



# The Neoliberalisation of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as a Tourist Region

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Date 25 May 2015

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## ***Abstract***

Proponents of transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) make a number of claims in favour of this relatively new conservation strategy, one of which is that it leads to an increase in tourism. Despite the growing body of literature on the subject of TFCAs, very little research has been conducted on whether or not this assumption is true. This study therefore draws on and situates itself within this literature on TFCAs and the neoliberalisation of nature and seeks to test this claim through the use of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) as a case study. This is achieved firstly by assessing the changes in tourism development that have taken place both within the Park and in the area surrounding it as a result of the KTP's formation, and secondly by comparing the KTP's tourist levels prior to becoming a TFCA with those from after the TFCA was established, in order to determine what trends and changes have taken place as a result of this development. In doing so, this paper challenges the claim that TFCAs automatically lead to an increase in tourism and tourist development by showing that the link between the two is tenuous at best. It also broadens the scope of enquiry on the subject of TFCAs by analysing the relationship between TFCAs and the small scale, nature-based economic activities that take place around them, a matter which is largely ignored in the literature and, in doing so, critiques the assumption that all nature-based economic activities are part of a wider neoliberal agenda.

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## **List of Acronyms**

<b>AENP</b>	Addo Elephant National Park
<b>CBNRM</b>	Community Based Natural Resource Management
<b>CCS</b>	Commercialisation as a Conservation Strategy
<b>CDD</b>	Commercial Development Department
<b>DEAT</b>	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
<b>DWNP</b>	Department of Wildlife and National Parks
<b>GLTP</b>	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park
<b>GNP</b>	Gemsbok National Park
<b>IDC</b>	Industrial Development Corporation
<b>KNP</b>	Kruger National Park
<b>KTP</b>	Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
<b>KGNP</b>	Kalahari Gemsbok National Park
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>PPF</b>	Peace Parks Foundation
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SANParks</b>	South African National Parks
<b>SASI</b>	South African San Institute
<b>TFCA</b>	Transfrontier Conservation Area
<b>TFP</b>	Transfrontier Park
<b>TIES</b>	The International Ecotourism Society
<b>TPD</b>	Transfrontier Parks Destinations
<b>UCT</b>	University of Cape Town
<b>WCC</b>	World Conservation Congress
<b>WTO</b>	World Tourism Organisation
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature

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# CHAPTER 1

## Tourism and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park: An Overview

### 1.1 Introduction

The subject of transboundary conservation has received a great deal of attention in recent years, in both academia and the wider media. Transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) can be described as relatively large tracts of land that encompass one or more protected areas and straddle the frontiers between two or more countries (World Bank 2006). The terms 'TFCA', 'transfrontier park' (TFP), 'transboundary conservation area' and 'peace park' can all be used to describe these border-straddling protected areas and are generally used interchangeably. However, although they are used interchangeably, two of the terms do have slightly different definitions, with TFPs (otherwise known as peace parks) referring to two or more national parks that have been joined together across a border in order to create one cohesive unit, and the term TFCAs referring to large conservation areas comprising of parks, private game reserves, communal land and farmland among others<sup>1</sup>. Proponents of TFCAs make several claims in favour of this growing conservation trend which have been widely discussed in the recent literature. The first such claim is one made by conservationists who cite the many advantages to ecosystems and animal populations of the removal of fences and barriers between habitats. The fact that little to no attention or consideration was generally afforded to the boundaries of ecoregions when state borders were drawn up has meant that the creation and fortification of these borders has led to a great deal of habitat fragmentation and degradation (Andersson & Cumming 2013). This in turn has had a severely negative effect on biodiversity levels and the healthy functioning of sensitive ecosystems (Hanks 2003; Hobbs *et al.* 2008). TFCA proponents therefore feel that any attempt to reverse this fragmentation through the linking of habitat islands across national borders is a step in the right direction and one that may help to mitigate the effects of this environmental crisis (Ramutsindela 2007a). Similarly, as the name suggests, peace parks are also said to foster a spirit of peace through cooperation between neighbouring countries, thus eliminating the likelihood of future conflict (Hall-Martin & Modise 2002; Ramutsindela 2007a; Tanner *et al.* 2007). In addition to these two claims, the creation of TFPs is also said to benefit local communities through the decentralisation of natural resource management (Büscher 2010b) as well through opportunities in the tourism industry.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, I too will use these two terms interchangeably throughout this paper.

This brings me to the claim that is most relevant to this study – that TFCAs automatically lead to an increase in tourism. This tendency for proponents of TFCAs to emphasise their ability to attract tourists is widely acknowledged in the literature (Büscher 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Ferreira 2004; Hanks 2003; Scovronick & Turpie 2009; Timothy 2001). Less prevalent, however, are studies testing whether or not this claim is justified. It is for this reason that my study aims to establish whether or not TFCAs bring greater levels of tourism and tourist development<sup>2</sup> to the areas in which they are established by using the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) as a case study, the location of which can be seen in Figures 1.1 and 3.1. I have broken this aim down into two objectives. The first of these is to assess the changes in tourism development that have taken place as a result of the TFCA's formation, both within the Park and in the area surrounding it. The second objective of this study is to compare the KTP's tourist levels prior to becoming a TFCA with those from after the TFCA was formed, in order to establish what trends and changes may have taken place as a result of the TFCA's formation. By accomplishing these objectives, this research project will evaluate the assumption that TFCAs lead automatically to greater levels of tourism and tourist development in the areas in which they are established and, in doing so, will broaden the scope of inquiry into the extent to which TFPs such the KTP live up to the claims made by their supporters.



**Figure 1.1** Map showing the location of the KTP  
Source: Thondhlana *et al.* (2011, p. 3)

<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'tourist development' to refer to the creation or expansion of tourist facilities such as lodges, private game parks, restaurants and guesthouses.

The KTP became Africa's very first peace park on 12 May 2000 when President Festus Mogae of Botswana and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa officially brought together South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP) and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park (GNP). The resulting TFCA, managed jointly by Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) and South African National Parks (SANParks), has a combined area of approximately 38 000 km<sup>2</sup>. This vast, arid, semi-desert expanse supports large numbers of wildlife, ranging from herds of ungulates to endemic and endangered raptors to the spectacular black-maned Kalahari lions, all of which are free to move uninhibited by fences or barriers within the TFCA's boundaries. Visitors are also free to travel from one side of the Park to the other<sup>3</sup> and passports are only required if one wishes to exit the Park into a different country than the one from which one entered. In addition to being able to enter and exit from South Africa and Botswana, visitors can also access the Park from Namibia at the Mata Mata entrance gate.

The Kalahari is also home to the famous †Khomani San 'bushmen' who historically inhabited the area before being displaced and marginalised, first by other tribes and groups such as the Bantu and the Mier, and then by the establishment of the KGNP and the GNP (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011). Following the end of apartheid and the election of a democratic government in South Africa in 1994, both the †Khomani San and the Mier submitted land claims, a large portion of which fell within the KTP. In 2002 the two groups were awarded a total of 25 000 hectares of Park land and 42 000 hectares of land outside the Park on which to farm, with the †Khomani San receiving more land than the Mier, given the historical injustices inflicted upon them by the Mier (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011). The 25 000 hectares of community-owned land within the KTP functions as a 'Contract Park' which is jointly managed by SANParks and the communities, and was established in part to generate socio-economic benefits for the two communities through ecotourism (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011, p. 5). In addition to the tourist facilities in the Contract Park and the KTP as a whole, there is also a great deal of tourism-related economic activity that takes place outside the Park. These establishments take the form of guesthouses and hunting farms and, due in part to the distinct lack of existing research on these kinds of economic activities that tend to proliferate in the areas surrounding TFCAs, they play as important a role in my study as the KTP itself.

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<sup>3</sup> Although everyone is allowed to travel from the South African side to the Botswana side of the Park and *vice versa*, a vehicle capable of four wheel drive is required in order to do so.

## 1.2 Structure of the thesis

The rest of this chapter will provide an outline of the structure of the paper, as well as a brief description of the content of each chapter. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two provides a context for my study by offering a relatively thorough analysis of the existing literature on TFCAs, tourism and the neoliberalisation of nature. It shows how the various claims made in favour of TFCAs are not as straightforward or infallible as they are often made to appear. Although the chapter describes many of these assertions in some detail, the claim pertaining to TFCAs' ability to increase tourism is described in more detail than the others, as it is the most relevant to this study. In order to fully understand the forces behind the expansion of nature-based tourism, the chapter also explores the neoliberalisation of nature as a concept and highlights a number of key papers explaining the effects that it can have when applied to areas of conservation. Chapter Three focuses on the various methods and techniques that were used to collect and analyse data during the study. It begins by explaining and justifying each of the chosen approaches and techniques, before describing the four phases of fieldwork that were undertaken. It also outlines a series of challenges and limitations that were experienced and how each one was dealt with, as well as the various ethical considerations that were taken into account when conducting the research.

Chapter Four marks the beginning of this paper's findings analysis by describing the various trends and changes in economic activity and the establishment of tourism enterprises outside the Park over the last fifteen to twenty years. It begins with a brief description of each guesthouse before analysing the trends in guesthouse and game farm establishment over time. Thereafter, it provides a relatively thorough explanation of the various reasons given by respondents for the establishment of their businesses, before concluding with an explanation of the limited impact that the establishment of the KTP has had on the creation of new businesses in the area immediately surrounding it. Chapter Five is closely related to Chapter Four.

Whereas Chapter Four focuses on the reasons behind the establishment of the guesthouses and game farms outside the KTP, Chapter Five explores which changes and factors have had the greatest influence on these establishments over the years, and where the formation of the TFCA ranks within these factors. The focus of the paper shifts slightly in Chapter Six from concentrating on the changes taking place outside the Park to focusing on tourism and development within the KTP itself. The chapter describes how the neoliberalisation of the KTP was achieved through two closely linked channels – the establishment of the Transfrontier Park and the introduction of SANParks' 'Commercialisation as a Conservation Strategy' plan, both of

which were implemented at roughly the same time. It starts by discussing the various aspects of SANParks' commercialisation strategy, namely the introduction of tourism concessions, the outsourcing of the Park's services and facilities, and the construction of new commercial developments, before moving on to an analysis of the KTP's long term visitation data. This analysis includes total visitor numbers as well as unit occupancy levels and highlights the fact that, far from experiencing the expected boom in tourism levels following the creation of the TFCA, the Park's data show a slight decline in tourist levels in the early 2000s. In order to account for national or global tourism changes, the KTP's data are compared to those of the Addo Elephant National Park. The chapter goes on to explain some of the side effects of the KTP's neoliberalisation, as perceived by those living and working in the area. Chapter Seven summarises the results and findings of the research and situates them within the broader literature. This concluding chapter also gently critiques the assumption that all nature-based economic activities are part of a wider neoliberal agenda and emphasises the need for caution when attempting to ascribe neoliberal assumptions and explanations to economic processes taking place on the ground, both within TFCAs and in the areas surrounding them. Finally, it proposes some key questions that future research on TFCAs should grapple with.

## CHAPTER 2

### Transfrontier Conservation Areas in Context

#### 2.1 Introduction to TFCAs in the wider literature

Proponents of TFCAs, be they state governments, conservationists or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), promote this relatively new phenomenon as being the endgame of conservation. One such NGO which is particularly active when it comes to establishing and promoting TFCAs in Southern Africa is the Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), who refer to these transboundary peace parks as “the global solution”. They are not alone in this view. Many highly influential individuals have shown their support for TFCAs over the last two decades. Dr Anton Rupert, famous South African businessman, passionate conservationist and cofounder of the PPF was incredibly influential in this regard and, as a result, “transfrontier parks are founded on Rupert’s philosophy of co-existence: the partnership between ‘man’ and ‘man’ on the one hand, and ‘man’ with nature on the other hand” (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 155) .

