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What is the Wonder?

An ethnography of 'rewilding' at the iSimangaliso Wetland
Park, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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Abstract ‘Rewilding’, or the return of degraded lands to a state of ‘wilderness’, is a bold attempt to resolve the world’s ecological challenges. It however does not address the division between nature and society, which lies at the core of the issues. According to Marshall Sahlins (1972) and Nurit Bird-David (1992), indigenous people relate to ‘nature’ in a markedly different way than Westerners. Capturing the social meanings, practices and ideas that they attach to ‘nature’ might assist in developing spiritual ‘rewilding’ strategies that 1) deal with key philosophical questions, and 2) empower a historically marginalised part of the global population. Problematic and overly simplistic is the underlying notion of an ‘Indigenous Other’. Seeking to contribute to the literature on ‘rewilding’ in a manner that acknowledges social complexity, this thesis builds on Mary Douglas’ cultural theory and the interpretation thereof by Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky (1990). Studying ‘indigeneity’ essentially involves the politics of land. Based on three months of fieldwork at the ‘rewilded’ Eastern Shores of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, I explore two opposing claims to land by the indigenous Mbuyazi (Bhangazi) tribe, and the nearby Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority. After the previous apartheid government removed the Bhangazi people from the shores, where they had allegedly been living independently and self-sufficiently, they wanted to ‘return’ to their lands in the post-apartheid era. Meanwhile, the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority sought to ‘benefit’ from the area’s mining and tourism potentials. The African National Congress-led government eventually took a neoliberal route of redress for past racial injustices, which does not necessarily tackle ‘indigenous’ people’s marginalisation. Current institutional failures complicate the achievement of social justice in this specific case.

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List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CCO	Community Conservation Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Eastern Shores
EWS	Eastern and Western Shores
GSLWP	Greater St Lucia Wetland Park
HiP	Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IMP	Integrated Management Plan
iSWP	iSimangaliso Wetland Park
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KNP	Kruger National Park
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LSDI	Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative
NPB	Natal Parks Board
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PA	Protected area
RLCC	Regional Land Claims Commissioner

SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SDI	Spatial Development Initiative
SUN	Stellenbosch University
UCT	University of Cape Town
WHS	World Heritage Site
WUR	Wageningen University

IsiZulu dictionary

IsiZulu is the main African language that is spoken in the region of study. This thesis uses various *isiZulu* terms, which are briefly described here.¹

Nouns

Singular	Plural	Description
<i>Isibongo</i>	<i>Izibongo</i>	Clan name, praise name
<i>Isichotho</i>	-	Hail
<i>Muthi</i>	<i>Umuthi</i>	Medicine
<i>Induna</i>	<i>Izinduna</i>	Headman, subordinate to <i>amakhosi</i>
<i>Inkosi</i>	<i>Amakhosi</i>	Leaders of varying importance, ranging from those whose polities comprise a few villages (led by <i>izinduna</i>) to the king of the Zulu ethnic group (Buthelezi 2008, 31)
<i>Intombazana</i>	<i>Amantombazana</i>	Girl
<i>Inyanga</i>	<i>Izinyanga</i>	Traditional herbalist, medicine (wo)man
<i>Isangoma</i>	<i>Izangoma</i>	Traditional diviner, medicine (wo)man
<i>Isimangaliso</i>	<i>Izimangaliso</i>	Miracle, surprise, wonder

Verbs

Infinitive	Description
<i>Ukukhonza</i>	To pay respect to

¹ The descriptions are derived from Benedict Carton, John Laband and Jabulani Sithole's landmark book (ed.) *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (2008), and <https://isizulu.net/>

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Map 1.1 The Eastern and Western Shores of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park,

1. Introduction

Human development is never finished, but it differs in time and space what the meaning of that development is. Today, the world grapples with the capability “to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature” (Nussbaum 2011, loc. 390-1²). Since the Industrial Revolution³, Westerners⁴ have unequivocally influenced the earth and everything that exists on it. In response, conservation biologists suggest that half of the earth should be ‘rewilded’ (Noss *et al.* 2012; Soulé & Noss 1998; Wilson 2016). ‘Rewilding’ refers to the relatively uncontrolled, large-scale rehabilitation of degraded lands, which typically occurs through the reintroduction of regionally extinct carnivores that trigger trophic cascades and thereby influence the entire ecosystem and restore its health. Great idea – were it not for the currently proposed epoch, the Anthropocene, in which humans are the Earth’s most significant geological force. Does ‘wilderness’ even exist in the Anthropocene? And if it does, how do conservation biologists imagine strategies of ‘rewilding’ to address the core of the problem: the lacking awe of nature within society (*Tegenlicht* 2017)? Conservation biologists like Edward O. Wilson (2016, 190) argue that ‘high-fertility’ areas are most suitable for ‘rewilding’, while these are often inhabited by the world’s poorest citizens who least contributed to the environmental challenges that the planet is facing today (Büscher & Fletcher 2017). Instead, Bram Büscher *et al.* (2016, 2-3) suggest that the possibilities of de-growth economies in the Global North should be more seriously considered. From a Western philosophical viewpoint, de-growth is at odds with development. It simultaneously reminds of Marshall Sahlins’ controversial text *The Original Affluent Society* (1972) wherein he puts

² I use the Kindle edition of Nussbaum’s book. ‘Loc.’ stands for location number, which is a stable and accurate means of locating a specific phrase or section in a digital book.

³ Some scientists argue that humans became the Earth’s most significant geological force well before the Industrial Revolution. According to them, the process of environmental destruction commenced when we started to settle on the land (*Tegenlicht* 2017).

⁴ To improve the readability of this thesis, I do not use quotation marks around terms such as local, indigenous, modern and Western. These nonetheless remain deeply problematic (Agrawal 1995; Douglas 2004; Sahlins 1999).

indigenous societies against Western ones – the former consisting of those who take

“a Zen road to affluence, departing from premises somewhat different from our own: that human material wants are finite and few, and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate. Adopting the Zen strategy, a people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty – with a low standard of living.” (*Ibid.*, 2)

Twenty years later, Sahlins takes a more nuanced stance. He (1999) acknowledges that industrial technologies have integrated into indigenous societies. This does not necessarily lead to their overall disappearance, as “culture is not only a heritage, it is a project” (Hountondji 1994 as cited in Sahlins 1999, xxi). Indeed, writes Sahlins (*Ibid.*, xv-xvi), some indigenous peoples still relate to (certain) trees, animals, plants and non-living elements of the environment in a way that markedly differs from the capitalist modes of production that underlie the world culture as a whole. On that basis, recent discussions on spiritual ‘rewilding’ (see Monbiot 2013; *Ramblings* 2013; *Tegenlicht* 2017) could open up an opportunity for indigenous peoples’ empowerment through the acknowledgement of the social meanings, practices and ideas that they attach to ‘nature’ on the basis of their potential value in the Anthropocene. Another great idea! – particularly given the extent to which indigenous ontologies and epistemologies have been downplayed in the past (see Tylor 1920 [1871], including by indigenous peoples themselves (Agrawal 1995, 423). However, argues Arun Agrawal (1995 & 2002), the reasoning of so-called *neo-indigenistas*⁵ fails to address local situations wherein indigenous peoples are marginalised ‘groups’ that likely cease to exist in the (near) future. I outline his argument in chapter 3 “Theoretical approach”. To avoid reproducing problematic dichotomies between traditional and modern cultures (Sahlins 1999), and situate the social meanings, practices and ideas of hybrid

⁵ I have adopted the terms *neo-indigenismo* and *neo-indigenistas* from Arun Agrawal (1995). *Neo-indigenismo* refers to “the belief that indigenous knowledges have something of value to offer” to conservation and development (*Ibid.*, 415).

indigenous ‘groups’ in relation to those of others, I build on Mary Douglas’ cultural theory. In this thesis, I explore the social position of the Bhangazi people and other indigenous ‘communities’ in case of the ‘rewilded’ sections of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (iSWP) in the KwaZulu Natal (KZN) province of South Africa on the basis of three months of fieldwork (from November 2016 to February 2017), and seek to answer the following research question:

Given that cultures and landscapes continuously change, how can we today understand competing claims to land and nature by indigenous ‘communities’ and the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority in case of the Eastern Shores of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park?

Important to bear in mind in relation to the first part of the question, which will be spelled out in the theoretical framework with reference to Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky’s interpretation of Douglas’ cultural theory (1990), is the mutual relationship between cultures and landscapes: social organisation determines the meaning of a landscape and vice versa.

1.1 Brief description of the case

The iSimangaliso Authority (‘iSimangaliso’) mentions ‘rewilding’ as its main focus in its Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for 2017 to 2021. From the 1950s to the early 1980s, the previous apartheid government displaced “some 1200 isiZulu-speaking households” from what is now the iSWP (Walker 2008a, 515). According to former Regional Land Claims Commissioner (RLCC) for KZN, Cheryl Walker (*Ibid.*),

“[s]ome lost their land in the name of conservation, while others were dispossessed to make way for commercial forestry and the establishment of a South African Defence Force missile base on the Ndlozi Peninsula in 1968.”

The lands that were used for commercial forestry were later ‘returned’ to their ‘natural’ status. These ‘rewilded’ areas became part of today’s iSimangaliso World Heritage Site (WHS) as the Park’s Eastern and Western Shores (EWS) sections (Spiegel 2004). Although this happened twenty years ago, iSimangaliso (2016, 36-7) still mentions the rehabilitation of areas that were previously covered by commercial *Pinus* and *Eucalyptus* species as a major challenge.

This thesis focuses on the indigenous communities that were removed for the establishment of forestry plantations, in particular the Bhangazi people whose land claim is the only one that has been settled (out of three⁶) at the EWS. After the end of apartheid, those who had lost their lands due to racially discriminatory legislation since 1913 – when the first major piece of apartheid legislation was passed – could reclaim that which they had lost. In the years that followed the transition to democracy in 1994, the ‘land question’ has proven to be extremely difficult to resolve. Redress has only been achieved piecemeal (Walker 2005, 806). That restitution *happened* in case of the Bhangazi people certainly makes it a success story, albeit a “bitter-sweet” one (Walker 2008c, loc. 1756). The 1999 settlement took the form of a financial compensation without the restoration of (legal) land ownership. Protected area (PA) management remained in hands of the government, which was now led by the African National Congress (ANC), and vested in the iSimangaliso Authority (then: the Greater St Lucia Wetland Authority). In the years that preceded the settlement, conservationists and mining interests clashed over the potential extraction of titanium from the dunes near St Lucia. This resulted in a victory for conservationists in 1996, but meanwhile, another claimant group had entered the scene that collaborated with Richard Bay

⁶ The Sokhulu claim of Maphelane, which is located to the south of St Lucia town and the estuary mouth (see map 0.1), was settled in 2007 (iSimangaliso 2016, 24). The entire park is under fourteen land claims of which five have not yet been settled. In its IMP, iSimangaliso (*Ibid.*) notes: “Initially, the period to lodge claims was from 1994 to 1998. However, in June 2014, the President announced the re-opening of the land claims process, providing opportunity for communities and individuals who had missed the original land claim deadline to lodge their claims, until June 2019. This will further hamper the resolution of land claims over the Park.”

Minerals (RBM) in the process. In addition to the Bhangazi people⁷, the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority claimed ownership rights to the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia (see map 0.1). A few things have to be clarified at this point. In contemporary rural South Africa, as elsewhere on the African continent, there are two local governance systems: one that is democratic and one that is ‘traditional’. The usage of ‘tradition’ should be criticised here, “given the impacts of both colonial policies and of past and current processes of rapid social [including democratic] change” (Cousins 2007, 282). For practical reasons that I will point out in chapter 4 “Methodology”, I have only spoken with indigenous people, or (children of) land claimants, who live around the EWS in the adjacent Greater Dukuduku area. It is important to be aware that (descendants of) claimants do not necessarily live in close proximity to the Park.

1.2 Thesis overview

The next chapter presents a literature review that focuses on ‘rewilding’ and what this might (be made to) mean. Throughout the thesis I put quotation marks around ‘rewilding’ and derivatives, because the main argument relates to the need for careful thinking about the potential meaning of this concept in the specific case of the EWS. I discuss the social construction of nature, resources, needs and preferences to some extent in chapter 3. There, I also outline the analytical framework on the basis of Arun Agrawal’s conceptualisation and criticism of *neo-indigenismo* and Mary Douglas’ cultural theory. I then turn to the methodology. Chapter 5 presents the case study, followed by some final reflections.

⁷ The Bhangazi people received this name in the context of the land claim. It refers to a small lake on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia, close to Cape Vidal (map 0.1). They are also known as the Mbuyazi tribe.

2. Literature review

Some conservation biologists (see Noss *et al.* 2012; Soulé & Noss 1998; Wilson 2016) argue that life on Earth can only survive and recover from unprecedented anthropogenic climate change if it is left to run its course on half of the planet. This technical solution reminds of pre-1980s ‘fortress’ conservation models that restrict human interferences through imposing ‘fences and fines’ (Reed *et al.*, 2541). According to social scientists like Büscher *et al.* (2016) and Flora Lu Holt (2005), ecological ‘rewilding’ ignores decades of trial-and-error efforts to sustainably live *with* the environment. On that account, ‘rewilding’ has in the Global North been framed as a source of hope that “our silent spring⁸ could be replaced by a raucous summer” (Monbiot 2013). George Monbiot romantically refers to ‘original’ hunting-gathering lifestyles with the aim of getting Westerners ‘back’ in touch with ‘the wild’ (*Ramblings* 2013). This hints at discussions on human-ecological development, which are incredibly complex. Nurit Bird-David (1992) maintains that there is ‘something’ – unrelated to the use-values of hunting and gathering – that makes the earth, trees, plants and animals essential to the identities of indigenous people. They allegedly forage to be “in touch with the natural agencies”, even while engaging in other economic activities and collecting little or nothing at all (*Ibid.*, 30). Yet, indigenous peoples do not exist independently from broader socio-ecological changes. It is often argued that they are the environmentalists of the past (Reed *et al.*, 2541); however,

“if the ecological impact within traditional societies was often low, this is not necessarily because of conservation-mindedness, but it should also be attributed to local conditions, such as low population density, the absence of a market, and poor technology, conditions that have now undergone profound changes and continue to do so.” (Koot 2017, 319)

⁸ With reference to Rachel Carson’s landmark book *Silent Spring* (2002 [1963]).

It is important to be aware that ‘indigeneity’ is a highly contentious and essentially political term (Koot & Büscher, in preparation). In terms of indigenous human rights in Southern Africa, the narrative is generally on dispossessions and racial injustices due to colonialism and apartheid (Sapignoli & Hitchcock 2013). The danger is that ‘whites’ are pitted against ‘blacks’ with little consideration of oppression within and between African groups (Walker 2005). These very complicated matters are introduced in paragraph 2.3 and further elaborated on in chapter 3 and the case study.