However, perhaps the most well-known – and certainly the most often cited – proponent of TFCAs was former South African President, Nelson Mandela (2001), who famously stated:

I know of no political movement, no philosophy, no ideology, which does not agree with the peace parks concept as we see it going into fruition today. It is a concept that can be embraced by all. In a world beset by conflict and division, peace is one of the cornerstones of the future. Peace parks are a building block in this process, not only in our region, but in the entire world.

These endorsements by some of Southern Africa’s most influential icons contribute significantly to the overwhelmingly positive light in which TFCAs are viewed. As Büscher (2013, p. 2) reiterates, “[t]ransfrontier conservation areas are not simply promoted. They are presented as the new telos of conservation; conservation the way it should be”. This is because they appear to tick all the boxes: they claim to champion the cause of conservation and biodiversity through the protection of entire ecosystems while supporting and reuniting local communities, fostering good political relations between participant countries and promoting and increasing the region’s tourism industry (Büscher 2013; *City Press* 2005; Hanks 2003; Mittermeier, *et al.* 2005; Ramutsindela 2007a; Scovronick & Turpie 2009; Wolmer 2003).

There are a number of factors that contribute to this seemingly unshakable faith in transboundary conservation. Perhaps the most significant of these is described by Ramutsindela (2007a, p. 6) who states that

the quotation [by Nelson Mandela] is strategically silent about which philosophy actually does support TFCAs. To expose the philosophy behind TFCAs would make TFCAs vulnerable to the weaknesses of that philosophy. It may also be that if a particular philosophy is overtly associated with TFCAs, the tenets of that philosophy might be challenged in places where TFCAs are to be established.

This distinct lack of clarity regarding the ideologies behind TFCAs is one of the reasons why critiquing them as a concept is so challenging. In addition to this, there are also certain difficulties attached to questioning the validity of a concept endorsed by institutions as respected and admired as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and heroes as loved and revered as Nelson Mandela. In addition to this, the direction that our investigations as researchers take is, to a large extent, predetermined by TFCA proponents. This is because, by testing the various claims made in favour of TFCAs, the research agenda is being set by those who make the claims in the first place, and this in turn “imposes limits on those seeking to interrogate TFCAs by forcing them to reaffirm the necessity of TFCAs as a point of departure” (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 1). However, it is nonetheless important to test these claims in order to establish to what extent proponents of TFCAs are justified in their unwavering support of transboundary conservation and, perhaps more importantly, where changes and improvements to the model need to be made.

The rest of this chapter will explore the various environmental, social, political and economic effects of transboundary conservation, as put forward by advocates of TFCAs, as well as the various critiques of these claims that have since been undertaken in the wider literature on the subject. It will begin with some of the more thoroughly tested aspects of TFCAs and will end of with a description of what I believe to be a gap in the current literature on the topic. Before continuing with this literature analysis, I wish to clarify one point regarding terminology. As was briefly stated in the previous chapter, although many researchers use them interchangeably – as I have and will continue to do – it must be noted that the terms ‘transfrontier conservation area’ and ‘transfrontier park’ refer to two different things. Transfrontier parks (also referred to as peace parks) are two or more national parks that have been joined together across a border in order to create one cohesive unit, such as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. TFCAs on the other hand, such as the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), are large conservation areas

comprising of TFPs, private game reserves, communal land, farmland, protected areas and land set aside for future use, among many land use types. Andersson *et al.* (2013, p. 4) rightly point out that “[a]lmalgated parks across borders (TFPs) usually have elaborate (joint) management structures and clearly defined boundaries and conservation targets” whereas “TFCAs, by contrast, generally include substantial human populations but have no clearly defined formalised boundaries, nor shared conservation rules”. These two concepts, though different, are used interchangeably by both academics and proponents of transboundary conservation, and the claims made in their favour are therefore randomly distributed between the two. Given that this literature review comprises mainly of an analysis of these claims, I too will be using them interchangeably unless otherwise stated, and will continue to do so throughout the rest of this paper.

## **2.2 Environmental claims made in favour of TFCAs**

Ramutsindela (2007a, p. 13) explains that “the notions of environmental crisis, together with the responses to that crisis by the environmental movement and allied institutions, are central to the mobilisation of ideas that underpin the creation of TFCAs”. Given this emphasis on the ecological role that TFCAs are said to play in averting this crisis, the first set of claims I will be examining are those relating to the various environmental benefits put forward by proponents of TFCAs. It is a well-established fact that, though some may adhere to certain geophysical features such as rivers or mountain ranges, the vast majority of state borders were not established with bioregions or ecological integrity in mind. Though this is true throughout the world, it is especially evident in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the international borders of which were “determined at European conference tables” (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013, p. 14) with little thought for the social and ecological systems that were already in place within these regions (Andersson & Cumming 2013). The lack of attention afforded to these ecoregions when Southern Africa was being carved up has meant that many of them have been divided, fragmented and degraded by the construction and fortification of state borders and the subsequent differences in management strategies on either side. This kind of mismanagement has led to a series of ecological tragedies due to the fact that, “[a]lthough [political and economic] benefits may arise from fragmentation, the dissection of rangelands into small, disconnected units can compromise ecosystem function and the viability of grazing systems by restricting movements and reducing access to ecosystem heterogeneity” (Hobbs *et al.* 2008, p. 37). This kind of habitat loss and fragmentation has two main (ecological) side effects. The first is a reduction in the area’s levels of biodiversity, as habitat fragmentation

and loss of species go hand in hand (Hanks 2003). The second is a reduction in the total number of animals that can be supported, due to the fact that fragmented areas are less capable of supporting animal life than intact areas of the same size (Hobbs *et al.* 2008, p. 37). It is therefore not surprising that one of the strongest claims made by proponents of TFCAs is the benefit to conservation of an amalgamation of two or more protected areas.

Because political borders and ecoregions seldom coincide, the removal of such boundaries allows for a more regional approach to conservation to be adopted which can help to prevent the extinction of endangered species and allow ecosystems to function more naturally. This is especially relevant in the case of biodiversity hotspots, of which there are several in Southern Africa (see Myers *et al.* 2000). In such cases, the number of different species is obviously very important, but equally crucial is the number of individuals of each species that can be supported. As has already been pointed out, TFPs have a sort of synergising effect, whereby the ability of the combined area as a whole to support life is greater than the sum of its parks. This means that the genetic diversity of species within TFCAs is likely to be higher than in smaller fragmented areas where the “zoning systems have mainly comprised a disparate and disconnected chain of habitat islands, an arrangement that has not only blocked 'natural' wildlife migration patterns, but has placed rarer species at risk due to the lack of genetic mixing” (Schroeder 1999, p. 365). In addition to this, advocates of TFCAs believe that linking habitat islands through the creation of transboundary conservation areas might aid in re-establishing historical migration patterns and could also help various species adapt to shifting and changing habitats brought about by climate change<sup>4</sup> (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013, p. 14). The environmental arguments made in favour of TFPs are plentiful but are still far from infallible, as will be shown in greater detail in section 6.4.

Because these environmental studies are driven by science, they require the knowledge of experts in a variety of fields. As Wolmer (2003, p. 3) explains, “there is a danger ... that the protectionist expansionism of the ecoregional planning paradigm will provide legitimacy for a return to an authoritarian protectionist conservation paradigm which had been curbed by the predominance of the community-based conservation discourse”. This authoritarian tendency to focus solely on conservation at the expense of the rights and wellbeing of local communities, though outdated, seems to be finding its way back into the current conservation discourse, as

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<sup>4</sup> However, this is not relevant in the case of the KTP as there were never any fences separating the two parks to begin with.

some authors have suggested that a 'back to the barriers' approach may be what is required to put a stop to further environmental degradation (Büscher & Dressler, 2007). This is of particular relevance to the discussion around TFCAs as this relatively new transboundary strategy has in many ways taken the place of community based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Southern Africa (Büscher 2010b). However, this is a (potential) social cost and will therefore be analysed in more detail in the socio-economic section of this chapter. There are a series of other weaknesses to be found in the environmental claims put forward by advocates of TFCAs. The first of these is a conceptual flaw, best described by Ramutsindela (2007a, p. 71):

The ecological aim of transfrontier parks is ... to re-establish ecoregions, using national parks as raw materials in that process. In this way the boundaries of national parks are being used as that of an ecoregion... This is problematic because the outer boundaries of national parks, which were not founded on bioregional planning, remain the same.

Therefore, while TFCAs are indeed creating large conservation areas, they are not (necessarily) adopting a true ecoregional approach, due to the fact that the borders of many national parks in Southern Africa are as arbitrary as those of nation states. As a result, many ecosystems will remain fragmented, thereby eliminating most of the advantages of TFPs outlined above. This habitat expansion would nonetheless be an acceptable goal of TFCAs which could be shown to be making the most of the "raw materials" available to them. However, Ramutsindela (2007a, p. 72) takes it a step further by pointing out that "[t]he implication of national parks-based-ecoregions is that they perpetuate ill-defined ecoregions while, at the same time, encouraging the establishment of more protected areas along international borders so as to promote the establishment of transfrontier parks". This means that, not only do TFCAs not represent complete, fully-functioning ecoregions, but the popularity of and support for the peace parks concept is actually promoting the perpetuation of this arbitrary placement of ecoregion borders. Worse still is the fact that the desire of governments and NGOs to be a part of the global transfrontier conservation movement has led to a shift in focus from transfrontier conservation areas (and here I use the term specifically) to transfrontier parks, meaning that national parks are being created *because of* their proximity to state borders and the resultant opportunities this provides for cross-border conservation (as well as economic and social) opportunities (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 75).

In addition to these theoretical challenges and contradictions inherent in the environmental claims made by proponents of TFCAs, there are also a number of practical issues. In the case of TFPs specifically, environmental co-management of two previously separate parks can be

challenging. Despite the fact that Southern Africa is increasingly being viewed as a homogenous expanse and a single tourist destination (Ferreira 2004, p. 303), the two or more national parks making up a TFP, though contiguous, can have completely different environmental challenges requiring different management strategies (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 34). However, the practical environmental challenges of TFPs pale in comparison to those of TFCAs. As outlined earlier, unlike TFPs, TFCAs seldom have one overarching set of conservation principles, due to the variety of different land use types within their poorly defined borders (Andersson *et al.* 2013, p. 4). This lack of clarity when it comes to responsibility and accountability can lead to a series of illegal and harmful practices taking place within these supposedly protected areas, the social and economic drivers of which will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter. These activities can include the illegal harvesting of medicinal plants or firewood by communities living within or on the outskirts of TFCAs (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011, p. 7) as well as the (illegal) grazing of livestock belonging to these communities (de Garine-Wichatitsky *et al.* 2013, p. 153), both of which can severely negatively affect ecosystems within TFCAs. However, perhaps the biggest threat, and certainly the most highly publicised in recent media reports, is that of poaching. Murwira *et al.* (2013, p. 133) describe how small-scale bushmeat hunting is often undertaken as a survival strategy by communities living in and around TFCAs. Although illegal and often environmentally detrimental, this is not the same as the kind of large-scale poaching operations taking place within many of Southern Africa's TFCAs. In April 2013 the *Cape Argus*, a South African newspaper, reported that every last one of the rhinos in Mozambique's section of the GLTP had been killed by poachers and, as a result of this, South Africa was planning on re-erecting its fences in order to protect the rhinos and other large mammals within its borders (Yeld 2013). The difficulties faced by the GLTP and Kruger National Park (KNP) with regard to poaching have been widely discussed in the literature (see Duffy 2014 and Lunstrum 2014). Although TFCAs are by no means the sole cause of the increase in poaching, all of the factors listed above contribute to the unfortunate though unavoidable conclusion that the environmental claims made by advocates of transboundary conservation, though appealing, are not infallible.

### **2.3 Political claims made in favour of TFCAs**

The fostering of good political relations between participant countries is the second claim made by advocates of peace parks that I will be examining. In addition to the considerable social and economic costs, the outbreak of war and conflict can also have an extremely negative impact on the environment. By encouraging communication and cooperation through joint management,

TFCAs are said to foster a spirit of peace and goodwill between neighbouring countries, thus eliminating the likelihood of future conflict (Hall-Martin & Modise 2002; Ramutsindela 2007a; Tanner *et al.* 2007). Ramutsindela (2007b) explains that, traditionally, borders in conflict zones have been fortified which has in turn served to deepen and exacerbate the conflict. The removal of such obstructions can therefore lead to a change in perception, as “[p]eace parks mainly can offer change to the symbolic meaning of border while respecting the territorial integrity of a state” (Ramutsindela, 2007b, p. 76). This is a particularly powerful selling point when it comes to peace parks in Africa, a continent with a long history of conflict and civil war. However, achieving such cooperation is not always a simple matter of taking down fences. In Southern Africa there has been a great deal of reluctance on the part of leaders to give up power over land to neighbouring countries, private investors or NGOs like the PPF. This is also made all the more complicated by the link between transborder protected areas and Afrikaaner nationalism, and the large number of Afrikaners in leadership roles within the PPF (see Ellis 1994 and Ramutsindela 2007a, 2007b).

Nonetheless, the PPF still manages to effectively sell TFCAs as “the global solution” to foreign investors, with a strong emphasis on their peace creating abilities. Once again, Ramutsindela (2007a, p. 38) perfectly articulates the first two flaws in this seemingly faultless claim by stating that,

by appealing to the morality of peace, proponents of peace parks render any opposition to the establishment of such parks as an anti-peace effort. The notion of peace parks is vaguely promoted as one of the distinctive aims of transfrontier conservation, yet no single treaty or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for TFCAs in southern Africa has the promotion of peace as one of its objectives.

While the first point needs little explanation, the absence of any formal peace agreements between countries participating in the establishment of a *peace park* is as surprising as it is inexplicable, and suggests that peace is perhaps not as high a priority on the TFCA agenda as proponents may advocate. Ali (2002) explains how a peace park in the mountainous regions of the Himalayas between India and Pakistan could help to ease the conflict over territory that has been taking place since the early 1980s. This could be a much needed step towards preventing further damage to the vulnerable glacial environment. Though such a formalised peace agreement might be effective in that region, the vast majority of conflict in Africa takes place within, not between, countries (Cawthra 1997), rendering transborder conservation relatively impotent and meaningless in this regard. Indeed, “advocates for peace parks in Africa promote

a narrow view of Africa's boundary problems in order to propose a common solution – the creation of peace parks" (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 50). This narrow view is further highlighted by the fact that, even where boundary disputes do exist in Africa, no attempts have been made to set up peace parks in these regions. Ramutsindela (2007a, p. 41) also points out that African countries had been successfully co-managing natural resources (such as water) for many years prior to the formation of the PPF or peace parks. These interactions continue to provide numerous opportunities for communication and peaceful, mutually-beneficial cooperation between neighbouring countries, meaning that the interactions required to jointly manage a TFP are unlikely to offer anything new, peace-wise, especially if the promotion of peace as an objective is not even included in the MoU.

Even if we concede that peace parks offer one *more* opportunity for peace and cooperation, there is still another problem. This problem relates to the fact that, even once the basis for a peace park has been established, the very negotiations over land, income and responsibility that are required to co-manage large areas can lead to new tensions and conflict. A good example of this is the controversial TFCA between Belize, Honduras and Guatemala. This TFCA has caused a great deal of tension due to the fact that Belize is not recognised by Guatemala as a sovereign state, but rather as a part of Guatemala, which has led to a great deal of controversy and border-related disputes (Duffy 2007). Lastly, claiming that peace parks help to reduce conflict and tension between neighbouring nation states can be seen as a weak argument when applied to countries that have always had a good political relationship, such as the USA and Canada who developed the world's first peace park, the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, in 1932 (Tanner *et al.* 2007). Therefore, due to factors such as the oversimplification of border disputes in Africa and the lack of formalised commitments to peace within TFCA agreements, the fact remains that it is "almost impossible to assess the usefulness or otherwise of peace parks towards achieving the goal of peace on which they are founded" (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 38).

#### **2.4 Socio-economic claims made in favour of TFCAs**

The third claim made by proponents of TFCAs is that, not only do they join previously fragmented ecoregions, but divided peoples as well by "reuniting communities divided by borders or allowing mobile peoples to move across their traditional territories more easily" (Mittermeier *et al.* 2005, p. 41). The suggested benefits afforded to local communities such as development, employment and access to natural resources are perhaps the most easily

refutable claims made by TFP advocates. In reality, the marginalisation of local communities begins long before the TFCAs are even established. This is because, in Southern Africa especially, there is seldom any community participation at all in the planning stages of TFCA formation. Much of the preliminary documentation is often classified which means that the results of negotiations between donors, NGOs and national governments are often simply imposed upon local communities, giving them little chance to have a say on the matter (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 112). This can result in some communities being completely unaware of the fact that their land is to be incorporated into the TFCA until it is much too late to do anything about it.

This is increasingly the case due to the fact that transboundary conservation has largely taken the place of CBNRM in Southern Africa (Büscher 2010b). Like CBNRM, TFCAs are a form of conservation that focuses on the decentralisation of natural resource management and the adoption of a more regional focus, as opposed to the traditional state-centric approach. This trend has meant that, in order to access funding from international donors and NGOs such as the PPF, Southern African nation states must also adopt this regional approach to conservation. This has meant that “governments have tended to support regional interests at the expense of their citizens, particularly those living inside or adjacent to areas designated for TFCAs” (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 106). Despite the perceived environmental benefits of TFPs, it is unlikely that donors would risk funding them if it became widely known that they negatively affect local communities, as this would almost certainly tarnish their reputation. Proponents of TFCAs therefore choose to portray these communities as the receivers of various social and economic benefits so as to appease the fund-providing public, when in reality the benefits are few and far between. Far from helping local communities to benefit from their land and natural resources, TFCAs have been shown to contribute significantly to the extension of the nature-human divide (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013). This is primarily due to the fact that, in many cases, conservationists view local communities as an inconvenience and an inherently destructive force. Local communities therefore often get left out of the plans completely, as “[e]cological perspectives that form the basis of conservationists’ promotion of transfrontier conservation have a blind spot for people” (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013, p. 21). What is perhaps most surprising is the fact that this invisibility goes almost completely uncontested, or at least unprotested, by the disenfranchised communities themselves (Dzingirai 2004; Ramutsindela 2007a) possibly due to the disparate levels of power and influence of rural communities compared to governments backed by wealthy donors.

The establishment of TFCAs can therefore have an enormously negative impact on these “invisible peoples”, to borrow the term from Andersson, Dzingirai and Cumming (2013). Most of these impacts can be split into two categories – those that occur as a result of displacement and those that occur as a result of staying put. Although it is illegal in some Southern African countries for people to live within protected areas, there are nonetheless thousands who do, and with this comes a number of challenges. Many of these challenges arise as a result of conflict or complications pertaining to interactions between humans and wildlife. The first of these is the obvious threat that large predators such as lions, leopards and hyenas pose to human settlements. More common than attacks on humans, however, are attacks on livestock owned by people living in and around TFCAs. In cattle-owning communities like those on the north-western periphery of the Kruger National Park (KNP) where the average herd size is approximately nine, the loss of even one animal can have a significantly detrimental effect by reducing the amount of meat, milk and manure (for fertiliser) available to each family (de Garine-Wichatitsky *et al.* 2013, p. 143). The loss of livestock to predators is a problem that affects those who reside within TFCAs as well as those living on the peripheries, as fences and boundaries are seldom impermeable, especially when it comes to lithe animals such as leopards and jackals.

Another threat that can cross even the most well-constructed game fences is that of disease. The interaction between livestock and wildlife can lead to the multidirectional spread of pathogens and diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease which can severely impact the wellbeing of livestock, wild animals and human beings on both sides of the fence. Similarly, crop raiding is not a problem that is unique to those residing within the boundaries of transfrontier protected areas. While elephants and other large herbivores pose an obvious threat to farmers within TFCAs, smaller ‘pests’ such as birds and small rodents can often do just as much damage to crops outside the TFCA’s boundaries. de Garine-Wichatitsky *et al.* (2013, p. 154) explain that this human-wildlife conflict is an especially sensitive issue within these rural communities because

wild animals are classified under Roman-Dutch law as *res nullius*, i.e. being owned by nobody until captured or killed ... This implies that farmers cannot claim for crop damages or livestock loss, and they are not compensated. At the same time, people suffering from attacks are not allowed, by law, to kill the wildlife responsible.

It is therefore not surprising that these communities soon grow to resent the animals inflicting these damages and, more importantly, the authorities that established the TFCA in the first place. Though illegal, the killing of wild animals as a result of the aforementioned conflict can and does arise and this in turn can lead to conflict between TFP authorities and these communities. This is especially the case when it comes to poaching in protected areas.

As has already been discussed, the poaching of rhinos in Southern Africa has become an increasingly prevalent problem and one that has generated a great deal of public outrage. However, the poaching of rhinos and elephants for their horns and tusks is generally not carried out by these kinds of small, rural communities, but rather by highly trained, well organised criminals supplying international demand (TRAFFIC 2011). Though there are legal ways for communities living in and around TFCAs to benefit from the hunting of animals, such as through safari hunting for tourists on communal land or contract parks, these require a certain level of infrastructure, investment and experience in the tourism industry, putting them beyond the reach of many rural communities. It is therefore unsurprising that there are also a series of illegal practices that take place within TFCAs. Other than illegal grazing within protected areas, which comes with the double threat of predation and disease, local communities also engage in illegal bushmeat hunting. Murwira *et al.* (2013, p. 132) explain that “the most frequently mentioned reasons for hunting in the protected areas were related to lack of income (52 per cent) or providing sufficient food (48 per cent) for family upkeep, although a significant number (11 per cent) also indicated hunting was a protest against the establishment of the conservancy”. However, regardless of the motivation behind it, this kind of consumptive use of natural resources such as bushmeat hunting or the harvesting of medicinal plants can, when undertaken on a large enough scale, lead to the often cited “tragedy of the commons” (Hanks 2003; Hardin 1968) which could ultimately deplete the common resources upon which they rely. In addition to this, with the increase in local and international attention that tends to accompany the formation of TFPs specifically, many illegal cross-border livelihood strategies are stopped or made more difficult to execute. These illicit activities can range from the removal of firewood from a protected area, as is the case in the KTP (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011), to the smuggling of narcotics across international borders, as has been the case in the Belize-Guatemala Peace Park (Duffy 2007). Although the prevention of such activities may be viewed as one of the advantages of establishing a TFP, when they constitute the only form of income in the area, their cessation can have a devastating effect on the local communities. However, perhaps the most detrimental side effects of TFCAs, as far as local communities are concerned, are those brought about by displacement.

When conflict between human populations and newly introduced wildlife becomes too great, or where the presence of human settlements compromises the feeling of wilderness so vital to TFCAs' tourist appeal, or where the very presence of local communities is seen as too much of a threat to conservation for them to be allowed to stay, the displacement and subsequent resettlement of entire villages and communities can occur. One prime example of this was the 'voluntary' resettlement of people living within the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique which was established in 2001 as a contribution to the GLTP. Though the resettlement was labelled voluntary, residents were given very little choice in the matter and "[t]here is a general consensus among analysts of the GLTP that communities were left outside the process of creating the GLTP for a long time despite the public pronouncements on the GLTP as a pro-community initiative" (Ramutsindela 2007a, p. 107). As Milgroom and Spierenburg (2008) explain, there were a number of reasons why the inhabitants needed to be relocated. The first of these was the conflict between residents and wildlife that arose following the influx of large animals such as elephants to the area after South Africa took down its fences. The second was that the authorities recognised the need to capitalise on tourism and, as a result, an upmarket tourist camp needed to be built in the river valley where the communities were living. Lastly, the perceived threat of poaching which arose when poor communities came into contact with high profit game solidified the view that the inhabitants had to be moved elsewhere. Milgroom and Spierenburg go on to explain that, despite their various grievances, the communities gradually accepted that they would have to leave. However, lengthy delays meant that they spent many years in limbo, having stopped investing in the land they currently lived on, but having not yet been moved to their new villages, the design of which they had very little say in. This is a clear example of how "establishing national parks without recompense compromises the corporal, economic, social, cultural, educational, and spiritual welfare of people who live in or near these protected landscapes" (Wilkie *et al.* 2006, p. 247). One method of attempting to make up for displacement, whether recent or historical, is to award local populations a certain section of (generally less environmentally sensitive or economically crucial) land on which to engage in farming or tourism related activities.