2.1 Half-earth or whole earth?

Last year conservation biologist Edward O. Wilson published *Half-Earth: Our Planet’s Fight for Life*. According to Wilson (2016, 55), “all of the available evidence points to the same two conclusions. First, the Sixth Extinction is under way; and second, human activity is its driving force.” In chapter 6 ‘Are we as Gods?’ (*Ibid.*, 47-51), he criticises humanity’s lust for greatness and our alleged ability to outsmart the catastrophes of climate change. He calls for a moment of reflection: “to think about where our species really came from and what we are today” (*Ibid.*, 50), thereby suggesting that our needs and wishes are fundamentally biological and do not differ much from those of “your family dog” (*Ibid.*, 48). He (*Ibid.*, 51) claims:

“We’re not yet sentient or intelligent enough to be much of anything. And we’re not going to have a secure future if we continue to play the kind of false god who whimsically destroys Earth’s living environment, and are pleased with what we have wrought.”

Paradoxically, as pointed out by Büscher *et al.* (2016), Wilson (2016, 191-5) trusts in technological advancement and free market mechanisms to reduce humanity’s ecological footprint in addition to the protection and expansion of wilderness areas. Others have argued similarly (see Soulé and Noss 1998; Noss *et*

al. 2012), although some of the ‘Nature Needs Half’⁹ perspectives are more nuanced towards the advantages of market approaches. Büscher *et al.* (2016, 2) express their concerns about the kind of protected area (PA) that half-earth advocates envision for nature’s ‘rewilded’ half. In light of sensitivities and complexities that derive from physical and economic displacements in the past, they (*Ibid.*) claim that it is “inconceivable that strict protected areas (IUCN Category I or II) could expand to 50% of the Earth without considerable social impacts”. Moreover, they (*Ibid.*) say, the half-earth idea does not offer an agenda for human-nature engagements within society’s half:

“Will this half be restricted merely to glimpsing the Earth’s saved biodiversity virtually, via hidden micro-cameras, as Wilson recommends? Will only the managers of nature’s half be allowed behind the curtain? This, we fear, would be a recipe for a dystopian world, where the vast majority of humanity is prevented from experiencing the very biodiversity many of them will have been displaced to save.”

Büscher *et al.* (2016) argue that proposed nuances as regards humanity’s salvation through The Market¹⁰ are insufficient. They (*Ibid.* 2) believe that sustainable solutions to global environmental degradation can only be achieved if the core of the problem – overconsumption in industrialised and emerging economies – is being addressed. According to Bram Büscher and Robert Fletcher (2017), this is socially more just than Wilson’s focus on overpopulation as the main problem.¹¹ They (*Ibid.*) argue that one cannot talk about the whole of humanity in such generalised terms, because different segments of the world population have (had) different impacts on global biodiversity loss and other climate issues. Wilson

⁹ See <http://natureneedshalf.org/>

¹⁰ There is a huge body of literature on the divine status of the market in the contemporary world culture. A key reading in development studies is Arturo Escobar’s *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (2012 [1995]).

¹¹ Other factors identified by Wilson (2016, 57-8) are: Habitat destruction, including climate change; Invasive species; Pollution; and Overhunting. Together with Population growth, he refers to these factors with the acronym HIPPO.

(2016, 190) takes on the issue by identifying high-fertility places, “including all of sub-Saharan Africa exclusive of South Africa” – but, write Büscher and Fletcher (2017),

“[t]hese are countries with some of the world’s lowest incomes. Paradoxically, then, it is those consuming the least that are considered the greatest problem. ‘Overpopulation’, it seems, is the same racialised bogeyman as ever, and the poor the greatest threat to an environmentally-sound future.”

In this line of argument, Flora Lu Holt (2005) argues against strict PA management in the Global South. She suggests that development in terms of demographic expansion, technological advancement and economic production should be encouraged, because exerting pressure on natural resources makes people aware of the potential for exploitation and subsequently the importance of conservation. She comments on the widely acknowledged point that traditional communities have used natural resources sustainably for many generations (Reed *et al.* 2016, 2541) – until they became ‘modern’. This thinking is contradictory, according to Lu Holt (2005), as conservation alliances are most likely to emerge under modern circumstances. Moreover, she (*Ibid.*, 210) writes:

“Such a view denies agency to indigenous people, making a deterministic prediction about technological change and not allowing for the possibility that another outcome is possible – e.g., perhaps people hunt for less time with a more efficient technology, taking the same amount of game as before?”

She acknowledges that people-centred trial-and-error conservation approaches might be luxuries in times of rapid environmental degradation on a global scale; however, “[i]t would follow from this line of reasoning, I argue, that conservation efforts could use as many allies as possible, rather than alienating or discounting

entire constituencies with strong vested interests in intact ecosystems” (*Ibid.*, 211).

James Reed *et al.* (2016) argue for a flexible ‘landscape approach’ in the Global South, which they (*Ibid.*, 2544) define as “a framework to integrate policy and practice for multiple competing land uses through the implementation of adaptive and integrated management systems”. The difference with existing community-based natural resource management programmes is that

“it does not follow the traditional unidirectional project cycle approach. Due to the dynamic nature of living landscapes, it follows that there should be no defined end point to a landscape approach, rather it should be an iterative process of negotiation, trial and adaptation.” (*Ibid.*)

These social scientists and policy researchers thus hold on to long-term conservation approaches that actively include indigenous people, and recognise their different needs and wishes in terms of subsistence and market orientations. As will be seen in the case study, the official recognition of these different needs and wishes does not necessarily result in meaningful practice.

2.2 Conservation and indigenous people

Some (see Brooks 2005; Gissibl, Höhler & Kupper 2012; Nustad 2015; Sundnes, unpublished manuscript) argue that the absence of human (read: non-Western) influences in PAs is not only for ecological but cultural-aesthetic reasons. In case of the iSWP and the adjacent Dukuduku Forest¹², Knut Nustad (2015) builds on the dichotomy between nature and society that allegedly prevails in conservation thinking. He suggests that Westerners distinguish between artificial landscapes of

¹² The Dukuduku Forest is located within the earlier-mentioned Greater Dukuduku area, which also comprises the peri-urban areas Khula Village and Ezwenelisha.

production and natural landscapes of recreational consumption¹³, and formulates his arguments around two images (*Ibid.*, 29): one of the white conservationists who wish to protect nature from the impact of people, “indigenous or otherwise”; and one of the African or indigenous people who want to have their land rights recognised and find ways to sustainably use natural resources. This depiction limits the agency of people, writes Stasja Koot (2016). He (*Ibid.*, 581) points out that *Creating Africas*

“does not have a thorough methodological section¹⁴ and it seems as if the title does not clearly reflect its content, which is not so much about ‘Africas’, but about different ideas of what the Dukuduku Forest and the iSimangaliso Wetland Park is or should be. ‘Africas’, I assume, refers to one ‘Created Africa’ in particular; a construction of African nature void of people based on the dominant ontology of nature conservation. As far as local ontologies are being covered, these do not contain specific ideas about other ‘Africas’.”

Nustad’s ‘heavy focus on the influence of thinking in a nature-society dichotomy’ (*Ibid.*) becomes clear in his discussion (2015, 42-50) of the request by Richards Bay Minerals in 1989 to mine the titanium-rich dunes of St Lucia, and the ensuing clash between mining interests and conservationists. An extensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted and resulted in a report in which the authors of a chapter on ‘sense(s) of place’ refer to St Lucia as a romantic

¹³ Historian Andrea Wulf adds to this view that Westerners perceived wilderness as opposed to nature and something awful that had to be tamed. Rather than the consumers of untouched nature, they saw themselves as the improvers of nature (*Tegenlicht* 2017).

¹⁴ Nustad (2015, 12) explains that “people from the various wards” were invited “to attend workshops and discussion groups”, which meant that “most of the information gathered on the inhabitants’ use of resources, livelihoods and so on was done in a setting that explicitly addressed these issues”. He (*Ibid.*) acknowledges that “[t]his might give the impression that the inhabitants’ relations to their environment is strictly utilitarian, but it is important to bear in mind that this was a result of the special situation in which these conversations were conducted, and not necessarily an accurate depiction of the forest dwellers’ overall relationship with their environment” Besides that, he (*Ibid.*) writes, “this book is not intended to read as an ethnographical study of the park authorities.”

wilderness area that is treasured by the “current electorate in South Africa, i.e. the literature White public” (as cited in Nustad 2015, 43). This representation was heavily criticised by the Save St Lucia-camp. According to one commentator, the report “fails to comprehend the instinctive, deep-rooted feelings of the people who recognize encroachment upon natural areas that will finally be destroyed by man” (as cited in Nustad 2015, 48). Nustad (*Ibid.*, 51) subsequently asks: “Does this mean that the arguments of the conservation lobby recognise the ‘interdependence of humans and environments’, as one of the commentators [...] argues?” He (*Ibid.*) rejects the point by mentioning that

“the responses, while positing a fundamental unity between humans and environments, at the same time deny multiplicity. This leads to the peculiar position that there is only one correct way of being in environments, only one sanctioned human-environment relation, only one way of dwelling.”

Frode Sundnes complements this view in an unpublished manuscript, where he speaks about the proposed green belt along the road to St Lucia that supposedly serves to hide human occupation of the Dukuduku Forest. According to him,

“[t]his is in contrast to provincial authorities’ plans some 70 years ago, when for an area abutting the wetland park to the north of the forest the presence of a ‘native population’ was regarded as an attraction and ‘an additional incentive to tourists [...] who in these days seldom are able to see Natives amid primitive surroundings’ (ZGRP, 1941).¹⁵ The most obvious way of reading this contrast is that the forest dwellers today challenge the park’s authenticity, as they do not match the desired pre-colonial state of the landscape.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Insufficiently addressed is the fact that iSimangaliso and KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife, the former is the iSWP’s managing authority and the latter carries out the ‘muddy boots’ conservation, are not the same agencies as the apartheid-era Zululand Game Reserves and Parks Board (ZGRP) and Natal Parks Board (NPB).

¹⁶ This reflects another, less prevalent discussion under the overarching term ‘rewilding’, which concerns the landscape and its desired components. The argument here is that humans have directly or indirectly caused the regional extinction of certain species; hence, these species should

Stasja Koot (2017) and Steven Robins (2001) address authenticity issues as regards cultural tourism and indigenous peoples in the context of the Bushmen of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. According to Koot (2017, 315), cultural tourism often necessitates modern indigenous people to remember or reinvent their traditions and thereby act like the authentic people of nature that Westerners imagine them to be. Telling in this regard is the quote by a development fieldworker who has worked with the Bushmen for decades and was interviewed by Koot in 2010:

“For us with a Western background and coming from a capitalist mindset, you see so clearly the potential of something that can be done but you don’t see the community networks that exist around it. And those community networks is their [the Bushmen’s] economy. We don’t see that economy, we just see ‘Oh, but you can get much more money’ but you don’t see how that economy imposed on their economy is going to destroy the fibre of the other one ... Tourism has in its core the force of destruction [of] what it is that we want to sell. So you want to sell this product, the beauty of it, while the capitalist world and culture and means that we bring in that they also want, that has the potential of destroying what we try to sell. How do you toss that game? ... It has positive elements of self-esteem and cultural knowledge, preservation and income-generation, but it has in its core ... the people fear that it keeps them back, it keeps them who they are and they want to move on.” (Koot 2017, 318)

This might give the impression that indigenous communities are the victims of a more dominant political economy; however, in cultural tourism, they actively engage in this economy by turning their backgrounds into commodities that are sought after by NGOs, donors, sustainable tourists¹⁷ and so on (see Koot 2017;

be reintroduced for ethical and aesthetic reasons. A critical reading about this reasoning is Rubenstein *et al.* (2006).

¹⁷ Sustainable tourists or eco-tourists are typically defined as “[i]ndividuals who travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and

Robins 2001). As noted by the development fieldworker, this certainly does not hold for all contemporary indigenous people. According to a village leader of the Yukon of northwest Canada (as quoted in Jorgensen 1990, 69),

“[w]e take whatever technology works and shape it to our purposes and uses. ... Apparently that bothers people who want us to remain pristine, or to admit to our contradictions of wanting technology and controlling and preserving the resources of our own use. ... Why not? We have always accepted and reshaped technology that works for our own purposes.”

In this line, Sahlins (1999) contests the dichotomy between indigenous and Western people. These, he claims (*Ibid.* i), are “clichés of the received anthropological wisdom” that reproduce the false idea that all societies go through a unilinear path of modernisation and development. This idea has (re)appeared in various forms, from early anthropological studies (see Tylor 1920 [1871]) to theories about and models for socioeconomic development (see Marx 1969; Rostow 1960), which are still being used (Robins 2001). The ‘Indigenous Other’ is thereby contrasted with the ‘Progressive Westerner’, which makes indigenous people seem ‘neo-historyless’: “their own agency disappears, more or less with their culture, the moment Europeans irrupt on the scene” (Sahlins 1999, ii). Sahlins (*Ibid.*) criticises that “when *we* change it’s called progress, but when they do – notably when they adopt some of our progressive things – it’s a kind of adulteration, a *loss* of their culture”. To the contrary, the worldwide survival of indigenous societies is not due to their successful *resistance* to global capitalism, but because they have *taken* certain things from Westerners to the development of their own existences (*Ibid.*, vi, ix). In the words of Sahlins (*Ibid.*, x), “[r]ather than a refusal of the commodities and relations of the world-system, this more often means [...] a desire to indigenize them. The project is the indigenization of

enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations” (Eagles, McCool & Haynes 2002, 163).

modernity”; hence, “there is not, for the [indigenous] people concerned, a radical disconformity, let alone an inauthenticity” (*Ibid.*, xi).

2.3 Land restitution

The political orientation of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa has been on ‘marginalised’ or ‘disadvantaged’ rather than ‘indigenous’ peoples with reference to histories of colonialism and apartheid (Sapignoli & Hitchcock 2013, 3). Since parks are often situated in remote areas where service delivery is poor and unemployment levels are high, park authorities have been socio-politically constructed as the providers of economic incentives to previously disadvantaged peoples. This is not only contradictory (Koot 2017) but also fails to recognise that some African peoples are more marginalised than others. They have been removed from an environment wherein the earth, trees, animals and plants were ‘sitting’ within their societies in a certain manner. Corresponding lifestyles arguably cannot be restored decades after the removals, as cultures and landscapes have changed (Walker 2008c, loc. 1828-9). According to Koot and Büscher (in preparation), “[a]s has now been recognised, at least in South Africa, returning land does not solve many socio-political, economic, psychological and ecological problems that cause and are caused by marginalisation”.