A good example of this is in the KTP where two previously marginalised groups, the #Khomani San and the Mier, following an historical land claim in 2002, were given land within and surrounding the Park in an attempt to make up for the historical dispossession experienced by both groups. As described in Chapter One, 25 000 hectares of park land was developed into a

Contract Park with the intention of allowing local people to enjoy the socio-economic benefits of being involved in the ecotourism industry (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011, p. 5). However, this case study highlights a series of flaws inherent in this strategy, the first of which is that some marginalised groups, when brought together, do not function or manage their land as a cohesive group and this can lead to rifts and conflict. Such conflict arose not only between the †Khomani San and the Mier, but also within the †Khomani San community itself. This is due to the fact that the modern day †Khomani San have little in common with one another, with the exception of their ancestry. This lack of unity and cohesion has resulted in some wanting to return to their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle, with others wishing to use the land they have been given for economic gain (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011). In order to prevent conflict, authority over resources is sometimes handed down to rural district councils, such as the South African San Institute (SASI) and the Mier Municipality in the case of the KTP, to govern as they see fit. However, it is often the case that these “councils claim to be acting on behalf of the local communities, but some take it further and claim that they ‘are the people’ themselves, and thus represent their own self-interests” (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013, p. 19) which can in turn lead to some individuals profiting at the expense of the rest of the group.

NGOs and other planning authorities can also undermine effective rural development by failing to involve local communities in the planning process. In the case of the †Khomani San, they insisted that their desires had been ignored and that they had just been dictated to by the authorities (Thondhlana *et al.* 2011), whereas in Belize, local communities felt as though their views had not been heard at all (Duffy 2007). However, in some instances, and increasingly in South Africa and Botswana, a certain amount of rural development is carried out in and around TFCAs on behalf of local communities in order to allow them to benefit from the tourism industry (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013), a prime example of which is !Xaus Lodge which was built by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) for the †Khomani San and Mier communities within the Contract Park in the KTP. This strategy can still prove problematic for a number of reasons, the first being that members of rural communities seldom have the training and skills required to effectively manage tourist establishments, meaning that the management of such lodges is often handed over, at least in part, to private companies (Mbaiwa & Stronza 2010; Spenceley 2006), which is indeed the case at !Xaus Lodge. Another issue is the fact that sometimes this kind of development can actually make an area less appealing to ecotourists who wish to enjoy an area of ‘pristine’, unspoilt nature. Even more relevant is the fact that “transfrontier conservation does not seem to recognise marginal people, and would prefer them to be invisible” and “[w]here people are

recognised, it is mainly as people to be discovered and experienced by tourists” (Andersson, Dzingirai & Cumming 2013, p. 20) and nowhere is this more true than in the KTP where one can pay to watch members of the †Khomani San engage in ‘traditional’ dances and rituals at !Xaus Lodge (Grant 2012). Lastly, the chances of local communities profiting from tourist spending are often overstated due to the extent of the leakage of money back to the management companies’ home countries as well as to urban areas, which is especially the case when it comes to all-inclusive package holidays which minimise local spending. However, this is not the only way in which proponents of TFCAs exaggerate the tourism-related benefits brought about by transboundary conservation, as this last section will show.

## **2.5 TFCAs and nature-based tourism as vehicles for neoliberal expansion**

Given the focus of this research project, a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between neoliberal capitalism and tourism are essential, and for this reason, this final section will examine the existing literature in slightly more detail than the preceding sections of this chapter.

### **2.5.1 The capitalist mode of production**

Neoliberalism is a notoriously difficult concept to define and many disagree on its usage as well as on the extent to which it deserves to be reified or assigned power. In order to better understand neoliberalism and its effects on tourism and conservation, one must first understand how neoliberalism came to be the dominant global phenomenon it is today by briefly looking at the theory of liberal capitalism that preceded it. Marx (1867) famously described three main logics or rules of the capitalist mode of production. The first of these is the need for capitalism to be in a state of continuous growth through the production of commodities at the lowest possible cost to the producer, the subsequent sale of these commodities for more money than was required to produce them, and the accumulation of capital earned as a result. The second rule states that this process must take place in a competitive environment where various businesses are forced to compete for their share of the market. The third of Marx’s logics is the result of the confluence of the first two. It states that producers must continuously adapt, evolve and become more efficient in order to continue to grow and accumulate wealth in the aforementioned competitive business environment.

Marx went on to identify an inherent contradiction within the capitalist mode of production that he believed would eventually lead to its downfall. This central contradiction is the result of capitalists' need to profit from the surplus value of the labour employed in the process of production. In order for the producer to make a profit, the workers must be paid less than the value of the finished product. However, this means that the buying power of the workforce will ultimately not be high enough for them to afford the product they help produce, which will inevitably lead to a decline in demand and eventually a 'capitalist crisis'. As Castree (2010b, p. 1737) summarises, "[c]apitalist crises are thus, fundamentally, both crises of 'overproduction' and 'under-consumption' at the same time: material abundance juxtaposed with social want is part of capitalism's irrational rationality because of the contradictions surrounding the source of both wealth and consumer demand (i.e. wage labour)". Although Marx may have believed that these crises would eventually spell the end of capitalism, several 'fixes' have since been suggested.

#### 2.5.2 Solutions to capitalism's crises and contradictions

The two solutions most closely connected to tourism were put forth by David Harvey. Harvey (1989) described a 'spatial fix' and a 'temporal fix', both of which attempt to solve the crises through further economic growth. The 'spatial fix' involves investing the excess capital in a new development or enterprise in a new market in a different geographical location. Tourism lends itself extremely well to this solution. West and Carrier (2004) explain that, in popular usage, nature-based tourism and ecotourism are practically synonymous, with the latter being defined by the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people". These forms of tourism are especially relevant, since the destinations that they are marketising and selling are usually relatively undeveloped (Fletcher 2011). Harvey's second solution to the overproduction crisis is slightly less straightforward in its connection to tourism and is best described by Fletcher (2011, p. 449) who explains that

A 'temporal fix', by contrast, involves displacing excess capital into future return, either by investing in ventures that will realize profit down the road or by reducing turnover time ... [and] [o]ne means that Harvey identifies by which the latter is accomplished is the selling of not a durable product but rather a transient event that is instantaneously consumed, thus reducing turnover time to a minimum. As an activity predicated on the sale of transient events, tourism may be seen to provide a temporal fix as well.

Although these fixes do provide (temporary) solutions to Harvey's overproduction crisis, there is another contradiction to be mindful of. Capitalism's 'second contradiction', as James O'Connor (1988) calls it, highlights the fact that Harvey's spatial and temporal fixes through growth and expansion are still reliant on the use or extraction of finite natural resources. This point is well illustrated by Brockington, Duffy and Igoe (2008, p. 188) who humorously note that "the Earth does not take MasterCard®. If there is no oil or water in the ground, it does not matter how much someone is willing to pay for it, they simply will not be able to have it". This acceptance by capitalists of their undeniable reliance on finite natural resources has led to an increase in sustainable development practices (O'Connor 1994) and a shift in focus to the *in situ* consumption of nature and natural resources (Escobar 1995; Fletcher 2011). Of course, this once again points to ecotourism as one of capitalism's greatest contemporary vehicles of expansion, and the 'environmental fix', (Castree 2008), to capitalism's second contradiction. Indeed, as has been pointed out by many scholars, ecotourism is perfectly situated to achieve this, as it allows capitalism to profit from the very environmental crisis it helped to create (Duffy 2013; Fletcher 2011; Igoe *et al.* 2010; Klein 2007; Neves 2010). In the modern world, tourism is the vehicle by means of which neoliberal capitalism is able to expand into previously uncharted territory.

### 2.5.3 The expansion of neoliberalism into nature

As has already been mentioned, despite the recent surge in the number of papers published on the subject of neoliberalism, and the neoliberalisation of nature in particular, it is still a relatively difficult concept to define. Duffy (2013, p. 608), whose recent paper on elephant tourism in Thailand focuses on many of the same aspects of neoliberalism as my study, "characterise[s] neoliberalism as a specific form of capitalism, centred on privatisation, marketization, deregulation and various forms of re-regulation ..., it is a hegemonic project which produces a 'nebuleuse' of ideas, institutions and organisations that create conditions favourable to neoliberalism, so that it appears as natural, neutral and as if there is no alternative". The last part of this definition emphasises a point that is made by many scholars of neoliberalism – that, by providing "market solutions for environmental problems" (Brockington & Duffy 2010, p. 470), the neoliberalisation of nature is seen to be the logical (and only) choice. In addition to this, the definition introduces four of the five key features of neoliberalism that are the most relevant to my study – privatisation, marketisation, deregulation and reregulation – with the fifth being the use of market proxies within residual government. Castree (2010a, 2010b, 2011), in his comprehensive three-part synthesis paper on neoliberalism and the

environment – a collection of work on which I will be drawing heavily in the rest of this section – provides a series of apt descriptions of each of these five aspects of neoliberalism, as well as others that are less relevant to this project. With his help, I will briefly describe each of these five aspects of the neoliberalism on nature.

1. Privatisation: This is perhaps the most common component of neoliberalism. It is a prerequisite for the second component (marketisation) and it “can entail the enclosure – for exclusive use or sale by individuals, communities or firms – of land, water, subterranean areas, the atmosphere or any components thereof ... [s]o, privatization always represents a shift in social relations to the non-human world, changing rights of access, use and disposal of physical components of nature” (Castree 2011, p. 36). Privatisation is therefore a key component of the global tourism industry.
2. Marketisation: Castree (2010a, p. 1728) describes this next aspect of neoliberalism as “rendering alienable and exchangeable things that might not previously have been subject to a market calculus lubricated by monetary transactions within and between nation states”. Marketisation, which requires privatisation as a starting point, can refer to either the purchase and consumptive use of some aspect of the biophysical world, or the *in situ* use (for a price) of certain aspects of the biophysical world, as is the case when it comes to nature-based tourism.
3. Deregulation: This next aspect of nature’s neoliberalism involves a reduction in the state’s ownership of and control over a country’s natural resources. This state roll-back allows for the management and ownership of these biophysical resources to become privatised, and for their potential commodification. This may happen simply as a result of the spread neoliberal capitalism or alternatively as the result of ‘state failure’, as described by Bakker (2003), whereby the state is unable to adequately or effectively provide the various goods and services required.
4. (Market-friendly) Reregulation: This aspect refers to policy shift within state governments, making the first two components of neoliberalism easier to achieve. Castree (2011, p. 39) states that, in order to achieve this reregulation, “[s]tate bodies operating in a neoliberal way will make the privatization and marketization of nature a reality wherever possible. This involves creating new laws and regulations; and ensuring that there are mechanisms to enforce these rules and procedures”.
5. The use of market proxies: Once again, this refers to a shift in the way in which state government operates. These market proxies are employed by the government in order to make the “remaining state services more market-like in their operation through the use of

measures like internal markets, cost-recovery and budget-capping” (Castree 2010a, p. 1728). Though this does not directly affect private enterprises, it is nonetheless an important aspect of neoliberalism, especially when it comes to the KTP, as will be shown later on.

The encouragement of ‘flanking mechanisms’ such as conservation NGOs in civil society and the creation of ‘self-sufficient’ individuals and communities are the other two aspects of neoliberalism described by Castree (2010a, 2011), but their relative lack of relevance to this study means that they do not require further explanation here. Having explained the various aspects of neoliberalism and how the neoliberalism of nature is able to prevent some of capitalism’s crises, the next part of this chapter will focus on the relationship between ecotourism and nature conservation.

#### 2.5.4 (eco)Tourism and nature conservation

As has been explained above, neoliberalism can be shown to solve capitalism’s crises through various processes such as privatisation and marketisation. The vehicle for neoliberalism that is most relevant to this study is that of tourism, and ecotourism in particular<sup>5</sup>. Rosaleen Duffy (2013, p. 609), one of the foremost scholars of nature’s neoliberalisation, describes

how nature-based tourism recreates and redefines nature in ways that make it more compatible with the logics of neoliberalism. One of the main processes through which nature can be reconfigured through tourism is via the creation of economic value from landscapes, animals and experiences. ... In the arena of tourism, nature is produced, reproduced and redesigned as a tourist attraction. In the process it is drawn in to the global tourism marketplace as a product to be consumed and to make profit.

By assigning economic value to nature, ecotourism extends capitalism’s influence into previously untapped areas. Far from considering this a threat to conservation, advocates of ecotourism view the neoliberalisation of nature (through nature-based tourism) as a good solution, if not the only solution, to the current environmental crisis (Arsel & Büscher 2012; Brockington & Duffy 2010; Duffy 2008; Fletcher & Neves 2012; Honey 2008; Igoe *et al.* 2010; Lefebvre 1991; Neves 2010; Spierenburg & Wels 2010; Uddhammar 2006; Ulfstrand 2002). Ferreira (2004, p. 303) even went so far as to say that, “[n]otwithstanding all the worthy efforts

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<sup>5</sup> Though I have focused mainly on ecotourism, Duffy (2013) argues that there is very little difference between ecotourism and mass tourism due to them both being heavily reliant on international markets, as well as both being part of the same wider capitalist system.

of the many who care about the environment, unless conservation can be made to pay for itself, and be seen to be doing so, not only will Africa's heritage be destroyed, but also the cornerstone of its tourism potential". Indeed, this view of nature conservation is quickly becoming the only view (Brockington & Duffy 2010), and is supported by many powerful groups from both sides of the coin, such as the World Conservation Congress (WCC) (Igoe *et al.* 2010), the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) (Duffy & Moore 2010), the United Nations and the World Bank (Duffy 2008), among others.

Duffy (2008, p. 330) describes how neoliberalism is seen "as a kind of magic bullet which can simultaneously hit multiple targets". This is a particularly apt description, due to the fact that, in addition to allowing for the continuous growth required by capitalism, nature-based tourism potentially allows protected areas to 'pay their way' while supposedly benefitting the state and local communities through improved infrastructure and employment, which in turn would allow these communities to learn the value of conserving the environment that their livelihoods depend on, rather than extracting it for short term gain (Eagles *et al.* 2002; Fletcher & Neves 2012; Uddhammar 2006). This collection of 'targets' for the 'magic bullet' is perhaps best expressed by Honey (2008, p. 4) who describes how

ecotourism has been hailed as a panacea: a way to fund conservation and scientific research, protect fragile and pristine ecosystems, benefit rural communities, promote development in poor countries, enhance ecological and cultural sensitivity, instil environmental awareness and a social conscience in the travel industry, satisfy and educate the discriminating tourist, and, some claim, build world peace.

The power and apparent all-encompassing nature of this dominant conservation ideology makes it relatively difficult to critique or oppose (Igoe *et al.* 2010). Nonetheless, as the next section will explore, many scholars have indeed found fault with it.

### 2.5.5 A critique of ecotourism and the neoliberalisation of nature

Although neoliberalism through (eco)tourism is often portrayed in an overwhelmingly positive light by proponents, it is far from the being the 'magic bullet' it seems. The first issue that arises when one analyses the claims made by advocates of neoliberal conservation more closely is yet another fundamental contradiction within the capitalist theory. This is made clear by the notion of 'disaster tourism', a term used to describe the tourism potential of certain areas following disastrous events such as hurricanes. The disaster upon which ecotourism seeks to capitalise is

the global trend of environmental degradation and species loss. This is based on the simple capitalist notion of supply and demand given that, “[a]s resources grow scarce, the remainder become increasingly valuable, and ecotourism destinations are in fact frequently marketed by emphasizing the likelihood that they will cease to exist in the future” (Fletcher & Neves 2012, p. 65). This is as much the case for threatened environments as it is for endangered species and, in addition to ignoring the fact that capitalism is almost always to blame for the degradation in the first place, there is an even more disturbing connotation. With this marketisation of scarcity, the ‘endangeredness’ of these animals and ecosystems becomes the very value addition upon which many ecotourism endeavours rely, and this in turn has the potential to reduce their motivation to eliminate this threat or scarcity through better conservation. This is closely related to Paige West’s (2010) study on speciality coffee production in Papua New Guinea, wherein she describes how the combination of the poverty of the farmers and the ethically sourced nature of the coffee beans adds value to the final product, necessitating the continuation of this poverty paradigm in order for the model to be maintained. This can either be achieved by reducing the amelioration of poverty in the affected communities, which would obviously be highly unethical, or, as is indeed the case, by misrepresenting the actual level of poverty of these Papua New Guinean communities. This case study highlights the fact that, when something is adding value to a product, be it poverty amongst coffee producers or the imminent threat of extinction of a certain species of animal, it is not truly in the interests of neoliberalism (and tourism) to solve these problems. This contradiction is, however, generally very well hidden from consumers through another of Marx’s (1867) notions – commodity fetishism.

Carrier (2010, p. 674) expands Marx’s original notion of commodity fetishism by using it “to refer to the ignoring or denial of the background of objects”. This denial contributes significantly to the second problem inherent in nature-based tourism which is the bubble in which ecotourists are kept in order for them to see only as much of the full picture as the providers of the ecotourism experience wish them to (Brockington, Duffy & Igoe 2008; Brockington & Scholfield 2010; Carrier & Macleod 2005). As Fletcher and Neves (2012, p. 71) explain, “in reality ecotourism commonly creates its own tourist bubble by obscuring negative environmental and social consequences in conflict with the virtuous image operators wish to present”. One way in which this is achieved is through encouraging tourists to focus on the minimisation of their own small-scale impacts on the environment (such as not damaging the coral reef upon which they dive) while hiding the much greater social and environmental consequences of the tourism industry of which they are a part (Carrier 2010). This kind of

fetishism can also result in entire ecosystems being defined by those individual species that are easily marketable and popular with tourists, resulting in the wider context and processes upon which these species are dependent being ignored (Carrier 2010). This in turn can lead to “a reduction of the qualities of a space into those that will sell” (Keul 2014, p. 237). Another way in which fetishism is achieved is through convincing tourists and consumers that the product or service in which they are partaking is doing good by comparing it with something much worse. West (2010) and Neves (2010) describe two prime examples of this technique, relating to the aforementioned specialist coffee industry and to cetourism (whale-based tourism) respectively. West (2010, p. 714) describes the “great trick” inherent in the marketing undertaken by the specialist coffee industry in which they emphasise the unfairness and immense poverty endured by coffee farmers prior to the intervention of the ‘sustainable’ coffee companies, in order to make the pitiful improvement they have brought about seem significant. Similarly, Neves (2010) describes how many of the damaging side effects of cetourism are ignored or due to that fact that whale watching is viewed by many as a sustainable alternative to whale hunting. She goes on to explain that this comparison is made despite the fact that (with a few highly publicised exceptions) the whale hunting industry all but died out long before the rise of cetourism and, in addition to this, many of the areas in which whale watching is most popular never experienced whale hunting at all, so it can hardly be considered to have replaced these practices in most settings (Neves 2010).

This removal of the background of both industries shows how easily commodity fetishism hides the often very serious effects and consequences of tourism from those engaging in it. One might expect the metabolic rift – a term coined by Foster (1999, 2000) to describe the Marxist notion that capitalist process would extract or interfere with components (or “nutrients”) of ecological process, ultimately culminating in environmental crisis – of cetourism to be easy to see, given that the experience is enjoyed by consumers *in situ*. However, as Neves (2010, p. 728) explains, it is the tourists’ lack of knowledge regarding whales and their behavioural patterns that allows both fetishism and the metabolic rift to exist in this case study. This is because, unbeknownst to most cetourists, the presence of motorised boats interferes with whales’ echolocation upon which they depend for navigation and food location which, Neves (2010, p. 730) predicts may have devastating long term effects on whale populations. For parks, however, the effects are more varied, given the many different contexts in which they exist. Carrier (2010, p. 685), in his study of the effects of tourism in Montego Bay and Negril, concludes that, in addition to the direct effects that individual tourists can have (such as reef damage due to irresponsible scuba diving techniques) of which tourists are generally aware, there are also a series of indirect

effects of the tourism industry which are hidden from consumers, ranging from beach realignment to water pollution caused by run-off produced by hotels. The social and environmental (side) effects of such nature-based tourism will inevitably vary with each case study but, regardless of how well they are hidden from consumers, there will always be costs.

#### 2.5.6 TFCAs and tourism

In the case of TFCAs, tourism is nonetheless “generally posited as the ‘holy grail’ capable of tying together all the different goals of contemporary (transfrontier) conservation” (Büscher 2013, p. 57). In much of the existing literature, this notion of TFCAs as sites of neoliberalism is illustrated through a number of neoliberal changes that they are said to undergo. One such change is the instance of “roll-out” neoliberalism in TFCAs, a term first used by Peck and Tickell (2002) which implicates more than just the traditional public to private shift. As Büscher (2010b, p. 652) explains,

contemporary neoliberalism has progressed from its 1980s ‘roll-back’ to 1990s and 2000s ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism which implicates not only the (public transfers to the) private sector but also the actual neoliberalization of the state ... [h]ence, not only does the state support neoliberal governance strategies such as competition and commercialization, it also actively partakes in them.

This reregulation of the state and its policies paves the way for the most prevalent assumption regarding neoliberalism in TFCAs – the increase in tourism. Indeed, it makes sense that tourism should be said to play a large role in TFCAs, given that they are “modelled on free market principles” (van Amerom 2005, p. 157) and that tourism is one of the most powerful vehicles of contemporary neoliberalism, as has been explained above.

Increased tourism is put forward by many proponents of transfrontier conservation as one of the primary benefits of the establishment of TFPs (Büscher 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Ferreira 2004; Hanks 2003; Scovronick & Turpie 2009; Timothy 2001, among many others). This is especially true in the Southern African context where tourism offers a potential solution to many socio-economic problems such as high levels of poverty and unemployment. The PPF is one of the most powerful players when it comes to Southern African transfrontier conservation and, as Büscher (2013, p. 52-53) explains, “[t]he peace parks discourse consists of the familiar transfrontier conservation elements (international cooperation, community development, and biodiversity conservation), but with a particular emphasis on finding harmony between

capitalism and nature, predominantly through nature-based tourism". This quote perfectly sums up the claims made in favour of TFCAs and highlights the one that is most relevant to this study – that transfrontier parks become sites of neoliberalism through the growth and encouragement of nature-based tourism. However, there exists a distinct gap in the existing literature when it comes to verifying the claim that TFCAs lead automatically to increased tourism levels. Similarly, very little has been written about tourism in the KTP, with Scovronick and Turpie's (2009) paper being the only exception. The rest of this paper attempts to broaden the scope of enquiry by assessing the impact that transfrontier status has had on tourism in the KTP and in the area immediately surrounding it.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Research and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Having explored the existing literature on the subject of TFCAs and positioned my study within this body of work, this chapter will describe the various methods and techniques that were used to collect and analyse the data during the study. The chapter will begin by explaining each of the chosen approaches and techniques and justifying their selection through a brief review of the relevant literature. It will then go on to explain how the study area was decided on, and the dates and duration of the various fieldwork phases. Thereafter, the following two sections describe in greater detail the two main research techniques that were employed – semi-structured interviews and the collection and analysis of the KTP's quantitative visitation data. I will then explore the many different challenges and limitations that presented themselves during my fieldwork and how I attempted to solve or mitigate each one. The chapter will conclude with a short description of the various ethical issues that were taken into consideration prior to engaging in any research involving human subjects.