The history of the Bhangazi people’s land claim to the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia is illustrative. In *Landmarked* (2008c), former RLCC Walker describes how the land restitution process resulted in severe identity struggles between the Bhangazi people, or the Mbuyazi clan, who had occupied the land for some 200 years before being removed by the apartheid government, and those who allege that it falls under the nearby Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority. Well before the end of apartheid, in the 1970s, the Bhangazi people began to articulate their wish to return to the land, but by the time of the EIA – recall Nustad’s discussion of the clash between conservation and mining interests – the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority under *Inkosi* (‘chief’) Mkhwanazi had also shown interest in a settled claim. In the words of Walker (2005, 810),

One set of claimant representatives described an isolated, self-sufficient and autonomous coastal clan whose only interest was to return to the land from which they had been gradually but inexorably displaced by forestry and conservation authorities over two decades in the mid-twentieth century. Another set of representatives articulated a confident tribal suzerainty that drew on both apartheid and precolonial discourses of tribal identity and clan hierarchies for its legitimacy. They claimed ownership of the Eastern Shores not for settlement purposes but to control the mineral wealth (the titanium) that glistened in its dunes.

The situation on the ground escalated violently and resulted in the coerced ‘support’ from the majority of those in the Mbuyazi committee for “one claim for the return of the land [...] to the Mkhwanazi tribe” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1635-40). Walker (*Ibid.*, loc. 1638-9) writes: “Shortly thereafter, following the murder of an associate, [the Bhangazi claimant leader] Mbuyazi felt compelled to flee the Mpukonyoni district.” Trying to minimise the risk of further escalations, she approached the issues by arguing that the claimants, whom she defined as those who had actually lived on the shores (and their descendants), could be represented by more than one set of leaders “if that reflected their reality”¹⁸ (*Ibid.*, loc. 1640-50). Anthropologist Andrew Spiegel formed part of the team that took care of the claim verification process through ‘walking the land’ with ex-residents. Walker (*Ibid.*, loc. 1690-1) writes that “[r]evisiting the land separated those who had lived there from those who had not”. According to some members of the Mbuyazi committee, *Inkosi* Mkhwanazi “could not take anyone, he could not show anything, he was weak” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1693). Their leader, to the contrary, “went and said, ‘You see that bush, you see that there? That’s where we were’” (*Ibid.*). Most

¹⁸ “The Mbuyazi claim form records: Sokana Mbuyazi 1812-1821; Makhungu Mbuyazi 1821-1829; Dobo Mbuyazi 1829-1840; Hlawukane Mbuyazi 1840-1910; Siyakatha Mbuyazi (regent) 1910-1913; Lokothrowo (Njojela) Mbuyazi 1913-1971. [...] The claim form supplied by *Inkosi* Mkhwanazi on behalf of the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority largely confirms the genealogy on the Mbuyazi claim form, but places Makhungu after Dobo, and, significantly, describes all the Mbuyazi leaders as headmen of the Mpukonyoni *amakhosi*” (Walker 2008c, loc. 3302-7).

remarkable for Spiegel (2004, 6) was *how* the ex-residents walked the original and ‘rewilded’ bush-grass lands as opposed to the afforested areas:

“Rather than systematically traversing the area along a grid-like pattern as we had planned to do, they immediately knew what routes to follow. Indeed, as they took us through the bush and long grass, they seemed to be following long hidden pathways as if the paths were there for all to see, with no obvious need even to be seeking to find bearings from significant markers in the landscape. Every so often they would then stop, first to announce that ‘so-and-so had his homestead here’ and then to seek and find the kind of evidence of habitation [to present in front of the Land Claims Court].”

In the afforested areas, the ex-residents were virtually unable to point out where sites of previous habitation had been. Hence, writes Spiegel (*Ibid.*, 6), “[t]he afforestation process had grown not only trees but amnesia too”. Seemingly paradoxically, he (*Ibid.*) adds, the Natal Parks Board (NPB) labelled the regenerated bush-grass lands as ‘pristine wilderness’; however, given the fact that ex-residents were able to make bodily memory there, “the idea of the pristine must include them, or the idea of the pristine terrain has no pertinence in the St Lucia context”. The African National Congress (ANC)-led government did not share this view to the same extent. It argued that the Park’s then pending World Heritage Site (WHS) status and ensuing ecotourism opportunities should “benefit many more [African] people than the claimants alone” (Walker 2008c, loc. 1769-70). The eventual settlement took the form of a financial compensation that was to be distributed through a to-be established Bhangazi Trust of elected representatives of the Bhangazi community, and the delivery of ‘benefits’ through funds from a community levy that tourists pay on entry to the Eastern Shores. Seventy percent of the levy goes to the Trust, and the other twenty and ten percent respectively to the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority and the KZN Nature Conservation Board (previously the NPB, today Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife). Additionally, a small Heritage Site would be created at Lake Bhangazi (*Ibid.*, loc.

1732-45). The following excerpt of a story on the basis of an interview with the Bhangazi claimant leader – Phineas Mbuyazi – about life on the eastern shores before the removals is taken from *Landmarked* (*Ibid.*, loc. 1840-6):

“We would always make reparations through the hippo. Once we made reparations on behalf of the Manivini clan. They had accused Lokothwayo [who was also a powerful *sangoma* (‘traditional diviner’)] of bewitching them, because they were dying. So then I asked all the people to give money – each to give me two rand. The person who can testify to this is Nzima. Then I went to the lake and I performed certain rituals. Thereafter I called on the hippo, calling, calling. He came out of the water to me. Some people ran away but I did not run away. I stood and faced the hippo because it was my ancestors that I had been calling; it was my ancestor coming out of the water. And then I gave him the money. The hippo opened its mouth and swallowed the money. As I threw the money into his mouth, I called out the names of the families that had accused Lokothwayo. I would say, ‘Please save the families.’ And indeed, people were saved after that.”

Mbuyazi thus lost “a culturally specific environment that located him in space and time, an environment which framed a particular understanding of both livelihoods and social identity” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1814-26). His tragedy does not stand alone, but can be found in many places across Southern Africa and indeed the world. For the South Kalahari Bushmen, whose land claim resembles that of the Bhangazi people except for the provision of alternative lands that has not materialised in case of the latter (Walker 2008c, loc. 1784-7), ‘loss’ relates to the meaning and use of the land that is given ‘back’ and cannot correspond to the lifestyles of their forefathers (Koot & Büscher, in preparation). In an unpublished paper, Koot and Büscher point out that the environment that has been taken away does not exist anymore. Land is only returned with many strings attached. At the same time, “if we only look at the land transfer itself, we risk understanding the deeper effects of the years of dispossession and concomitant forms of colonization, oppression and

marginalization on ‘indigenous peoples’”. Restitution can only be understood as “simply a next stage” in this process. Besides that, indigenous peoples are never safe from the threat of land grabbing – “[o]nce land is taken, others will own it and this seems to lead to an important reduction of agency, which does not simply increase again when some land is given back.”

3. Theoretical approach

“The king is naked!”, would a (bright) student occasionally exclaim with reference to Sahlins’ controversial text *The Original Affluent Society*, writes Bird-David (1992, 26), “but we considered it a king even if indecently dressed”. Twenty years after Sahlins’ publication on indigenous peoples’ alleged ‘Zen road to affluence’, Bird-David articulates *A Culturalist Reformulation* (1992). She (*Ibid.*, 29) argues that ‘indigenous people’ view nature as “a set of agencies simultaneously natural and human-like”, whereas “we commonly construct nature in mechanistic terms”. If this is the case, and because our view has resulted in severe environmental challenges (*Tegenlicht* 2017), it would be critically important to better understand how indigenous peoples “do not inscribe into the nature of things a division between the natural agencies and themselves as we do with our ‘nature:culture’ dichotomy” (Bird-David 1992, 29-30). Bird-David’s argument is odd, writes Jon Altman (1992, 35-6) in his comment on *A Culturalist Reformulation*. He (*Ibid.*) points out that both Sahlins and Bird-David, in their wish to generalise, insufficiently address the significant influence that social, political, economic and ecological conditions have on different indigenous groups around the world. In the words of Altman (*Ibid.*, 36, emphasis added),

“What I cannot understand is the anthropological culture that generates questions like Bird-David’s at a different historical moment [than Sahlins’ explicitly economic account], when remaining hunter-gatherer societies are either incorporated into the world economy or are under threat from a range of powerful industrial interests.”

The perspectives of the founder of cultural theory, Mary Douglas, could be situated in between those of Bird-David and Altman – but much closer to the latter. According to Douglas (2004, 91-2),

“[s]ince any kind of organization depends on moral commitment, the basic assumption is that the collectively held theories about humans and the world correspond to the form of organization. Consequently each cultural bias provides its own view of” nature, needs, resources and preferences as examples in this chapter.

In other words, while Bird-David might be right about the perspectives of some indigenous people as regards ‘nature’ – most likely elders and traditional healers (Impey 2002) – we need to understand those in relation to the socially constructed meanings of ‘land’ and ‘nature’ by the mainstreams, which compete with the increasingly precarious ‘culturalist’ viewpoints that Bird-David describes.

3.1 *Social meanings*

Cultural theory essentially explains “meaning” from a social *science* rather than an arts perspective:

“We are interested in how individuals confer meaning upon situations, events, objects, relationships – in short, their lives. How do people come to believe that physical nature is one way rather than another? How does one view of human nature come to seem more sensible than another?”
(Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, xiii)

The starting point is that “ideas of nature, whether physical or human, [...] are socially constructed. What is natural and unnatural is given to individuals by their way of life” (*Ibid.*, 25).

3.1.1 Myths of nature

In their interpretation of Douglas’ cultural theory, political scientists Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990) take the management of ecosystems as an example and introduce five ‘myths of nature’. According to them (*Ibid.*, 26),

“unlike the explicit models that scientists usually deal with, these models are seen by those who hold to them as being built from largely unquestioned assumptions. The myths of nature, in consequence, are both true and false; that is the secret of their longevity. Each myth is a partial representation of reality. Each captures some essence of experience and wisdom, and each recommends itself as self-evident truth to the particular social being whose way of life is premised on nature conforming to that version of reality.”

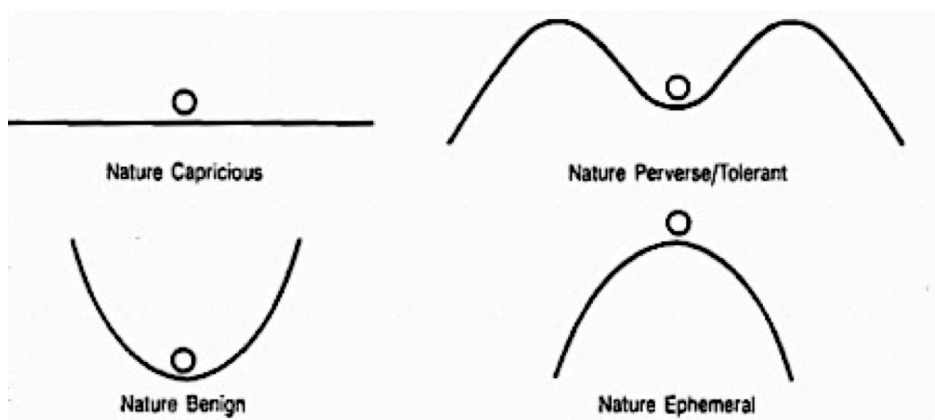


Figure 3.1 Four myths of nature, source: Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, 27

The five myths of nature are: Nature Benign, Nature Ephemeral, Nature Perverse/Tolerant, Nature Capricious and Nature Resilient. The first four are shown in figure 3.1. The fifth is dealt with later on. The authors (*ibid.*, 26) explain Nature Benign as forgiving: no matter what damages are done to the ecosystem, it always returns to an equilibrium. Conservation bodies can therefore adopt a laissez-faire attitude. Nature Ephemeral is the opposite. When damage is done, the whole system collapses. Hence, the natural environment needs to be treated with great care. Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990, 27) indicate that “[t]he fact that we are still here, despite all our perturbations, would seem to make this myth a nonstarter”. Strict PAs (IUCN Category I and II) could be based on this myth. PAs where sustainable use is allowed and regulated by a range of experts correspond to Nature Perverse/Tolerant. This myth is forgiving of most events,

but sometimes cannot restore. The managing authority has to regulate against unusual occurrences. Nature Capricious represents a random world. There is no structure, plan or learning process, nature is dealt with in the way it occurs. It is a *wilderness*. Life is based on luck. It might be said that Nature Resilient (figure 3.2) corresponds to the Anthropocene. The ball, which represents human influences on the landscape, pulls and pushes the line, which is the landscape. Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (*Ibid.*, 30, emphasis added) explain that

“[k]eeping the ball away from the boundary works and goes on working until that unsuspected moment when the bowl, which has been getting steadily shallower, ceases to be a bowl and becomes a bump instead. All is then lost; the tolerant pocket, which was the key to the management of the system, had disappeared, and nature is suddenly *everywhere* perverse”.

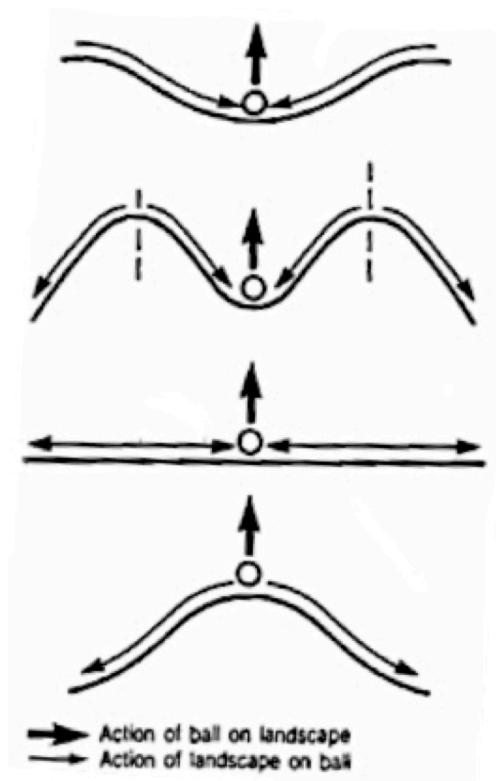


Figure 3.2 Nature Resilient, source: Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, 32

The concept of ‘rewilding’ could be seen as a response to Nature Resilient. It indicates a need to (temporarily) recognise a notion of wilderness and abandon the possibility to predict the flow of nature on local levels. In our world culture that drives on regulation and safety (Monbiot 2013), it is desirable to get the ball back ‘on’ line and thereby limit the jolt (Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, 31). This is the foundation for spiritual ‘rewilding’.