#### **3.2 Methodological approaches**

In order to discover the impact that the establishment of the Transfrontier Park had on tourism and development, both within its borders and in the area surrounding it, I employed both a qualitative and quantitative approach to data collection, and several methodological techniques were used as a result. The two most important techniques were the use of semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from local guesthouse owners and park officials, and the acquisition and analysis of the Park's (quantitative) visitation data. Bryman (2006, p. 111) explains that the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research within one study can be a useful and productive strategy as it "frequently brings more to researchers' understanding than they anticipate at the outset". Prior to engaging in either of these, however, two other research techniques were undertaken. The first of these was an in-depth review of the existing literature on the subject of TFCAs, nature-based tourism and the spread of neoliberalism into the realm of nature. This helped me gain a thorough understanding of these areas of research and how they intersected with and affected one another. In addition to this, the review allowed me to situate my study within the existing body of literature. The second initial research

technique was the acquisition and study of aerial photographs of the Kalahari from the Department of Land Affairs in Cape Town. These were used to aid my preliminary understanding of the area's topography and to identify the main development hubs, as well as to gauge how far out from the Park's entrance at TWEEN RIVIEREN the development and infrastructure stretched. I had initially planned to engage in a comparison of aerial photographs from different years in order to assess the large-scale changes to development and infrastructure in the area over time. In order to accomplish this, photographs were required that not only predated the establishment of the KTP in 2000 (in order to identify any changes that may have taken place as a result of its formation) but that were also of high enough resolution to be able to reflect the kinds of development and land use changes that had occurred over time. Unfortunately, due perhaps to the remoteness of the location, not only were the available images taken at an inappropriate resolution, but the most recent available photographs were already ten years old, thereby limiting their usefulness in assessing change



**Figure 3.1** Map showing the KTP and surrounding area  
 Source: The Peace Parks Foundation ([www.peaceparks.org](http://www.peaceparks.org))

over time. I therefore had to rely on verbal accounts of the many changes that had taken place over the last fifteen to twenty years as described to me by guesthouse owners and residents of the area, many of whom had lived and farmed in the Kalahari for several generations and who therefore had a great deal of insight in this regard.

These semi-structured interviews were by far my most utilised method of data collection, and were undertaken with guesthouse owners, game farm managers, park officials and local residents alike, as will be described in greater detail later in this chapter. This form of qualitative data collection was chosen over formalised or structured interviews for several reasons. May (2011, p. 135) describes how semi-structured interviews encourage respondents to answer "on their own terms" while still allowing a certain level of structure to be maintained for comparability. This comparability is important as "[n]o single interview, however revealing, can offer more than limited insights into general social forces and processes" (Gerson & Horowitz 2002, p. 211), and a comparison is therefore required in order to highlight the important findings within the body of research. Indeed, this continuity proved very important to my research as many of the answers, though qualitative in nature, were later collated and quantified in order to produce graphs and percentages. For this reason, all the 'bases' needed to be covered in each interview to allow for a more codeable set of results, as is common practice within the social sciences (May 2011, p. 143). In addition to this, semi-structured interviews are generally relatively informal and have a conversational quality to them (Longhurst 2010, p. 105) which fosters a relaxed environment and therefore, hopefully, a relaxed respondent who is more willing to divulge their honest opinions. Most importantly, however, the asking of open-ended questions allows respondents to make points and raise issues that may not have been anticipated by the interviewer. This was certainly the case during my fieldwork and, had it not been for the informal, semi-structured nature of the interviews, I may not have become aware of many of the most important changes and issues affecting tourism and development in the area.

As stated above, the second part of my study involved the acquisition and analysis of the Park's tourism and visitation data from the last twenty-five years. This was an essential step towards understanding the relationship (if any) between transfrontier parks and a rise in tourism. I had initially assumed that the Park's total yearly visitor numbers and unit occupancy levels would be available in SANParks' annual reports which are published at the end of each financial year. However, early on in the process of extracting the relevant data from these publications I realised that, especially in the early editions (in the late 1980s and early 1990s), the data was

not only insufficient, but also highly inaccurate<sup>6</sup> and, in many instances, no visitation data was published at all. This led me to request the Park's raw tourism data directly from the SANParks official following our (semi-structured) interview. He happily furnished me with detailed visitation data of the KTP and Addo Elephant National Park dating back to the 1980s. A large portion of this project's findings and conclusions are based on the analysis and comparison of the tourism data of these two Parks, the details of which will be described later in this chapter.

### **3.3 Study area and time spent in the field**

My fieldwork was divided into four phases. The first phase took place in July 2012 and was only one week long. The majority of the fieldwork took place during the second and third phases which lasted just over a month each and took place in November to December 2012 and March to April 2013 respectively. The fourth and final phase which took place in July 2013 lasted just under two weeks and was undertaken primarily in order to carry out a few final interviews with individuals who had not been available during the previous fieldwork phases. I travelled the approximately 1100 km from Cape Town to the Kalahari by car each time which required an average of 12 hours of uninterrupted, solo driving, but did allow me to have my own transport while in the field. The purpose of the first, week-long phase in July 2012 was threefold. The first objective was to do what the aerial photographs had failed to do – to find out how much tourist development existed both within and surrounding the KTP. The second was to ascertain how large a study area outside the Park would be required in order to capture enough of the peripheral establishments to gain a big enough sample size. Since I had not visited the area before, the final objective of this short visit was simply to familiarise myself with the character and layout of the place in which I would be spending a great deal of time in the next eighteen months and, in doing so, to make some preliminary contacts and to find suitable accommodation for the second, third and fourth fieldwork phases. It was during this first excursion that I discovered a small wildlife reserve 35 km outside the Park called Kalahari Trails which was to become my home for all three of the subsequent fieldwork phases. A photograph of Kalahari Trails can be seen in Figure 3.2 below. The reserve, which offers a variety of accommodation options, is owned by Professor Anne Rasa who retired to the Kalahari in the 1980s after having worked in the Park researching desert animals for a number of years. I stayed with 'Prof Anne' (as she is affectionately known and referred to by the local people) and

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<sup>6</sup> Several annual reports admitted to having counted some groups of visitors more than once, depending on whether or not they entered and exited the Park through the same gate. Though I do not fully understand how this mistake occurred, the data that I received directly from the Park Official accounted for these early errors.

her assistant and former student, Andre Labuschaigne, for just under three months over the course of 2012 and 2013 and during these visits I developed a close friendship with both of them which proved invaluable to my research and to the overall enjoyment of my time in the field.



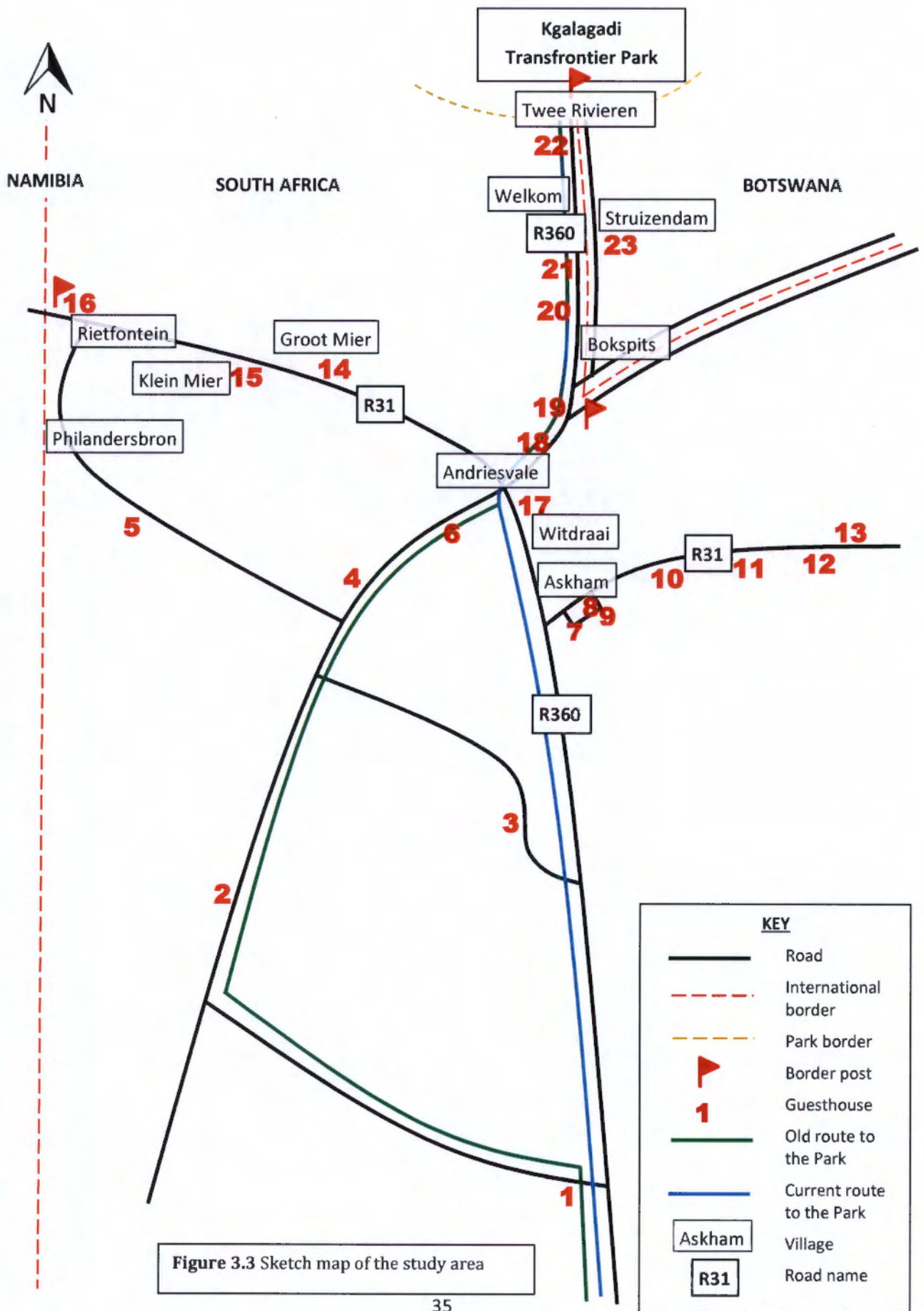
**Figure 3.2** A photograph of Kalahari Trails during a rainstorm

I managed to accomplish all three of the above stated objectives in the one week that I was able to spend in the field during phase one. During my very first drive into the Kalahari on the R360, I immediately became aware of the large number of game farms, guesthouses and other types of tourist development situated en route to the Park. The challenge therefore lay in deciding where to 'draw the line', as it were, with regard to the study area. I had initially thought that a 50 km radius from the Park's entrance gate at Twee Rivieren would be sufficient. However, after plotting this area this on a map, I decided that this would be too small and limiting, and that a radius of 100 km would be more appropriate. This was due primarily to the large size of the farms upon which these tourist establishments were situated. These farm sizes resulted in there being considerable distance between each of the guesthouses, meaning that a 50 km radius would only have captured approximately ten establishments which I felt would be insufficient. This was an adjustment that I expected to have to make, given that the Northern

Cape is South Africa's least densely populated province with only 2.2% of the national population living in a province that makes up a third of the country's land area (South Africa 2014, p. 9). The majority of this first fieldwork phase was spent driving along the various gravel roads criss-crossing the study area that stretched across the border between South Africa and Botswana, making note of the locations of various tourist establishments in both countries on a series of basic maps that I constructed myself. I used my car's odometer to measure the distances between the guesthouses in order to make their positions on the sketch maps as accurate as possible, relative to each other. This allowed me to create a list of establishments that fell within the 100 km radius from Twee Rivieren. Figure 3.3 is an amalgamation of all of these little sketch maps and shows the entire study area (outside the Park) as well as the locations (represented by numbers) of all of the establishments located within the study area. In addition to this, I also collected as many brochures and flyers as possible from the establishments that I visited during this first fieldwork period. These proved extremely useful in helping me to identify the game farms and guesthouses (and even some roads) that I had missed on my drives. One particularly well-stocked establishment, the Kalahari Info and Tented Camp situated on the outskirts of Rietfontien, provided me with over thirty brochures of different guesthouses to scrutinise and cross-reference with the list that I had already constructed. The combination of these two techniques, as well as an extensive internet search for tourist establishments in and around the Kalahari, ensured that the list of twenty-three guesthouses that I constructed was both accurate and exhaustive, and allowed me to conduct the semi-structured interviews with the owners and proprietors of these establishments during the second phase later that year.

### **3.4 Interviews**

The reasons for choosing to undertake semi-structured interviews have already been described earlier in the chapter and will therefore not be repeated here. Two sets of interviews were undertaken with the owners or managers of each of the twenty-three tourist establishments identified during the first phase of the fieldwork. The first set of interviews was carried out during the second fieldwork phase in November and December 2012 and the follow up interviews were conducted during the third phase in March and April 2013. The purpose of the first set of interviews was to introduce myself to the owners of the guesthouses and game farms and to familiarise them with my project and its aims and objectives. These first interviews were very informal and, although I had a list of eight basic questions to ask them – such as how long they had owned their business and what kind of accommodation or services they offered – they



served mainly as points of conversation and allowed me to get to know the community a little better and to become more aware of some of the undercurrents and issues at play within the area. In order to avoid being turned away by business owners who were wary of researchers before even being able to meet them, I did not telephone ahead to set up meetings during the first set of interviews, and merely arrived at the various establishments unannounced. Although this occasionally proved slightly awkward and often required me to visit an establishment more than once due to the owners not being home at the time, it was definitely a good tactic for a number of reasons. The first of these was that many proprietors (especially those who owned or operated hunting farms) were slightly wary and mistrustful of me at first, especially after hearing that I was from UCT's Department of Environmental and Geographical Science<sup>7</sup>. I believe that, had I called and requested a meeting ahead of time, many individuals may have found reasons and excuses to avoid meeting with me at all. Another positive outcome of this method was the very casual and informal tone that was set by my arriving unannounced. Once again, this may not have been the case had I telephoned or emailed them requesting a formal meeting. I feel that this would have set a more formal tone, thereby suggesting that I was hoping to conduct a much more structured interview than was desired or necessary. During these first interviews I did not use a recording device to record any of the dialogue out of fear of this ruining the casual tone of the discussion. Instead, I merely made hand-written notes of some of the important points that were made which allowed for the recording of some of the basic preliminary findings for use in the next phases of fieldwork, while still putting the respondents at ease and encouraging free flowing dialogue. In addition to answering some of the basic questions (which greatly influenced the content and structure of the follow-up interviews), these preliminary interviews were undertaken primarily in order to develop a rapport with the respondents and to garner a sense of trust which I hoped would bear fruit during the third fieldwork phase by making them more comfortable and willing to cooperate the next time I visited.

This tactic, although time consuming, did indeed pay off during the third phase in March and April 2013. By this time I had met all of the guesthouse owners at least once and some several times at various local events the previous year, such as the Kalahari Desert Festival<sup>8</sup>. The second round of interviews, although still semi-structured, was more elaborate than the first. In

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<sup>7</sup> The owner of a one of the larger hunting farms continued to respond guardedly until I managed to convince him that I was not there representing any kind of environmental watchdog organisation by producing my student identification card.

<sup>8</sup> One of the respondents even helped me to push my car out of some thick sand in which it had become stuck at the Desert Festival.

order to minimise the kind of time wastage that had occurred during the first set of interviews by arriving at the various establishments unannounced only to find that there was no one home, I decided to set up the interviews beforehand by telephoning the owners, whose contact details I had collected during the first interviews. Arranging the interviews was relatively easy thanks in no small part to the fact that I had already developed a working relationship with most of the respondents and that they were therefore more than happy to meet with me again. I believe it was because of this trust and familiarity that I was able to easily arrange the follow-up interviews with twenty out of twenty-three of the respondents during this third phase. Although they did not technically deny me the chance to interview them, three guesthouse owners were out of the area during this third visit and it was partly for this reason that a fourth fieldwork phase was necessary in July 2013.

This second round of interviews was extremely productive. Each interview varied in length from forty-five minutes to anywhere between three and five hours depending on the respondent's willingness to elaborate on the questions asked and to provide details to illustrate and substantiate their answers<sup>9</sup>. A list of the questions that were asked can be found in Appendix 1. It was essential that some questions, such as the year in which the guesthouse was established, be answered in a clear and precise fashion in order for the aforementioned comparability of results to be maintained. These short, simple questions were asked first, thereby serving as 'ice breakers' before moving onto questions which leant themselves more to conversation and discussion, such as 'What impact, if any, did the establishment of the KTP in 2000 have on your business?'. Permission to record each interview with a voice recorder was also requested prior to the start of each one, which was granted by all the respondents. The use of such tools during interviews allows researchers to engage more fully with the conversation taking place, due to the fact that they do not have to focus on constantly taking notes in order to record their findings (Longhurst 2010; Marshall & Rossman 1999). This was especially pertinent in the interviews that lasted several hours, as maintaining lively conversation *and* taking accurate notes for that long would have proved challenging. Longhurst (2010, p. 110) explains the importance of transcribing interviews as soon after they are conducted as possible so as not to forget any details or observations that were made during the discussion. Although I did not transcribe all of the interviews in their entirety, at the end of each day I listened to the recordings that had been taken and made notes of the important findings and any direct quotes

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<sup>9</sup> In some of the more remote locations, the owners of the guesthouses would insist that I stay for a meal before I began the drive back to Kalahari Trails which would inevitably lengthen the duration of the interview.

that I felt may have been particularly relevant. Upon completing my fieldwork, this qualitative data was analysed through the construction of a large spreadsheet listing all the questions that were asked as well as a shortened version of the responses that were provided by each respondent. In addition to allowing me to produce graphs (such as Figures 4.1 and 4.2) illustrating the answers to some of the more quantitative questions, the spreadsheet (and the process of summarising each answer in order to enter it into the spreadsheet) helped me to recognise trends that were present within what would otherwise have been a very large and daunting set of data. Once the trends and arguments within my findings were clear, I then returned to the recordings of the interviews in order to rediscover some of the finer details and descriptions that were lost in the summarising process. Through these steps I was able to formulate strong, coherent arguments that represented the larger trends without sacrificing the interesting little details and nuances of the individual interviews.

In addition to the forty-six interviews (2 x 23) conducted with guesthouse and game farm owners, I also conducted three interviews with what Roger Pierce (2008) would call 'elites'. These elites, according to Pierce, "are people who exercise disproportionately high influence on the outcome of events or policies in your research area" (2008, p. 119). This quote pertains to political elites but is nonetheless an appropriate description of the three 'elite' individuals in my study. These individuals consisted of two officials from the KTP – one working for SANParks and the other for the DWNP – whose identity I was not granted permission to disclose, and one ex-park warden, Elias le Riche, whose family presided over the KTP (or the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park as it was called before 2000) for three generations. Although semi-structured interviews were still carried out with these three individuals, each conversation was steered by a unique set of questions. These interviews pertained primarily to the changes that had taken place inside the Park over time and what effects these had had on tourism levels. In addition to providing a great deal of useful qualitative data, one of the park officials was also able to supply me with the Park's raw visitation data described earlier. This data took the form of several spreadsheets spanning four decades, which allowed me to carry out a quantitative data analysis of the changes to tourism levels in the KTP over time, as will be explained in the following section.

### **3.5 Analysis of the KTP's visitation data**

Given the value of combining both qualitative and quantitative research within one study (as described earlier in the chapter), the collection and analyses of the KTP's visitation data was therefore an essential component of my research project. Section 3.2 describes the problems and limitations that I experienced when attempting to gather this data from SANParks' annual reports. As a result of these limitations, a complete set of comprehensive tourism data was acquired from one of the two park officials with whom interviews were conducted. The document consisted of visitation and occupancy data spanning several decades for a number of Southern African parks, including the KTP and the Addo Elephant National Park (AENP). These data were used to compile a series of graphs depicting the changes over time to the total number of visitors to the KTP, as well as the changes to the Park's unit occupancy levels. These two aspects of the Park's tourism data were chosen partly because their data sets were the most complete and extensive, and partly due to that fact that, between them, they offer insight into the changes to both the real numbers of guests visiting the KTP and to the number of visitors relative to the Park's total capacity.

Given that the primary purpose of this data analysis is to confirm or negate the claim that TFCA's automatically lead to greater tourist numbers, a study of the KTP's figures alone would not have been sufficient. In order to properly make sense of the tourism numbers of this TFCA, a comparison with a non-transfrontier park was therefore required. In this case, the non-transfrontier (national) park selected was the AENP due to its many characteristics that were different to those of the KTP. As will be described further in Chapter 6, the comparison of these two parks' tourism data helped to underscore the (limited) effects that transfrontier status had on the KTP's ability to attract tourists. It was not necessary to offer a great deal of context or insight into the workings of the AENP. The comparison served only to highlight which trends reflected in the KTP's data were a result of the formation of the TFCA and which reflected national or global changes. This comparison helped to emphasise that tourism numbers are closely linked to a park's original pull factors, and not in fact to the size of the park.

### **3.6 Challenges and limitations**

As is the case in most studies that engage in fieldwork, I experienced a number of challenges and limitations during the course of my research, some of which proved more problematic than

others. This section will describe each challenge and the various steps taken to overcome or rectify them individually.

### 3.6.1 Communication difficulties

As with any kind of fieldwork, being aware of one's own personal attributes, values and positionality – and how they might affect the research process – is very important. Two factors that certainly influenced the way in which I was perceived and treated by participants were my race and my gender. Sadly, given the extremely high levels of socio-economic inequality, as well as the noticeable racial tension prevalent in the area as a whole, I am fairly confident that I would not have received the kind of warm welcome and hospitality that I enjoyed from many of the wealthy, white, Afrikaans farmers and their families had I not been white myself. On the other hand, my gender sometimes proved to be an obstacle due to the fact that some of the male farmers were reluctant to be questioned by a (young) woman. Although none of them refused to be interviewed, it is possible that they may have been more open and forthcoming with their responses had I been a man. However, the attribute with by far the greatest impact was my lack of fluency in Afrikaans. Throughout the Northern Cape, the most prevalent and widely understood language is Afrikaans which is spoken by 68% of the province's population (South Africa 2014, p.9). The fact that I am only able to speak very limited Afrikaans was therefore a constant inconvenience during my time in the field. However, in addition to being able to speak Afrikaans, many of the individuals I interviewed – especially the game farm and guesthouse owners – were also able to speak English fluently. The majority of those who were not fluent were still able to speak and understand a fair amount of English and this, combined with my ability to understand a great deal more Afrikaans than I can speak, made it possible for me to conduct my research without needing to employ a fulltime translator. In only one instance was communication impossible without the aid of a translator and this in turn raised its own set of challenges. This individual felt she was unable to properly understand, let alone answer, my questions without the aid of someone who spoke both Afrikaans and English. For this interview I enlisted the help of a relative who happened to be visiting me in the field at that time. Although her presence made communication easier, the flow and tone of the interview was noticeably different compared to those interviews in which I was able to communicate directly with the respondent. Despite the fact that I was asking the questions and leading the interview, the interviewee would respond only to the translator and made limited eye contact with me throughout the interview. This prevented the kind of connection and relationship that I had experienced with the other respondents from developing in this instance. In addition to this,

upon listening to the recording of this interview at the end of the day, I found that in many situations, due to my limited understanding of the responses (despite having them translated for me during the interview), I had neglected to ask the relevant follow-up questions that would have provided me with a deeper level of understanding of the finer details surrounding the woman's business. Thankfully, this was an exception and all of the other interviews were conducted primarily in English with occasional Afrikaans words and phrases included, some of which have been retained in the findings analysis.