It should be clear that “[n]ature cannot be both cornucopian and fragile [...] except in regard to different objects, times, places and conditions. Neither can any of the other myths be true all the time, everywhere, and under all conditions.” (*Ibid.*) Therein lies the peculiarity of the claims that Sahlins (1972) and Bird-David (1992) make: we *cannot* theorise about the social meanings, practices and ideas of indigenous people in a manner that transcends time and space. They have to be approached in light of the social organisation that prevails at place X in period Y. This point is addressed by Arun Agrawal (1995). According to him (*Ibid.*, 423), ‘indigenous knowledge about the environment’, for example, cannot be the property, “over a period of time, of a specific group” and it cannot “be characterized in a particular way as a result of being the property of that group”. He (*Ibid.*, 427) suggests that “[i]nstead of trying to conflate all non-western knowledge into a category termed ‘indigenous’, and all western knowledge into another category, it may be more sensible to accept differences within these categories and perhaps find similarities across them.”

3.1.2 Needs, resources and preferences

Differences between groups (‘cultural biases’) nonetheless and necessarily remain. These could derive from a shared history or cultural heritage that can be documented – an initiative that I discuss in the next paragraph with reference to Agrawal (1995 & 2002). Cultural heritage is per definition under ‘threat’ by the own development of its constituents. This need not be a problem. In case of indigenous people, as discussed with reference to Koot (2017) and Sahlins (1999), cultural *loss* is often perceived by others (‘Westerners’) as a problem because

‘we’ tend (or more controversially: like) to see ‘them’ in a certain way. If they do not correspond to that image, indigenous peoples ‘cease’ to exist. Underneath these superficial ideas about ‘us’ and ‘them’ are more complex cultural (ontological and epistemological) layers that are important yet extremely difficult to understand. Consider an example wherein a public official argues about a hunter-gatherer that he lives underneath the poverty line:

“[H]e does not have enough bedclothes; he is not eating enough; his mobility is inadequate; his small house is in contravention of current housing standards. He is to be moved into an old people’s home where he will be properly clothed, fed, and housed. As he makes this involuntary transition to the old people’s home, his needs are expanded for him until they reach their ‘correct’ level.” (Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, 41)

Sahlins (1972) idea of ‘want not, lack not’ suddenly becomes irrelevant, because someone else articulates for the hunter-gatherer what he wants and needs. This public official might argue that “more derived needs [or preferences] are only striven for once the more basic needs have been met” (Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, 55). This “attractive theory” – because of its simplicity – “collapses once the anthropologist points out that as you go from one culture to another (or even from one social class to another), one person’s basic need become another person’s derived need and vice versa” (*Ibid.*). The following situation should be awkwardly familiar for students in ‘development’:

“Western aid-providers in Nepal, for instance, were horrified to see poor villagers spend their money, not on improving the productivity of their rice fields, but on refurbishing the village temple. The aid-providers (the World Bank, through its Basic Needs Program) had assumed that an adequate supply of rice was the basic need of the villagers. The villagers’ basic need, however, was a good relationship with their gods; you cannot, they insisted, do anything about increasing your food supply until you have that.” (*Ibid.*)

This sheds a different light on Bird-David's example of indigenous people who forage to be "in touch with the natural agencies" (Bird-David 1992, 30). At the same time, Altman's point (1992, 36) stands: virtually all hunter-gatherer societies are today somehow influenced by the West: processes of industrialisation, technological advancement, marketization and population growth are affecting the stretchability of social meanings of 'land' and 'nature' across the world. Hence, the indigenous people that Bird-David describes are likely to belong to the 'fatalist' cultural bias that Douglas identifies. Before turning to Douglas' description of cultural biases, I critically reflect on the possibility to empower those people ('the environmentalists of the past') through the documentation of their 'knowledge' on the basis of Agrawal (1995 & 2002).

3.2 *Neo-indigenismo*

The current focus on the indigenous in human development and conservation is to be welcomed after the worth and utility of indigenous peoples' perspectives have been dismissed for centuries (Agrawal 2002, 287). However, writes Agrawal (*Ibid.*) the ways in which their knowledge is increasingly being 'captured' and used, primarily through the creation of databases, should be challenged. He (*Ibid.*, 288) points out that the aims of creating databases are twofold:

- 1) "to protect indigenous knowledge in the face of myriad pressures that are undermining the conditions under which indigenous peoples and knowledge thrive"; and
- 2) "to collect and analyse the available information and identify specific features that can be generalised and applied more widely in the service of more effective development and environmental conservation".

Agrawal (1995 & 2002) argues that *neo-indigenismo*, or the belief that indigenous knowledge has something of value to offer (Agrawal 1995, 415), is too often based on wishful thinking. According to him (*Ibid.*),

“[m]uch of the information that such ethnobotanical databases contain is reminiscent of earlier anthropological research from around the turn of the century on traditional knowledge. The difference is that the same knowledge and research is now presented through the powerful, utilitarian idiom of indigenous knowledge and justified on the grounds that it is crucial for successful development [and conservation] results.”

He (*Ibid.*, 294) warns that the creation of databases provides “a means to more powerful social actors to appropriate useful indigenous knowledge”. Moreover, “once the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples are separated from them and saved, there is little reason to pay much attention to indigenous peoples themselves” (Agrawal 2002, 294). In conclusion, he writes (1995, 431),

“[i]f indigenous knowledges are disappearing, it is primarily because pressures of modernization and cultural homogenization, under the auspices of the modern nation-state and the international trade system, threaten the lifestyles, practices and cultures of nomadic populations, small agricultural producers, and indigenous peoples. Perhaps these groups are fated to disappear. But their knowledge certainly cannot be saved in an archive if they themselves disappear.”

Alternative strategies are much more complex and lie in the reconsideration of past decisions to delimit the spatial mobility of indigenous peoples and the implementation of market forces, which enable them to decide for themselves how they wish to sustain and develop their knowledges within their dwelling environments (*Ibid.*, 432). Such processes cannot succeed without the provision of rights to land and natural resources (Agrawal 1995, 432; Koot & Büscher in preparation; Spiegel 2004; Walker 2008b), which can be very complicated as will be seen in the case study.

3.3 Cultural theory

‘All Africans are indigenous’ is the standpoint of governments in Southern Africa. All have been ‘disadvantaged’ by colonialism and apartheid, and therefore, all have the right to redress for past racial injustices (Sapignoli & Hitchcock 2013). This ‘master narrative’ works well as a “political fable”, writes Walker (2005, 811),

“but as a basis for a programme of government the simple story of forced removals is increasingly problematic. The problem is not that its constituent elements are not (broadly speaking) true. The problem is that the narrative is too simple. The elements it assembles are incomplete ... the story stops at the point of dispossession and does not ... consider carefully and dispassionately what has happened to communities and to the land in subsequent years. ... As a guide to practical action it can be dangerous.”

Her words correspond to the points that Koot and Büscher raise in their unpublished paper, where they stretch the argument until after some kind of restitution has taken place. The social meaning of the ‘given’ land differs from when it was taken and therefore land cannot be ‘given back’. Linking this to the concept of ‘rewilding’, we cannot return to the ‘wilderness’ wherein indigenous communities used to dwell. Social, political, economic and ecological conditions have changed, including communal prescriptions. “The more binding and extensive the scope of the prescriptions, the less of life that is open to individual negotiation”, write Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990, 5). Let us consider an example from conservation. Imagine a person who customarily collects elephant dung as a building material. One day the national government decides that everything that is produced by a protected ecosystem has to remain within it. The law enforcer at the gates now sends the person who set out to collect the dung away: rules are rules. It is difficult to argue against such policies as they have been produced on national level.

In other cases, compromises can be reached through negotiation within the ‘community’, which exists as a “fourfold cultural unit” consisting of hierarchs, individualists or entrepreneurs, egalitarians or dissidents, and fatalists, who engage in “contentious internal dialogue” (Douglas 2004, 92). The influences of hierarchs, entrepreneurs and egalitarians are typically significant (although not all at the same time); those of fatalists are not. If the marginalisation of indigenous people sustains even after restitution, they could belong to this fatalist ‘group’. The tragic case of the Bhangazi claimant leader is exemplary here. Fatalists

“may be very frustrated or lonely. In a large community there is inevitably a penumbra of such people, they don’t see much of each other, by definition. Their circumstances being similar, they tend to have similar attitudes to time, history, efficiency, justice. They do not combine for political action. They may suffer injustice and hardship but they consider that nothing will ever be done to help them.” (*Ibid.*, 93).

Fatalists do not have to be fatalist for their entire lives. This is (or should be) the point of ‘development’, which could be steered by each of the other three cultural biases, thereby taking different forms and having different outcomes (Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, 69-81). Finally, a few points about the other cultural biases:

1. Hierarchs typically derive their authority from their age and gender, through hereditary systems, or simply because of ‘who they are’.
2. Egalitarians tend to promote democracy. They are generally situated on the political left and in opposition to individualists or entrepreneurs.
3. Dissidents are those who go against the status quo (Douglas 2004, 92-3).

4. Methodology

Thomson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990, xiii) criticise how subjectivity, social construction and the interpretation of meaning have become

“the almost exclusive province of those who insist that an explanatory social science in search of regularities is impossible. Proponents of hermeneutics, ethnomethodology, critical theory and the like assert that understanding human beings, because humans confer meaning upon their lives, is inconsistent with theorizing in the spirit of the natural sciences. [...] Our view is that this rigid dichotomy between interpretation of meaning and scientific explanation is unjustified. [...] Subjectivity need not rule out regularity as long as different sorts of people feel subjective in similar ways with regard to similar objects.”

I agree, and want to add that there is no clear link between this ontological-epistemological stance and methodology. Although I use cultural theory, which is applicable to many cases, the study itself remains sensitive to ethnographic detail – which is possible *because* cultural theory is so broad. This ethnographic detail is crucial to fieldwork and distinguishes it from ‘ivory tower approaches’ (Latour 2005). The aim of fieldwork is to “understand the people studied in their own terms” through “engaging in real or constructed dialogues” (England 1994, 243), and subsequently develop a ‘thick description’ of discourses, ideas and feelings that the researcher encounters in the field. During the fieldwork, I used ethnographic methods like participant observations, and open and semi-structured interviews.

4.1 *Ethnographic vacillation*

Doing fieldwork is essentially a learning process, which might be called ‘ethnographic vacillation’ (Hage 2010). This process needs to be unpacked to understand the outcome thereof, which is this thesis. To begin with, it should be

noted that doing fieldwork at the iSWP was not easy, and this has contributed to my understanding of the situation wherein (descendants of) land claimants find themselves today. I have come to realise that conservation and land are highly politicised, complex and sensitive topics that are perceived to be difficult to understand by an ‘outsider’ (“I don’t want to offend you, but there is something very different about us. I’m African [white male owner of a tour operation in St Lucia]. And you’re not”). Perhaps this is the reason why iSimangaliso acted as a ‘gatekeeper’ that only assisted in conducting interviews with relevant persons both within and outside of its organisation in the week before I left the field. This has not stopped me from doing the study, although I have to admit that feelings of failure and self-doubt have at times made me re-evaluate the worth of pursuing it (England 1994, 244).

4.2.1 Strategy

Soon after the start of my master’s programme in development studies, I realised that I have a particular interest in the integration of and inherent conflict between conservation and development. In subsequently searching for a thesis topic, I stumbled upon a co-authored article by Dr Melissa Hansen (Hansen, Islar & Krause 2015). Dr Hansen earned her doctoral degree at Lund University through a research project on social justice at the KwaDapha community of Kosi Bay, which is located within the current iSWP (Hansen 2014). I contacted Dr Hansen in the spring of 2016 and she enthusiastically agreed to help me with setting up a thesis project. I combined the project with an internship on the Governance of Africa’s Resources Programme of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) in Cape Town. I interned there from August to November 2016. Afterwards, I went on two fieldtrips to the iSWP of one month each. I left South Africa in February 2017.

During the internship, I could speak with local experts in conservation and development and got in touch with Dr Thomas Cousins, a social anthropologist at Stellenbosch University who has done extensive research on health and

commercial forestry in the Mtubatuba¹⁹-St Lucia area. We extensively discussed the iSWP-case, which made me reconsider some thoughts that I initially developed on the basis of *Creating Africas* (2015) by Norwegian researcher Knut Nustad – a book recommendation by Dr Hansen. Dr Cousins and I were both enthusiastic about the potential meaning of ‘rewilding’, a concept that appears in iSimangaliso’s IMP. In this context, I felt that Nustad was onto something important that concerns the social construction of nature in the Anthropocene and the potential role of indigenous people therein. I discussed my ideas with iSimangaliso’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and senior manager in November 2016, but these were not warmly²⁰ received. Instead, they suggested that I focus on the removal of alien invasive plants. 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 on (spiritual) ‘rewilding’ that I felt passionate about.

Because my proposal had not been approved (or rejected) by iSimangaliso, it was difficult to arrange interviews with iSimangaliso and KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife (‘Ezemvelo’) staff members. At the iSWP, iSimangaliso is the managing authority and Ezemvelo carries out the ‘muddy boots’ conservation. The relationship between these bodies is not smooth, which helped in my informal interactions with Ezemvelo staff members. One week before I left the field, iSimangaliso registered my project. A few days before I left, I had one interview with two iSimangaliso staff members. In hindsight, I should have been more diplomatic about my project in negotiating access to the field (Sultana 2007, 380). Dr Cousins did explain to me how certain power relations ‘sit’ in this specific case, but that was difficult to understand for me a-priori. This might be due to cultural differences, although I am more inclined to point towards the highly politicised and personalised landscape wherein my project is situated. This in itself makes for

¹⁹ Mtubatuba is located thirty kilometres from St Lucia.

²⁰ Although, and perhaps partially because, I was not allowed to take notes during this encounter, the meeting was a valuable source of subjective information. In plain terms: I felt intimidated.

interesting interpretation and has certainly played a role in the way wherein I have come to understand the iSWP-case.

4.1.2 Positionality

I primarily conducted fieldwork in the Greater Dukuduku area and St Lucia. The Greater Dukuduku area ('Dukuduku') comprises the peri-urban areas Khula Village and Ezwenelisha, as well as the Dukuduku Forest. These are located some six to seven kilometres from St Lucia. While I did feel like an 'insider' in the historically white²¹ holiday town of St Lucia, I did not in Dukuduku. I was soon recognised in both St Lucia and Dukuduku, but for different reasons. St Lucia is a small town that is completely surrounded by the WHS, where everyone seemingly knows everyone and everything that is going on. In Dukuduku I stood out as a white, female, young foreigner who visited on a daily basis and occasionally resided in Khula Village. While I made some good friends and felt very welcome, there was a fair amount of mistrust and suspicion among the Dukuduku residents. This has to do with local perceptions of power relations in particular towards iSimangaliso and *izinduna* ('headmen'). After I introduced myself as a student-researcher from overseas, relationships of trust remarkably soon developed. It was considered to be safe to discuss social concerns and (politically) sensitive matters with me. This does raise ethical issues, which I addressed by reminding study participants of my role as a researcher and the way wherein I might use the information that they shared with me. In response, they sometimes asked me not to take notes. My experiences significantly contrast the feelings of paralysis by some Western researchers as regards fieldwork in developing countries that stem from over-concerns about their positionality in terms of neo-colonial representations and Western biases (Sultana 2007, 375). Although these issues were not resolved in my case and reflexivity remains crucial, the advantages of *not* being a local researcher should also be acknowledged. The contacts that I

²¹ I use terms like white and African to describe groups of people as if they self-evidently exist. I recognise that by doing so I am reproducing highly problematic racial categories; however, one still cannot discuss situations in South Africa, and elsewhere, without making such references.

early on made with a group of young residents who *toyi-toyi*²² against the traditional leadership contributed to the swift establishment of trust relationships with particularly elderly land claimants. One of the protesters (#5, see annex I) sometimes accompanied me to interviews. He acted as a translator and mediator with whom I shared many thoughts informally. He told me that people in Dukuduku trust him. Indeed, he was often described as an honest and good leader. After my project was registered with iSimangaliso, I requested to attend a meeting between the *toyi-toyi*-ing group – the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents – and iSimangaliso, among others, but iSimangaliso staff members (#53 & #54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017) questioned “the relevance [of the meeting] to [my] rewilding project” and subsequently pointed out that local politics are “crazy”. Such interactions are important backgrounds to which the case study as I present it should be assessed.

My engagements with people in the field might have triggered certain expectations or hopes, which became clear in conversations about cultural and eco-tourism, and land. Many study participants shared ideas with me about businesses that they would like to start, only to ask later if I could arrange the necessary funds with iSimangaliso. There were no financial expectations from me personally. I was very open about the research funding – I paid for everything myself from money that I earned with side-jobs during my studies. This sometimes resulted in surprise and appreciation (“You are so committed to this! I don’t know why but I appreciate it”), and, again, hope (“Talking with you, I think is important”; “I make time for you because I think you will do good”). I constantly had to renegotiate ethics in the field, which reinforces the fluidity and openness of doing fieldwork. A sad example was a lady who showed me her flooded farmland due to changes at the protected estuary river mouth – also labelled as ‘rewilding’ in iSimangaliso’s IMP. One of my mediators brought me

²² Some respondents used the word ‘*toyi-toyi*’ to refer to marches against the traditional leadership and other government structures in the area. In a *toyi-toyi* – which could also be used as a verb (to *toyi-toyi*) – people take to the streets, they sing and particularly dance to express their unhappiness.

to her. She did not say much at first. We drove around in her *bakkie*, only to stop at places where the water reached upon our knees. She did not want to be in photos, but insisted that I took them. When we arrived at our last stop, she stood in the middle of the flooded field, spread her arms and cried out something in *isiZulu*. I looked at my mediator-and-translator: she wanted me to take a photo. It broke my heart. After that, she told me that she would fight for this land until she dies. It felt morally wrong to be there. I told her that I could not help her and she replied that she understood. After I gave her some money for fuel and a big hug, she gave us a dozen bananas and a sugar cane stick each. These instances show that doing fieldwork is essentially emotional and personal. However, I do not agree with England (1994, 249) that the interference into the lives of the researched is necessarily greater in comparison to the application of traditional (neo-positivist) methodologies. It depends on how the fieldworker handles these emotional encounters.

4.2 The fieldwork

During my two field trips, I spoke with a broad range of people: (descendants of) land claimants, *izangoma* ('traditional diviners', singular: *sangoma*), *izinyanga* ('traditional herbalists', singular: *inyanga*), *izinduna* ('headmen', singular: *induna*), park officials and other government officials, natural and social scientists, (former) community conservation officers (CCOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), tour operators and guides, tourists, and residents of Dukuduku and St Lucia. I normally visited one or several person(s) for a couple of hours, and went on multiple visits per day. I spent most time with members of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents. In accordance to local customs, I brought something to interviews as a sign of respect for people's time and willingness to talk. This was usually a juice or other food product. I did not do this when I met with park officials, NGOs, tour operators and guides, or tourists. I never stayed with people in their houses, but always in tourist accommodations in Khula Village or St Lucia. I drove from place to place in a rental car. The study participants from Dukuduku considered this to be a useful 'material extension of

my body' as a researcher: I often took them to St Lucia and elsewhere, as most of them do not have a car. Engaging in such day-to-day activities made me understand more fully the restrictions that they experience due to a lack of financial resources. I also used my car to visit the Park, generally the 'rewilded' Eastern and Western Shores sections but also Kosi Bay, which is located some 200 kilometres north of St Lucia. I joined a game drive with a tour operator in St Lucia as well.

In between the fieldtrips, I stayed at the QwaQwa Campus of the University of the Free State in Phuthaditjhaba – a bit more than 500 kilometres west of St Lucia – where Dr Hansen teaches at the Geography Department. I discussed my findings with Dr Hansen regularly, but primarily during these in-between periods. I did not present my research at the Department, but SAIIA organised a meeting on 'rewilding' in Cape Town after my last fieldtrip. A panel consisting of Dr Jackie Sunde and doctoral candidate Philile Mbatha (both based at the University of Cape Town), and Dr Cousins commented on my talk. They have all done substantial work within or around the iSWP. In March 2017, I also spoke at Wageningen University (WUR) to which Dr Bram Büscher and Dr Stasja Koot invited me. I met Dr Büscher and Dr Koot during a fieldtrip at the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, which is situated some fifty kilometres inland from St Lucia. The trip was organised by Dr Adrian Nel of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and meant to gather researchers in the area, including Dr Hansen, doctoral candidates Jasper Finkeldey (University of Essex) and Lerato Thakholi (WUR), and master's student Iris van der Wiel (WUR). The insights on 'communities' and conservation that I gained during this trip were very helpful to contextualise the situation at the iSWP.

4.3 Information gathering and usage

During interviews and participant observations, I almost always took notes. I found this helpful, as I could not always listen to the recorded material that I had gathered while being in the field. I only began to transcribe and analyse recorded

interviews after I had left. Not everyone was comfortable with recording. Some, particularly elderly land claimants, were suspicious of it and did not want to be recorded. I only took notes in such instances. (Because I cannot speak *isiZulu* and none of these claimants spoke English, I had enough time to write down the translated answers.) When I met with these elderly land claimants, the interviews were beneficial to my translator-and-mediator, too. As the leader of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents he hoped to get some information from the claimants that could help to better articulate the Committee's concerns to relevant institutions. I observed their conversations. Although I could not understand what they were saying, I picked up on topics and their body languages 'spoke' as well. Assistance from iSimangaliso to contact land claimants never materialised; hence, it would have been difficult to get in touch with them without the significant assistance of some individuals with whom I established good relationships in the field. I not only shared my reflections with those people, but also with the friends that I made in St Lucia. They in turn put me in touch with informants who explained to me more fully the 'conservation-side' of things. I thereby gained a good understanding of St Lucia's fisher identity, how the fishermen look at iSimangaliso, and the socio-political changes over time since the Park's establishment as a WHS. This resulted in interesting new insights about iSimangaliso as an ANC-led government institution.

From my engagements in the field, I learned about the work of Dr Angela Impey (SOAS, University of London). She conducted an ethnomusicological research project upon request by the Dukuduku Development and Tourism Association in 2000 – soon after the establishment of the iSWP as a WHS. It aimed to stimulate community empowerment and environmental stewardship through discussing and documenting local knowledge system on the environment “in a context where these systems may no longer be learned through apprenticeships or oral tradition, due to geographic displacement and rapid socio-economic transformation” (Impey 2002, 10). I contacted Dr Impey about the project and she shared with me the cultural heritage archive that she initiated at a local high school. I read and

extensively reflected on the interviews that learners conducted with community elders and *izangomas*. It has greatly benefited my understanding of current and past nature-society relationships in the Greater Dukuduku area. I discuss the project and its outcomes more extensively in the case study. The next chapter also significantly builds upon Walker's important and detailed description of the (history of the) Bhangazi land claim in *Landmarked* (2008c) and other publications.

Although I use discretion with regard to people's identities and seek to maintain their anonymity, some of them will unavoidably be recognisable. Everyone in the area knows the leader of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents and the *induna* of Khula Village – let alone iSimangaliso's CEO. The discourses, ideas and rumours that the case study draws upon often concern well-known people or those in powerful positions. Achieving privacy is then impossible.

5. Case study

My initial focus on indigenous communities and how these relate to ‘nature’ proved to be problematic in case of the EWS. The Bhangazi people were geographically scattered after they were removed in different phases from the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia. In the post-apartheid era, they did not receive alternative land from which they could build their identity as dispossessed people. Bhangazi claimant leader Phineas Mbuyazi told former RLCC Walker in 2003:

“What would really end the suffering, what would really make my spirit rejoice, is if we could get a place to stay that is ours – to know that the place where I stay, that that is my place. I have heard on the radio that some people have got their land back. But for us, there is not that light.”
(as quoted in Walker 2008c, loc. 1822-4)

As the time in between the land dispossessions and desired ‘return’ to the shores covered multiple decades, and landscapes and cultures continuously change, Walker (2008c, loc. 1827-8) argues that Mbuyazi “lost a way of life through the land that was never replaced – a way of life that [...] could no longer be restored in 1999 in its totality in the manner that he sought”. As regards the provision of alternative (farming) lands, the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) promised to assist claimants with buying those from their financial compensations, but

“[t]hat undertaking was not pursued aggressively immediately after the settlement was signed and with time it faded away, as [the Regional Land Claims] Commission and DLA staff close to the process moved on and the beneficiaries who had chosen this option spent their compensation money on other household expenditure instead.” (Walker 2008c, loc. 1784-7).

Hence, Mbuyazi (as quoted in Walker 2008c, loc. 1824-5) asked: “And they say we must develop ourselves. How are we going to develop ourselves and where?”

The representation of partial realities in this case study indicates that the marginalisation of indigenous people does not necessarily end after some kind of restitution has taken place, although the achievements of the RLCC, iSimangaliso and others should be acknowledged. I seek to present a nuanced and constructive account of the way wherein the ‘wonder’ (*isimangaliso* in *isiZulu*) has been politico-economically constructed in the post-apartheid era and how (children of) land claimants are currently dwelling in the Greater Dukuduku area under *Inkosi* Mkhwanazi and his subordinate *izindunas*.

5.1 Socio-ecological changes

Mbuyazi is the *isibongo* (‘clan name’) of the Bhangazi people. According to Phineas Mbuyazi, the Bhangazi people had been occupying the shores independently of Zulu governance systems for two hundred years before being removed by the apartheid government. “In 1879, in the aftermath of the Anglo-Zulu War”, writes Walker (*Ibid.*, loc. 1449-50),

“the British divided the defeated Zulu kingdom into 13 nominally independent chiefdoms, with the southern portions of Lake St Lucia and the Eastern Shores allocated (temporarily) to the once-powerful Somkhele (Mpukonyoni) chiefdom to the west.”

As a consequence, the Bhangazi people became “unbeknown to themselves and along with many others, squatters on their own land” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1453-4). Seventy years later, tells Mbuyazi, there was a “change in the system” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1486-95). The Bhangazi people had always regarded themselves as “just Mbuyazi” but their last leader Lokothwayo became the first Mbuyazi *inkosi* to identify as Zulu (*Ibid.*). Similar identity changes occurred elsewhere around the current iSWP²³,

²³ Dingani Mthethwa (2008) and David Webster (1986) present the case of the Thonga people of Kosi Bay, some 200 kilometres from St Lucia on the Mozambican border. After the ANC won the elections in 1994 and announced the establishment of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) to encourage tourism in northern KZN, various groups re-invented their Thonga heritages in the hope of gaining something from the LSDI. According to Dingani Mthethwa (2008, 50, emphasis added), “[m]any so-called isiZulu-speaking inhabitants of Kosi Bay *still* regard

which clearly refer to the incorporation of Zulu chiefs into the apartheid state through among others the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. The system of segregation was intellectually justified as the separate development of Africans in homelands²⁴ under some “real or illusionary” autonomy of chiefs (Fay 2012, 288). After the Bhangazi people were removed from their lands, they had to *khonza* (‘pay respect to’) neighbouring *amakhosi*: “Most people ended up in the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority; some moved illegally into the Dukuduku state forest²⁵” (Walker 2008c, loc. 1527-8).

The eastern shores of Lake St Lucia have moved from being partially covered by commercial pine trees to a ‘rewilded’ PA that is ‘freed’ of indigenous communities. The latter statement derives from an article by Spiegel – who ‘walked the land’ with RLCC Walker – wherein he (2004, 7) surmises

“whether the process of afforestation [that the Department of Forestry] instituted [during apartheid] was not itself a form of colonial intervention intended, albeit probably tacitly, not only to clear the land but also cleanse it of its indigenous human presence. It is moot, of course, whether one can ever find evidence to support such a surmise about motivations.”

Today, the Eastern Shores is part of larger socio-economic constellation that seeks to redress past racial injustices, for example through the Lubombo Spatial

themselves as Thonga people living in Maputaland, who owe their allegiance to area clans rather than to the Zulu king”. Twenty years earlier, when the apartheid government used Zulu tribal authorities to control homelands, Webster (1986, 612) mentioned that “I [...] have reservations about calling the people of the region Thonga, and Tembe-Thonga, as the majority no longer accept this appellation themselves”. They rather identified as Zulu (*Ibid.*, 628).

²⁴ Homelands, also called ‘Bantustans’, were areas that the apartheid government designated for black occupation.

²⁵ The history of the Dukuduku Forest is highly controversial. Conservation is very sensitive and got paired with a lot of violence in the past. People were living deep inside the bush – not close to the road – to hide from the government (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017). The people of Dukuduku “did not want to be under [*Inkosi*] Mkhwanazi. They wanted to be by themselves, like a tractor without a driver. But the Mkhwanazi were wanting to push themselves into owning the Dukuduku people” (#29, Khula Village, 25 January 2017). Today, the Dukuduku Forest ‘belongs’ to Mkhwanazi’s sphere of influence (#33, Khula Village, 18 January 2017).

Development Initiative (LSDI). Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) were designed by the ANC-led government in the late 1990s to address “uneven development by attracting external investment to a number of development ‘nodes’, most situated within the former homelands” (Fay 2012, 293). Significant in the implementation of the LSDI was iSimangaliso’s CEO, as noted by Walker (2008c, loc. 3352-3). She (*Ibid.*) adds that “[h]is father [...] was a prominent member of the Campaign for St Lucia”. Some stories around the LSDI emphasise the long-term view for the Park that the CEO’s late father had by linking it to Swaziland and Mozambique. The idea was allegedly to make the iSWP greater than the Kruger National Park (KNP) (#30, St Lucia, 23 December 2016).²⁶ Small-scale fishing, foraging, and agricultural practices inside the park became strictly proscribed (Impey 2002, 12), except for the sustainable harvesting of for example *ncema* grass, which is open to the public at large and season-bound (#53 & #54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017). Six months after the agreements were signed, the Bhangazi people “came back to the commission to demand their ancestral land rights” (Walker 2008c, loc. 1422). This remains a sensitive issue to which I return later.

5.2 Current challenges

What should be remembered, says iSimangaliso’s Park Operations Director (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017), is that iSimangaliso is “a government entity that is here to implement government legislations”. These are steered towards protecting World Heritage values, optimising tourism, creating jobs and improving service delivery in neighbouring communities (#53, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017). To achieve those goals, it is arguably most effective to work closely with the traditional leadership rather than elected councillors or the Bhangazi Trust with its geographically scattered constituency.

²⁶ While discussing the potential meaning of ‘spiritual’ rewilding with a tour guide, he (#1, St Lucia, 13 December 2016) points out that it is now difficult to take time for the ‘little things’ in the Park. “You are selling a product”, he explains, “that needs to comply to a certain setting”. At the iSWP, people generally do not stay for a long time and just “wanna do a bit of the park and stuff” (#1, St Lucia, 13 December 2016). More time can be taken at the KNP, which could be beneficial for tourists’ reconnection with ‘nature’ (#1, St Lucia, 13 December 2016).

Derick Fay (2012, 291) points out that neoliberal austerity measures under the previous President Thabo Mbeki have “weakened other organs of the state and thereby facilitated the resurgence of traditional authorities”. Service delivery by local municipalities is poor in most of (rural) South Africa. Hence, “in many areas headmen and chiefs remained the most visible and effective agents on the ground” (*Ibid.*).

According to Fay (2012), the government’s tendency to work with Tribal Authorities is also rooted in party politics. He points out that SDIs are strategies to secure the ANC’s hold on KZN wherein the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is typically dominant. Other means that the ANC deploys to gain the favour of chiefs (*amakhosi*, singular: *inkosi*) and *izinduna* include the adoption of controversial pieces of legislation like the Communal Land Rights Act (CLARA), which entrenches the power of hereditary and exclusively male traditional authorities. This does not only raise questions in terms of democracy (Ntsebeza 2005), but also in relation to the position of indigenous communities like the Bhangazi people. Although they never received (alternative) land from which they could (re)build their identity as the Mbuyazi tribe, it is useful to consider how precarious their situation would have remained with reference to the Makuleke case at the KNP. Walker (2008c, loc. 1424-5) points out that unlike the Bhangazi community, “the Makuleke people had been resettled as a group on alternative land (albeit land that was far smaller than that from which they had been moved)”. Under CLARA, the nearby traditional authority would be “entitled to exercise the rights of a land administration committee for the area concerned, including the land occupied by the Makuleke community” (*Ibid.*). In that case, their status would have been²⁷ similar to that of the Bhangazi people who today reside in an area that is controlled by the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority. (A very important difference remains that many Bhangazi people *do not* live in this area; hence, the ‘community’ is highly fragmented.)

²⁷ CLARA was deemed unconstitutional in 2009 (Fay 2012, 299).

Some elderly Bhangazi claimants (#22, #23 & #24, Khula Village, 15 December 2016) are frustrated about the autocratic leadership of the *induna* of Khula Village. They team up with the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents, despite intense feelings of fear. The *induna* is described as a strong one that “uses and abuses his powers to those who do not support him” (#29, Khula Village, 25 January 2017). People say that iSimangaliso takes this *induna* to meetings and conferences like People and Parks, where the chairperson of the Bhangazi Trust (which represents the Bhangazi ‘community’) is supposed to go. Walker (2008c, loc. 1799-1800) points out that “[t]here is constant scope for suspicions and jealousies to fester, including among those outside the officially recognised Bhangazi fold”. One elderly Bhangazi claimant (#22, Khula Village, 21 January 2017) confirms that negotiations with iSimangaliso were boycotted “to stop the sons of *Inkosi Mkhwanazi*”. Hence, conflicts between the strong Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority and the much weaker and less organised Bhangazi claimants remain. The intensity of these land conflicts in combination with the Bhangazi community’s fragmented nature worked against the restitution of legal ownership on the Eastern Shores (Walker 2008c, loc. 1774-5). Besides that,

“claimants such as Phineas Mbuyazi who were most strongly invested in the restoration of their land were [...] not interested in symbolic ownership in law. If they could not return to the Eastern Shores, they wanted alternative land instead.” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1776-6)

5.3 Cultural heritage

The first time that I met with the leader of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents (#5, Khula Village, 09 December 2016), who I then got to know as a cultural tour guide (‘storyteller’) and *inyanga*, he told me:

Z: There was a person there [at Lake Bhangazi]. He was a powerful *inyanga* in a place that is now called Cape Vidal. His name is Lokothwayo Mbuyazi. That man ... People who knew him say that he would ride a hippo.

[silence]

E: Really?

[silence]

Z: Yah. He rode a hippo. He was powerful. He had a very powerful *muti*.

E: Do you think that these kinds of stories ... Do they still underlie the culture of the Bhangazi people here?

Z: I think all that was lost in Bhangazi. They lost it in Bhangazi. I think when the government forced them to move out of that place, back in the 1970s, they got scattered. You see? That atmosphere of Bhangazi, they left it behind.

E: But surely ... There are still leftovers of it?

Z: Yah. There are so many of them ... I'll be talking on Saturday to old ladies. They are very old ... I need some information about the history of the area. I'll be talking to those people, because they have told me some stories about Lokothwayo. Many stories about people who used to live here.

E: Could I come with you?

[silence]

Z: You wanna learn?

E: Yes. I wanna learn.

[...]

Z: There are so many stories that you will hear, because the history that you read on the Internet is not true.

He is thereby referring to the telling of the Bhangazi people's history by *Inkosi Mkhwanazi*. Upon asking an elderly Bhangazi claimant (#23, Khula Village, 15 December 2016) if she could tell me about the meaning of the earth, the trees, the plants and the animals to her, she tells:

“The older Mbuyazi [Lokothwayo] understood nature better. He was a healer. Previously they [the healers] got their things by themselves. Now they can't go. In that time, there was no poverty. Trees, fruits ... everything was there. Much has been lost because of the loss of land.

Every family has its own secrets about a certain tree. But now new generations cannot learn about it. We've got nothing written down. It's all in our head."

She suggests that researchers document the history of the Bhangazi people for future generations:

"They should tape-record it, write it down. After they have done that, they should keep it in houses [of the interviewed families]. It cannot be kept with [the *induna*]. [The *induna*] is not from here."

The documentation project of Dr Impey did not specifically focus on the Bhangazi people – and thus did not address different tellings of their history – but indigenous people in the Greater Dukuduku area²⁸ more generally. The aims of the project were:

1. "to examine the interdependencies between symbolic practices and natural resource management, and
2. to explore ways in which deep-rooted cultural wisdoms can be recast to generate an organising paradigm for the sustainable custodianship of the environment, and
3. herein empower the communities to participate more equitably in the development of the region." (Impey 2002, 9)

Impey was asked by the Dukuduku Development and Tourism Association²⁹ to conduct a musical survey that could inform the development of cultural and eco-tourism initiatives. She (*Ibid.*, 12) was initially sceptical towards the idea, as

²⁸ According to Impey (2002, 9-10), "not all residents can claim ancestral connection with Dukuduku [...]. Some attempted to escape violence [between supporters of the ANC and the IFP in the run up to and aftermath of the first democratic elections in 1994] from other areas of the province; some sought land, employment or other lifestyle opportunities; a small number are immigrants from Mozambique".

²⁹ Today, the Association is known as the Simunye Association, which is supposedly headed by a cultural tourism NGO, but in practice the *induna* is dictating what tourism development in the area should be (personal observations).

“tourism would inevitably benefit some (the gate-keepers, those with resources, men) and exclude others (the poor, women, the aged)”. Moreover and similarly to Koot (2017), she (2002, 12) notes:

“[t]he construction of a cultural spectacle based on a fabricated, historicised cultural image would not assist in the establishment of a community identity, which in reality is based on diversity and difference. Nor would such an exercise assist people in negotiating the complex dialectic between "traditional" and "modern", which feature as concurrent facets of their contemporary lives and identities.”

She (*Ibid.*, 13) nonetheless took on the task,

“[g]iven that there are so few economic alternatives for the communities in the region, and that Nature Conservation bodies, NGOs and the corporate sector were resolute in their decision to develop partnerships with communities around tourism and tourism-related activities”.

As anticipated, two cultural tourism ventures were established “by individuals who have a privileged status in the community” (*Ibid.*, 21) – one being the *induna*. Impey recruited learners from the local high school for conducting interviews with community elders (*Ibid.*, 13). Soon after starting, they were directed to *izangoma*, “who operate as the essential custodians of information about the environment, linking people to landscape through their knowledge of medicinal plants, their spiritual connectedness and ritual action” (*Ibid.*, 19). One of the former student-interviewers (#27) took me to a *sangoma* (#28) who she interviewed for the project. The *sangoma*, also a small-scale farmer, tells that the soil has been infected by Western pesticides and aeroplanes flying over (Dukuduku Forest, 21 December 2016). How does that relate to the work of iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo? Is she happy about their protection of the environment?

#27: [She says that] I don't know ... I've never gone and sit with them as to how do they protect it.

Q: She has never been there? In the Park?

#27: [asks in *isiZulu*]

#28: uh uh

#27: No

#28: [elaborates in *isiZulu*]

#27: [She says that] we can't get inside, because we are told there are animals. I am a traditional healer. I used to extract some of the herbs that I needed from that side of the game reserve but now they've put a fence. I can't go inside and get those herbs.

Q: Is that a problem to her? Can she find it somewhere else?

#27: [asks in *isiZulu*]

#28: [replies in *isiZulu*]

#27: Then she'll have to travel far north. That is about 250 kilometres from here.

Q: How does that affect her work as a traditional healer?

#27: [She says that] it is hurting me. If I want to help someone, I could get the medication faster if it was here, closer.

#27: [She asks you] who built the iSimangaliso thing? Who created the iSimangaliso thing?

Q: What? The government?

#27: She doesn't even know that it was the government. She is telling it like it is [laughs]

#27: [She says that] I do have permits to go and harvest. In the Park.

Q: Why doesn't she use them?

#27: [She says that] I haven't gone there, because I still have my herbs.³⁰
(Dukuduku Forest, 21 December 2016)

According to the *sangoma* (#28, Dukuduku Forest, 21 December 2016, translated by #27), "society has lost direction".

³⁰ It would be interesting to explore how different traditional healers understand harvesting and using *imithi* ('medicines'). Today, there are big markets that sell *imithi*, which challenges the arguments of Sahlins (1972) and Bird-David (1992) concerning 'want not, lack not'.

Q: How can we get it back?

#28: Ah! [answers in *isiZulu*]

#27: [She says that] now you are telling me that there is government, before there was no government. People now don't sit down. Even when an elderly person comes, they'll sit on top and not sit down. If you want to get things from the earth, they arrest you. God created this grass and he said: 'This is yours.' *Everything* now belongs to government. Why would we be happy with the government? She would like to know where does this government come from? Who is refusing us with all these things?³¹

The *sangoma* tells that she hears people saying that they are saving the environment, "but they are saving the environment that they don't understand"³² (translated by #27). She says:

"They don't know how we as humans originate. When they tell these stories, they don't go to the Geist or the origin of where whatever

³¹ A young member of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents (#10, Khula Village, 19 December 2016) exclaims that: "iSimangaliso is God. Those who create the rules, legislation, they think they're God. But they're not God!"

³² The conflict between indigenous and scientific knowledge also plays out at Futululu, a protected indigenous forest on the southern edges of the Dukuduku Forest. Last year a group of people, including two *izinyanga* wanted to go into the forest. As told by the law enforcer of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (#41, Futululu, 20 January 2017), they said: "There is a tree ... it's a mystery though!" I had heard about that tree from the *inyanga* (#5) with whom I spoke most. I asked: "Is it the tree that gravitates people?" "Yes!" answered the law enforcer. He laughs and tells: "We had to go with them and gave them security but only at a later stage when we started seeing the thing getting serious ...". His colleague (#40) interrupts and adds: "There were more people coming." The law enforcer (#41) continues: "And you'll find very old people who say they were living in this forest. They said: 'Hey, you know, there is this tree here, we want to find it, we'll pay for the bark'. We never ... that's why I first said it was a mystery, because we've ... it [the tree] was never seen." The elderly and *izinyanga* insisted that it was there. I asked: "So eventually, you did let them in?" They did not. The law enforcer says: "We told them, no guys, *be realistic here*. This thing ... It wasn't easy to say that because you know if a person believes that thing ... We tried to explain, but nah ... we walk this forest like ... no other time but we've never encountered [it]." The story reminded me of an article by Martin Porr and Hannah Rachel Bell (2012) wherein 'rock art' is criticised by Australian indigenous people who say that it is not *art* but *living images*. These examples indicate important ontological conflicts in dealing with indigenous peoples about 'what exists', and epistemological ones: 'what can we know about it?'

information they're telling comes from. They take it light" (translated by #27).

"People of today don't have respect", she continues (translated by #27).

#28: [tells a story in *isiZulu*]

#27: When it's raining and there is ... you know those whitish small stones? When there is thunderstorms? What do you call that?

Q: Hail?

#27: Yes. They call that by name. She did ask me the name: 'What do you call it?' And I said: 'it's *isichotho*' ['hail' in *isiZulu*]. And she said: 'No! You don't say that!' It is called *amantombazana*, meaning 'girls'. People in the olden days used to foresee that it's coming. They [the girls] kill. If they come, when they are heavy and they find crops like mealies, they will make all the leaves fall off until only the stem is left. ... You know the fire? Ashes. People in the olden days when they see that the hail is coming, they will take ash from where they prepare the fire and they'll throw it around the yard, saying: 'Go away, girls! Go away, girls! We've seen you!' And then they wouldn't come heavily.

Q: Why is it so important to not call them by name?

#27: [She says that] I don't know. Old people used to tell us to do that. A sign of respect.

Such examples support Bird-David's argument that 'indigenous people' view nature as "a set of agencies simultaneously natural and human-like" (Bird-David 1992, 29). These social meanings, practices and ideas are in case of Dukuduku primarily sustained – for as far as possible given the tightly controlled access to land and natural resources and other challenges that are posed by Western activities like intensive farming – by (Bhangazi) elders, *izangoma* and *izinyanga*.

5.3 Whose land of dreams³³?

Based on shared feelings of injustice, young *izinyanga* like the leader of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents are trying to reinvigorate the discussion on ancestral rights to land and natural resources. According to the Committee's leader (#5, Khula Village, 09 December 2016), iSimangaliso

“never bothered to study the life of the [Bhangazi] people and why the environment was so important to them, but I think they devised their methods and strategies based on their assumptions of how the people relate to the environment and that caused many problems.”

It is important to be aware that this representation of the Bhangazi people builds on the perspectives of ‘fatalists’ like Phineas Mbuyazi. According to the Park Operations Director (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017),

“the way in which protected areas were established in South Africa and the model over which the government is using settled land has got its own influence [on] the way people relate to protected areas, in general, not only iSimangaliso. So you have a situation where if you ask a 95-year old – I’m just making it up, I don’t do ask him about the park – he just cries first and you wait for him to finish crying and he says: ‘Well the truck [of the apartheid government] picked us up there around three o’clock and then drop us here before this road was built and they told us never to set our foot back ... my father had 100 cattle which were never loaded in the truck with us. And as we were leaving, the truck was leaving with us, we saw our home being burnt down.’ And *that’s* ... if he shares that with his kids and when the settlement is about to come people were ... I’m not blaming colleagues who are doing it but I think there was an overpromising of what benefits tourism can give and how much time do you need and how many people can benefit from it, sustainable as is ... and now you have 20 000 people looking up this one marula tree hoping to get 10 000 fruits each and

³³ The title refers to Walker’s chapter on the history of the Bhangazi land claim in *Landmarked* (2008c): Land of dreams: claiming the Eastern Shores of Lake St Lucia’.

it's not possible ... in some cases it will never be possible ... and people begin to think: if we go back to our areas, we will probably be able to survive, or our lives will be better ... we don't believe that.”

Of course, the lack of *tourism* opportunities for the older generation or the *izangoma* and *izinyanga* is not what they are unhappy about. Yet, the argument of the Park Operations Director seemingly stands for younger *izinyanga* like the leader of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents. He namely also works as a cultural tour guide in Khula Village, where his venture needs to compete with that of the *induna* who is trying to – as people say – push everything into his own business. Hence, the traditional leadership is individualist or entrepreneurial, besides being hierarchical, with reference to Douglas' cultural theory. Having opposing ideas about social justice and going against the status quo, the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents consists of dissidents that are seeking to represent the viewpoints of fatalists like the Bhangazi elders. Furthermore, the children of Bhangazi claimants belong to the individualist or entrepreneurial bias. According to Walker (2008c, loc. 1802-5), they are “no longer unambiguously ‘people of the sea’”:

“In the new milieu of business plans, public-private partnerships and project management within which they must operate, they tend to regard the Heritage Site more as an opportunity for cultural tourism and lodge development than a private shrine to their ancestors and the way of life that shape a man like Phineas Mbuyazi.”

In trying to overcome past racial injustices as an ANC-led government institution – which aims to ‘benefit’ many more people than the Bhangazi claimants alone – iSimangaliso could be described as egalitarian. I add something to this perspective in the final reflections, which I think is important but does not fit into the discussion here. Many other groups that iSimangaliso needs to take into consideration in setting up its conservation and development programmes are not included here as well. These stretch into the (inter)national sphere. On the local

level, KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife, tour operators, St Lucia residents, tourists and democratically elected ward councillors are particularly missing. In this paragraph, I focus on the contemporary conflict between children of land claimants and the traditional leadership, which both want a stake in the development of the Park.

In the late 1970s Phineas Mbuyazi had a dream wherein his last *Inkosi* Lokothwayo – in the Bhangazi people’s telling of their history³⁴ – “appeared before him and instructed him to lead the struggle to restore his people’s land” (*Ibid.*, loc. 1545). Walker (*Ibid.*, loc. 1549-50) tells that “Lokothwayo continued to haunt Mbuyazi’s dreams and stoke his determination”. According to Mbuyazi (as quoted in Walker 2008c, loc. 1549-50), “[t]here were times when I would get fed up and want to stop, but Lokothwayo would come to me and say, ‘Who said you could stop?’” Mbuyazi’s struggle for his people’s land eventually resulted in a settlement that took the form of a financial compensation, certain other ‘benefits’ and the establishment of a Heritage Site on the Eastern Shores. In 2008 iSimangaliso reported to Walker (*Ibid.*, loc. 1794-5) that plans for the latter were “finally coming to fruition”:

“[T]his is a major infrastructural project involving the development of a cultural centre, museum and tourist accommodation, which has been sent out to tender, along with the redevelopment of the adjacent Cape Vidal tourism node. The [iSimangaliso] Authority sees this as promising a substantial return to the Bhangazi Community Trust over time.”

It has not been realised to date. The Park Operations Director (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017) comments that the “proper development” is one of the most difficult aspects in the relationship between ‘communities’ and the Park. The

³⁴ In the Mkhwanazi version all Bhangazi leaders are described as *izinduna* of the Mpukonyoni *amakhosi* (Walker 2008c, loc. 3303-7).

Heritage Site is a project that “we need to take time [for] before we realise [it]” (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017). Such big projects need

“authorisations ... it takes two years and so on, finding the investors and finding money³⁵ to build and getting the operator, transferring skills from the operator to the rightful owners or land owners or claimants ... that process is quite long because it’s not an in-house process. But then, people are hungry today and impatience then kicks in on those issues and causes that animosity in meetings.” (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017)

Meanwhile, the *induna* of Khula Village (#33, Khula Village, 12 January 2017, emphasis added), also had a dream about the Eastern Shores:

I thought this is *our land, our lake, our estuary*. And we don’t have a boat there [for tourism]. That is wrong. So I had this dream in 1997. In 1999 I wrote my first proposal. It was to KZN Wildlife, or no, also iSimangaliso by that time. But they declined. Then I put in 2002. That failed again. In 2009 I succeeded. It was a racist thing. ISimangaliso said that it would be bad for the people in St Lucia but that is not true. Then later they realised that: no, *black people*, they must do something there. It’s now been six years that we have the boats. We have two now.

Q: Why do you think it is so difficult to get the concession for the boat?

A: Those concessions are only issued every five years. It is difficult. I even don’t know about the re-tendering. I hope that we pass. There have been no complaints about us doing wrong things. But maybe iSimangaliso could say: ‘You can have more boats.’ It would be good for the community, for the cash flow, how much money you have. The relationship with

³⁵ According to the son of one Bhangazi claimant (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017), “I think now ten twelve years they’ve been announcing that. They [the Trust] were talking about billions.” He adds: “They said they want a bank. If you put a billion in a bank ... for the last ten years. How much money now? The bank can use that money. How much interest? On yourself? On that billion?” These expressions of frustration on the Trust’s functioning indicate how challenging it is to manage “substantial communal funds in the midst of poverty” (Walker 2008c, loc. 1799-1800). As mentioned before, “[t]here is constant scope for suspicions and jealousies to fester” (*Ibid.*).

iSimangaliso is much better. The door is open. Now it's working, not the same as before. Life has changed.

Life has changed for the Bhangazi claimants as well. There are for example those who received a bursary from iSimangaliso. I spoke with one of them who works as a tour guide in St Lucia:

Q: How did you get to do what you're doing now?

A: That's a long story. I did nature conservation at school. Then first, I worked in Richards Bay. But you know Cape Vidal? Where the Bhangazi used to live? Yes that land claim ... my parents are part of that one. Back then it was still the GSLWP [Greater St Lucia Wetland Park]. The World Heritage Site. The Bhangazi people were forcefully removed. Later when they came back to this area, problems arose [with the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority]. Mandela came along. The children of the land claimants can apply for bursaries and training. I decided to do that. [...] Forty land claimant children from all the settled land claims from Somkhele [some 45 kilometres inland of St Lucia] up until Kosi Bay were selected. There was a mentoring programme in which you were working in different places. It was a rotating system. But [my current boss] kept me until the rotating was finished. Then he offered me a job. (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017)

As a point of constructive feedback to iSimangaliso, he says that

“they do like to see us somewhere. They do offer trainings. They are trying to make sure that they [the children of the land claimants] will be proud. That there is someone who is doing it. ... His parents, they've been living in the area around about this year. He's a part of the land claimants but it's only the follow up they don't do. They spend a lot of money. I remember there were a lot of people they've been trained. They say the money [is] from the Belgium government but you take someone and put in a training and after training ... you don't check up whether that person has got a job

or not. The money that is spent there is so much for one person to educate someone. It's end up too much. But to do a follow up to see: okay whatever the plant is growing or not. They plant it and leave it there. ... That's the other thing of which I can say where they lack but for them I know that they are trying by all means. As now the new concession law they were saying [that] they want to take like ... 50 to 75 percent of the black people ... to run the business inside the park of which those also are the things that you see it's not like they don't think for the land claimer they want to see them somewhere ... ja they want to see them somewhere."

It should once again be remembered that iSimangaliso is an ANC-led government institution. The 'concession law' refers to the government's Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy, which

"sets scorecards and codes of good practice for both the private and the state sector to reduce racialised inequalities in the economy, shift asset ownership to black people and increase black representation in the higher echelons of the economy" (Walker 2008c, loc. 3178-80)

During his training, the land claimant's son (#45) began a business with some friends. He (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017) tells that

"African or black people are not that much in tourism. It's something that's new for us but I had that idea or that question in my mind: why a lot of the white people who were there [for example in St Lucia] and do their business in tourism industry use the African names? Look at the businesses. Who own them, which name they use? It's the African names. It's to ... blind you overseas!"

So, they wanted to make the company "original". They initially did informative talks on tourism and global warming at schools, sometimes mentioning the

Crocodile Centre that is located next to the Bhangazi gates to the Eastern Shores (ES) of the iSWP. They would tell the children that

“you can come and experience what we’re talking about. We take them to Croc Centre. We take them to the first section [of the ES] where we do self-guided walk. After that, we take them to the beach and also our trip it ended at the beach.”

While he was already working for the St Lucia tour operation, he continued doing the school trips. However, when the five-year period for concessions to the iSWP was coming to an end – and concessions would be redistributed – “our company was shut”. This happened after his boss offered him a share in the St Lucia business, but “nothing was written black and white” (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017). The undesired consequence of BEE is that established (white) businesses create partnerships with African people to increase their status and get the concessions. According to the guide (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017),

“[t]o get something in government you must work BEE status, so a lot of people now, they [are] using us as we don’t understand the [tourism] industry and we don’t understand the paper work. I came from a rural area ... never done anything like that. You experience on the industry. You’ll know that ... to use that road [for which one needs a concession that requires a ‘good’ BEE status] ... you must be my partner. You use that advantage ... that I don’t know how it works. You say: ‘Okay we can be partners.’ ... and you know that you’re not like you want me to benefit. You want me to be your partner in your sake of beneficiary not for me.”

As regards ‘benefits’ from the Park, I ask him about the role of the *induna*. His eyebrows turn into a frown. He is now irritated: “[The *induna*]? Look. How many concession[s] they do have? For iSimangaliso? ... If I can ask? ... For your research?” I do not reply. He answers:

“Go and research! What he owns ... Sometimes to be in power, is not me ... you must be lazy. You must be ... active to work, but you mustn’t work by yourself, work with people around! Let them get the information. If they [the *induna* and those who are close to him] hear that there is some work, it’s available for KZN [Wildlife] or for iSimangaliso, I have to take only my family to pull them in, but what about other families? They were there! There were a lot of people that have been living in the area there, but none of them ... *they are not existing anymore. It’s like they’ve never been there!*”³⁶

This reveals the immense challenges that derive from the ‘proper development’ that has not yet ensued through negotiations with the Bhangazi Trust. It should critically be remembered that these were described by the elderly Bhangazi claimant (#22, Khula Village, 21 January 2017) as boycotted “to stop the sons of *Inkosi Mkhwanazi*”. The government’s little nuanced focus on ‘African people’ thus provides a window of opportunity to those who are more powerful.

The Park Operations Director shared a thought that could be worth considering more seriously. In relation to those who want to go ‘back’ to their lands – because they, speaking now *only* about members of the Bhangazi community, have been unable to ‘benefit’ otherwise – he (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017) says

“[i]f conservation was ... or ecosystem could rehabilitate quickly we could just have an area, 10 000 hectares, and say guys: ‘Just do what you think should be done and if it doesn’t work then fix it.’ But unfortunately you can’t do that because the rehabilitation of the Park would be an issue.”

³⁶ This feeds into another issue, which is recognised by Walker (2008c, loc. 1790-1): “Amid rumbles of discontent over allegations of exclusion and opportunities missed or denied, the list of names identified through the Commission’s research and negotiations phase – my ‘good enough’ list – was scrutinised again and again”.

This reminds of Flora Lu Holt's *Catch-22 of Conservation* (2005). Where is this assumption coming from that land claimants want to *use* and *exhaust* the PA – the land of *their* forefathers? Is this really a conservation issue – or is it political? In the words of a law enforcer at an indigenous forest on the southern edges of Dukuduku that has not (yet³⁷) been incorporated into the iSWP (#41, Futululu, 20 January 2017, emphasis added),

“[t]here will always be conflicts between development and conservation [...] I believe some things are better left unpoliticised. You know? Things like conservation. They can politicise the other things but conservation, it should be left alone. And when development comes they should develop the place that's already been in use. Not go and try to develop a place where it's been conserved for like many many years and interfere with ... nah ... I don't know whether it's me being too much on the conservation side ... or if I'm being *unfair*.”

5.5 Social mobilisation

The ‘demands’ of the Greater Dukuduku Committee of Concerned Residents as regards customary use rights are situated in a broader socio-political context. People believe that iSimangaliso has failed to live up to its founding promises. These frustrations build on the ‘political fable’ that Walker (2005) criticises, wherein “white [conservationists in this case] and foreigners are villains, black South Africans are victims, and government (or an opposition party, or civil society activists) are heroes riding to the rescue” (Cousins 2016). According to Ben Cousins (*Ibid.*, emphasis added), “South Africa needs *fresh* ideas to make land reform a reality”. Meanwhile, “high, entrenched levels of poverty and unemployment in the region mean that the mining option retains a lurking, local appeal” (Walker 2005, 810). One young member of the Committee (#11, Khula

³⁷ Rumours about iSimangaliso's wish to take over Futululu have been spreading for years. It is currently being managed by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). According to a DAFF student fieldworker (#40, Futululu, 20 January 2017), “but now we can see the fence, it's all over”. The fencing is a topic of considerable contestation in the area, which feeds into debates on communal land in South Africa (see Cousins 2007).

Village, 19 December 2016) – who is not a land claimant’s son – puts it as follows:

“The way they [iSimangaliso] are protecting the environment ... they are making the environment to be number one priority and making human being to be number two, but it’s supposed to be human being number one and the environment number two, so the way they are protecting the environment is ... They don’t even want people around the village to live here. They want to put the fence all over this village. They want to take people to another place so that’s what people they don’t like ... That’s why they make the people break the fence. They get into the park. That is not allowed because of the iSimangaliso ... maybe if iSimangaliso can make the licence to get into the Park. There is season of things. Everything has got seasons ... so if they allow people to come inside by that season to take than thing that is old enough. Even long time ago our forefathers when they look at the environment to get meat, to hunt, they got season that they’re going to hunt, because they know that now springbok got children. They are breastfeeding them and now the children are old enough to hunt themselves, so they go and hunt the old springbok, not the younger ones. When that season’s closed, they stop to hunt until the environment grew up again. Maybe if iSimangaliso also can do that to the people and help people meet their demand. RBM when they got mining in Richards Bay, they helping people, put tar road, street light, build houses, build schools, libraries. If iSimangaliso can also do that to the village ... it’s good to do that. *It’s the thing that they promised before.*”

Because of these overpromises in the past, the frustration is directed to iSimangaliso rather than the government as a whole. “This is an area that lacks service delivery”, explains iSimangaliso’s Research and Development Manager (#53, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017), “the lack of service delivery from other departments [primarily the local municipality] affects our work”. According to the Park Operations Director (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017), iSimangaliso is now “more often being seen as this big blockade between the

community and their land”. He (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017) explains:

“[T]hat’s where the conflict sometimes stems from as far as some of the community members are concerned. ISimangaliso is stopping us from doing this and iSimangaliso is never viewed in a bigger picture of a government entity that is here to implement government legislations.”

Unfortunately, these legislations have been little successful in redressing past racial injustices (Cousins 2016):

“Partly unintentionally, partly by design, land reform has been captured by elites. The most powerful voices are those of traditional leaders, so-called ‘emerging’ black capitalist farmers (who often own other businesses), consultants, agri-business companies and white farmers.”

The situation is no different at the EWS. People are *toyi-toyi*-ing against the power of the Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority, but this is very difficult and (politically) sensitive to change. According to the Park Operations Director (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017, emphasis added):

#54: [W]e spent most of our time killing those fires, because you’ll always have a concerned group, against the structure that is already there. That is *legitimately* there.

Q: But is that your responsibility?

#54: It is not our responsibility but the problem is that ... eh ... if there are issues ... Let me give you an example. You have the municipality calling you and saying: ‘There is an application for a march and people are marching because they don’t know what the Park does.’ And you have so much that you know and in fact there is so much that the Park is doing but the legitimate structure to deal with it is the Trust and you go to them and you say: ‘But there is a Trust’. And they say: ‘We don’t know the Trust and we don’t acknowledge the Trust. In fact, the Trust has got no protected

area. You do have the protected area.’ And then you say: ‘But by law, we need to deal with the Trust and whatever we have, we must keep it to the Trust.’ And they say: ‘Well ... We don’t know. We don’t know anything from the Trust. The Trust never told us anything.’ That’s it. It’s not a problem but it becomes a problem. Because when there is a march action it gets directed to the Park ... not to the Trust.

Importantly, the marches are primarily directed against the Tribal Authority and not the (Bhangazi) Trust. This does not take away that there are significant issues as regards communication between the Trust and its fragmented constituency (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017). The son of one Bhangazi claimant tells: “Like those people [in the Trust] whatever news or whatever supposed to be delivered to those people that had been living in the area, they are the ones who hear it”, but the information does not reach the claimants. He suggests the establishment of a ‘youth league’:

“The last few years, I was saying to one of my friends: ‘Okay, I think we do have a [Bhangazi Trust] [but] look at the big party like ANC. There is ANC, big ANC, and the ANC Youth League. What about us!? Who [do] not have a youth league? For our land claim. For our forefathers. So whatever that we agreed with those people [iSimangaliso], the younger generation they can know. If they die, what was agreement? In which year?’”

6. Final reflections

Like the story of forced removals is too simple to dictate programmes that redress South Africa's history of racial injustices (Walker 2005, 810), the arguments of Sahlins (1972) and Bird-David (1992) are too general to apply to indigenous people today. More valuable is Douglas' cultural theory, which in case of the Mbuyazi tribe helps to understand the complex situation wherein

1. Bhangazi land claimants and their children are "no longer unambiguously people of the sea" (Walker 2008c, loc. 1802-5); and
2. new generations belong to the individualist or entrepreneurial bias to which the Mpukonyoni (Mkhwanazi) Tribal Authority also belongs, but
3. *Inkosi* Mkhwanazi and his subordinates are more powerful and organised ('hierarchical') than the children of land claimants;
4. hence, the marginalisation of indigenous people might not end after some kind of restitution has taken place.

6.1 Fatalism and (spiritual) 'rewilding'

Especially tragic are the stories of 'fatalists' like the Bhangazi elders who want to 'return' to 'their' lands, which do not exist anymore. In case of the *sangoma* (#28), she does not know what this 'wonder', *isimangaliso* or the government has ever done to help her.³⁸ In terms of (spiritual) 'rewilding', it is practically and politically unlikely that the discussion will shift to the reinvigoration of rights to land and natural resources for elders, *izinyanga* and *izangoma*. In the words of iSimangaliso's Park Operations Director (#54, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017), "as much as we can explore culturally and traditionally the way things used to be done [and] whether we can go back to that, the forces of life may not allow

³⁸ As the *sangoma* was telling us that she will not allow electricity at her house, her phone rang: "You see now", she said (#28, Dukuduku Forest, 21 December 2016, translated by #27), "I've also been civilised!"

and have not allowed us to do [so]”. Although I believe in line with Sahlins (1999) that there is no dichotomy between indigenous peoples’ social meanings, practices and ideas on the one hand and socio-economic development on the other, I agree with Agrawal (1995, 431) that indigenous peoples are likely fated to disappear “under the auspices of the modern nation-state and the international trade system”. Besides that, the ANC-led government and thereby the iSimangaliso Authority is more concerned with empowering *all* Africans – the majority of which belongs to the individualist or entrepreneurial bias – rather than specifically fatalists like the Bhangazi elders, *izangoma* and *izinyanga*. If their awe of ‘nature’ is heavily dependent on the way wherein they used to be living *with* the environment, I presume that it ceases to exist in the (near) future.

6.2 Hierarchy or democracy?

Discussions on ‘indigeneity’ are essentially about the politics of land. In South Africa, it is increasingly becoming clear that “restitution does not solve many socio-political, economic, psychological and ecological problems that cause and are caused by marginalisation” (Koot & Büscher, in preparation). Questions of who should today be seen as ‘indigenous’, why and what that should entail are becoming ever-pressing. Given that communal property associations (in case of the Makuleke people) and trusts (in case of the Bhangazi people) “remain poorly supported and are often dysfunctional” (Cousins 2016), could it be a *good* thing that iSimangaliso – as people are saying – works closely with the *Inkosi*? What does this mean for the reconstruction of the Bhangazi people’s sense of belonging and identity on the Eastern Shores? Will only their name at the gates remain? Twenty-three years after South Africa’s transition to democracy, these very important and complicated questions remain open.

Problematic in case of the iSWP is the hierarchical cultural bias that others (individualists and entrepreneurs, dissidents and fatalists) perceive iSimangaliso to embody. While the organisation itself identifies as a democratic government

institution that seeks to redress past racial injustices, stories like the one that follows are broadly shared in the Greater Dukuduku area:

“If you can ask people here: ‘What you know has iSimangaliso done for your area?’ They don’t know nothing! But when you go to [*induna*], you ask him, he’ll tell you. *It’s a lot.*³⁹ It’s 1, 5, 7, 20 but the wider people don’t know. That’s the other thing. It mustn’t be individual thing. It must be community thing. That you know okay ... Even iSimangaliso members: get *down* to people! Use [*induna*] as a leader, say: ‘He’ll be there to present our issues to the community.’ If the community got questions, they can ask direct to the people who are there in the management. But I haven’t seen that happening. Nothing. It’s only they talk to [*induna*] and other two, three, four guys there. That’s it ... ja ... but the other people ... nothing they will know. So I think if there can be that relationship that the area will be working so well.” (#45, Dukuduku Forest, 22 January 2017, emphasis added)

A beneficiary of iSimangaliso’s Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprises (SMME) Programme from Empangeni (#7, Khula Village, 08 December 2016) acknowledges that

“as I sometimes commented to the CEO that the lack of communication between the communities and the Park, it’s very, very low. People don’t really get the genuine information, the true information, because the Park doesn’t interact directly when it’s setting up things and so forth. It usually transfers information to the chiefs and then they send it down, which ends up generally not being said what is being said there. Or something that is diluted and not the reality of what it is. Being a tour guide, I generally come across people that are angry and the moment when we sit down, especially with the kids, that’s what I do, that’s my target. I cannot change an adult, I’m one, so I know how difficult an adult is, but a kid can change their mom so I make sure that the children get the right and the true and the

³⁹ The iSWP generates most revenues at the EWS.

genuine information of the Park, because I can only trust them to change their parents' mind.”

That iSimangaliso offers programmes to people from ‘far away’ – Empagneni is situated some 80 kilometres south of St Lucia – feeds into feelings of suspicion and mistrust towards the Authority. There are many conspiracy theories, among others about iSimangaliso wanting to employ ‘blank-minded’ people, so they can be used as a tool. ISimangaliso’s Research and Development Manager (#53, iSimangaliso office, 02 February 2017) points out that

“iSimangaliso is an organisation of forty people, working in a park, a third of KZN’s coast line, World Heritage Site in one of the poorest districts, so what are our challenges? We understand that there is poverty and we do not take that lightly, but what you do have to look at is ... actually there needs to be an integrated programme at a national level, not just looking at poverty, look at education – it’s really poor. I work with schools in this area ... I can tell you how many schools are just okay and passing from our bursary programme, we issue about 2 000 applications, we get back maybe 200 and that’s just from people that may be able to access our education, because they have enough points to get it and out of those 200 only 10 people can actually get into university, so it’s a much bigger, broader problem than iSimangaliso being a conservation organisation and preventing people from accessing benefits. You have to look at it from that point of view.”

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Annexes

Annex 1: List of study participants

This list should be read with two points in mind. First, each participant is mentioned once and in order of first encounter. Second, it is impossible to describe people's identities in one or several words. For example, someone who marches against the traditional leadership on one day works as a cultural tour guide on the other. At the same time, not all cultural tour guides march against the traditional leadership – some even work for the *induna* who owns a Zulu cultural tourism business. Another example is a farmer who is a *sangoma*, or a tour guide at the Eastern Shores (ES) who is a land claimant's son. Hence, this list is the mere result of decisions that I had to make, which are never entirely 'right' or 'wrong'.

#	Description (Male/Female)	Place	Language(s)
1	ES tour guide (M)	St Lucia	English
2	Priest (M)	Khula Village	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
3	Resident (F)	Khula Village	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
4	Cultural tour guide (F)	Khula Village	English
5	Cultural tour guide (M), NGO	Khula Village	English
6	Owner of cultural tour operation (M)	Khula Village	English
7	Small business owner (F)	Khula Village	English
10	Cultural tour guide (M), NGO	Khula Village	English
11	Cultural tour guide (M), NGO	Khula Village	English
12	Conservation worker, NGO (M)	Khula Village	English

13	ES tour guide (M)	St Lucia	English
14	ES tour guide (M)	St Lucia	English
15	Farmer (F)	Monzi	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
16	Cultural tour guide (M)	Khula Village	English
17	Ezemvelo scientist (M)	Kosi Bay	English
18	Small business owner (M)	Khula Village	English
19	Small business owner (M)	Khula Village	English
20	Owner of tour operation (M)	St Lucia	English
21	Ezemvelo ranger (M)	Crocodile Centre, ES	English
22	Bhangazi land claimant (F)	Khula Village	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
23	Bhangazi land claimant (F)	Khula Village	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
24	Bhangazi land claimant (F)	Khula Village	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
25	Eco-tourism student (M)	Khula Village	Dutch, English
26	Former Ezemvelo scientist (M)	<i>Phone</i> , St Lucia	English
27	Manager of cultural tour operation (F), NGO	Khula Village	English
28	Farmer (F)	Dukuduku Forest	English
29	Former Ezemvelo ranger and CCO (M)	Khula Village	English
30	Owner of tour operation (M)	St Lucia	Dutch, English
31	Assistant ward councilor (M)	Khula Village	English
32	Cultural tour guide (F), NGO	Khula Village	English
33	<i>Induna</i> (M)	Khula Village	English
34	Former Ezemvelo CCO (M)	Khula Village	English
35	Mining activist (F)	Machibini	English
36	Ranger in game capture (M)	HiP	English
37	Ward councilor (M)	Khula Village	English
38	Ward councilor (M)	Dukuduku Forest	English

39	<i>Induna</i> (M)	Dukuduku Forest	English
40	Student fieldworker (F)	Futululu	English
41	Law enforcer (M)	Futululu	English
42	Chairperson of the Dukuduku land claimant community (M)	Khula Village	<i>isiZulu</i> (translated), English
43	Chairperson of the Dukuduku land claimant community's son (M)	Khula Village	English
44	iSimangaliso employee (M)	Khula Village	English
45	Son of Bhangazi claimant (M)	Dukuduku Forest	English
46	Owner of tour operation (M)	St Lucia	English
47	Resident (F)	St Lucia	English
48	Resident (M)	St Lucia	English
49	Former iSimangaliso employee (F)	Khula Village	English
50	Ezemvelo ranger (M)	Crocodile Centre, ES	English
51	Fishing shop owner (M)	St Lucia	English
52	Ezemvelo CCO (F)	KwaMbonambi	English
53	iSimangaliso Research & Development Manager (F)	iSimangaliso office, St Lucia	English
54	iSimangaliso Park Operations Director (M)	iSimangaliso office, St Lucia	English
55	Former chairperson of the Dukuduku Development Forum (M)	Richards Bay	English
56	Former principal of high school in Khula Village (M)	<i>Phone</i> , Heemskerk	English