### 3.6.2 Transport

Perhaps the second greatest challenge to effective data collection was transport. The Kalahari's arid landscape is difficult to navigate, which is one of the reasons why most of the vehicle-owning residents choose to drive 4x4s. I, however, drove a small sedan during all four fieldwork phases, and this resulted in a number of incidents that hindered my progress, such as a number of flat tyres, a flat battery and one instance of over-heating. Changing tyres became a regular chore and I soon learnt how to plug my own tyres so as to avoid having to drive the five hour roundtrip to Upington every time one got punctured by nails and other sharp objects that got repositioned and brought to the surface when the gravel roads were graded. However, by far the most prevalent problem was the sandy terrain. Being capable of only two wheel drive, my vehicle got stuck in the sand on an almost daily basis. This was not only inconvenient but also at times worrying due to the intense heat, the remoteness of some of the locations and the lack of cell phone reception in most areas. The majority of these situations merely required me to dig the sand out from in front of the wheels and to lay down rubber mats, cardboard or any other flat surfaces that I happened to have with me in order to get the vehicle moving. However, in one extreme instance, I was forced to wait for several hours until a farmer with a towrope and a 4x4 happened to drive past and offer assistance.

During my third phase of fieldwork, I had no option but to make use of a rental car due to my own car needing repairs at the time. Because this decision was made at the last minute, I neglected to remember to get clearance from the rental agency to take the car across the border to Botswana. This was something that needed to be done in Cape Town, as a separate contract was required, and I could not therefore rectify the situation once in the field. This proved to be exceptionally problematic as I had yet to conduct the second (and most important) interview with the respondents situated in the Botswana side of the study area. During one of my visits to

the Park, I stopped at the border post at Twee Rivieren and enquired as to whether it would be possible to take a rental car across the border to Botswana for just a few hours despite the fact that I did not have the correct documentation. Despite being turned away three times, my perseverance eventually achieved the desired result and I was granted permission by the South African Police Service to take the rental car into Botswana on the condition that I returned the same day and to through the same border post every time.

During the same phase in March 2013, I was fortunate enough to witness a series of spectacular thunderstorms bringing much needed rain to the desert. However, this in turn brought a different set of vehicular challenges. With so much precipitation in such a short space of time, the ground soon became saturated and vast pools of water collected on the surface of roads and did not drain for over a week. After a few days of being driven on, these saturated gravel-turned-mud roads quickly became almost impassable, as depicted in Figures 3.4a and 3.4b. This



**Figures 3.4a (top) and 3.4b (bottom)** Photographs depicting the flooding and resulting degradation of gravel roads within the study area.

was due to both the width and depth of the tracks left in the mud by farmers' 4x4s, which resulted in the axle of my own much smaller car grinding badly against the middle ridge in between the tracks. Nonetheless, the network of gravel roads meant that if one section was too degraded to be traversed in a vehicle capable of only two wheel drive, there was always another route to try. However, were I to return to the field for any long space of time, my first priority would be to secure a vehicle capable of four wheel drive.

### 3.6.3 Electricity, electronics and connectivity

Another set of challenges brought about by the extreme weather conditions were the continuous power outages caused by the powerful thunderstorms. At one point during my December visit the power remained off at Kalahari Trails for over 48 hours, making it impossible to work on computers or to charge recording devices. There were also other practical implications such as that, after two days in the desert without electricity, a great deal of my food had defrosted much of it had to be given away or discarded. This in turn forced me to visit Upington more often than should have been necessary which wasted time and drove up petrol expenses. There was also very limited cell phone connectivity in the area and as a whole, and no internet facilities of any kind which, though not as problematic as the intermittent power supply, was still inconvenient. Another problem caused by the extreme weather was the overheating and subsequent failure of my laptop computer. I relied on it heavily whilst in the field to make notes, write up findings, create maps, keep field diaries, store and listen to the recordings of my interviews and to keep track of the arranged times and addresses of the interviews that I had yet to conduct. During my second fieldwork phase which took place in December 2012, day time temperatures often exceeded 45°C which caused my computer to spontaneously shut down approximately every twenty minutes. However, this minor inconvenience paled in comparison to the devastating complete failure that took place roughly half way through the second phase. Attempts by a local self-proclaimed computer expert to fix my laptop only worsened the situation and I was forced to conduct the rest of my second fieldwork phase without it. Luckily, upon returning to Cape Town, I was able to recover most of the work I had done up to that point.

### 3.6.4 Local practices and rituals

In addition to these biophysical and climatological hindrances, certain aspects of the local residents' lifestyles also influenced and challenged my research methodology. Shortly after

arriving in the Kalahari to conduct phase two in November 2012 (at the height of summer), it became apparent that attempting to conduct any interviews between eleven o'clock in the morning and three o'clock in the afternoon was an exercise in futility. This is because of the widely followed practice adopted by local residents during the summer months, when temperatures can reach 50°C, involving a sort of hibernation during the hottest hours of the day whereby people retreat into the relative coolness of their homes to sleep or simply escape the heat. Attempting to contact or interview people during these times was very challenging. The same was true for Sundays when most farmers and their families travel considerable distances in the mornings to attend their respective churches. Only very occasionally was I able to secure interviews during these times, but this became less and less of an inconvenience due to the fact that, the more time I spent in the Kalahari, the more I too felt the need to escape the heat during the afternoon.

Another aspect of the local residents' lifestyles that affected my ability to carry out fieldwork was alcohol consumption which, in different ways, turned out to be both a help and a hindrance to my research. In this region of the Northern Cape of South Africa there are a number of socio-economic problems, especially amongst the poorer rural communities and the †Khomani San in particular. In addition to (and, arguably, because of) issues such as poverty, unemployment and a lack of education, there is a noticeable dependency among these communities on drugs and alcohol. Julie Grant, a fellow researcher working with the †Khomani San during my second and third fieldwork phases, describes how "[i]nstances of violent spousal abuse, rape and murder, all occurred in the Community during the research period, as did regular alcohol and drug consumption" (Grant 2012, p. 263). Although the majority of my interviewees were relatively wealthy, Afrikaans land owners who generally did not fall into this category, a large portion of my time was nonetheless spent interacting with local communities in both Andriesvale and Askham. During the week, these interactions were both friendly and insightful, but the same cannot be said for the weekends. From midday on Friday until early Monday morning, these spaces transformed into areas of drunkenness and violence, resulting in my abandoning them during these periods. However, in a very much less extreme respect, the social consumption of alcohol on the weekends led to a number of positive outcomes and unexpected insights. During the three months spent in the field, I spent a number of evenings at the bar of the Molopo Lodge, the largest and most well established lodge outside the KTP. Whether I was there to have a cooked meal, to charge my laptop using their generator during the power failures, or simply to watch a game of football on the weekend, spending time at the Molopo Lodge in a casual capacity helped me to engage casually with local residents and this in turn allowed me to build

relationships with a number of contacts that I may not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet.

### 3.6.5 Acquiring a permit

Surprisingly, some of the main challenges to my study took place before any fieldwork was even undertaken. The first of these was the lack of available aerial photographs of the study area which I had hoped to examine prior to visiting the field, as was discussed in section 3.2.

However, the series of delays in the issuing of my research permit by SANParks proved very much more troublesome and inconvenient. Given that my research project involved one of their parks, I applied for a research permit, despite the fact that very little time would be spent actually conducting research within the KTP itself. Nonetheless, in order to ethically and responsibly conduct the interviews I required, and in the hopes of accessing the Park's visitation data for the last twenty-five years, I applied for the relevant permit in 2012, prior to the first phase of fieldwork. I submitted my research proposal and engaged in frequent correspondence with one particular SANParks employee for over three months. After hearing nothing from her for some time, I contacted SANParks again, only to be told that the employee with whom I had been dealing was in fact not equipped to review my proposal and that I would have to start again with someone else. This led to a significant delay and a great deal of frustration. Nonetheless, after over a year of dealing with SANParks, I was eventually awarded my permit and granted permission to conduct research within the KTP.

### **3.7 Ethics**

Conducting research in an ethical manner is an essential part of any project, especially those involving human subjects. Given that a certain level of interaction with human subjects was indeed a part of my fieldwork, I attained ethical clearance from my department to conduct interviews with individuals in my study area. Kelman (1972, p. 1001) explains that many ethical problems arise as a result of the violation or circumvention of the participants' voluntary informed consent. In order to ensure such violations did not take place within my study, each respondent was asked to read, complete and sign a document which included the aims and objectives of my research project, as well as a series of permission requests. These included the request for permission to use the information they were about to give me, permission to use their names and those of their businesses, and permission to record the interviews using a voice recorder, as described in the previous section. Respondents were given the option to grant or

deny each of these requests and it was stated clearly that, should they not wish to be named in my final project, an alias would be used to protect their identity. However, with the exception of the two park officials, I was given permission to publish the names of all of the respondents. In addition to this, the document (of which they were given a copy) contained my contact details and those of my supervisor, details on how the information they provided would be used and for what purpose, and a statement confirming that they were free to decline answering any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering and were able to back out of the interview at any time. With these permission forms signed, I was able to undertake research confident that it was being conducted in an ethical manner.

## CHAPTER 4

### Trends and Changes in the Establishment of Guesthouses and Game Farms Outside the KTP

#### 4.1 Introduction

In order to achieve the first objective of this study – to assess the changes in tourism development that have taken place as a result of the TFCA's formation, both within the Park and in the area surrounding it – an analysis of the trends and changes in development and economic activity outside the Park, as well as the reasons behind these trends, is an essential step. This chapter will therefore begin with a brief description of each guesthouse in order to familiarise the reader with the nature of these surrounding businesses and to prevent having to constantly contextualise each one as they are referred to in the following sections. Thereafter, an analysis of the trends in guesthouse establishment will take place, involving a description of the patterns of establishment over time, as well as a thorough explanation of the various reasons given for the establishment of these businesses. The chapter will conclude by describing the limited impact that the establishment of the KTP has had on the creation of new businesses in the area immediately surrounding it.

#### 4.2 Brief description of each guesthouse

An analysis of the economic activity taking place outside the Park is one of the key objectives of this study and, in order to reduce the need to describe and contextualise each guesthouse as it is mentioned in the following chapters, a brief description of each will be given here. The numbers assigned to each establishment correspond to those on Figure 3.3, showing their location within the study area.

1. Rooipan Guesthouse (established in 1990): Rooipan is a small guesthouse situated on the Rooipan farm and accommodating only 8 people. It is owned and run by Lizette Knoetze who claims that her guesthouse was the area's first (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). The farm is situated just 2 km off the R360 on a gravel road that used to make up part of the previous route to the Park before the R360 was created. Lizette, whose family has lived and farmed in the area for multiple generations, was able to provide a detailed account of the changes that have taken place in the area, such as the provision of piped water in 1985 which was used by the

government as an incentive to keep farmers on their land during the South African Border War<sup>10</sup>. Lizette's business began when passers-by en route to the Park stopped at her farm requesting to use her ablution facilities. This led her to open a tearoom and eventually a guesthouse catering to tourists, the majority of whom stop over for only one night on their way to or from the Park (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013).

2. Loch Maree Guest Farm (established in 1997): Loch Maree is a guest farm catering to both hunters and tourists. Owned and run by Retha Stadler and her husband, it, like many other hunting farms, consists of both a guesthouse for tourists and a field camp for hunters. As with many of the other hunting establishments in the region, the guesthouse component of Loch Maree is located within the main farmhouse where Retha and her family live. Because of this proximity to the guests staying in the guesthouse, these rooms are reserved for tourists en route to the Park, while the hunters are relegated to the field camp due to their notoriously anti-social behaviour (R. Stadler, interview, 12/04/2013).

3. Dune Valley Farm House and Family Field Chalet (established in 2007): Similar to Loch Maree, Dune Valley offers accommodation to tourists within their farm house, although the majority of their clientele are hunters who stay in the field chalet. This chalet, like most field camps, is situated some distance from the main house and is somewhat rustic, with running water but no electricity. The manager (and mother of the owner), Magda van Schalkwyk explained that, although they accommodate hunters, no hunting takes place on their farm. Instead, they have an agreement with relatives who own the neighbouring farm which allows hunters staying at Dune Valley to hunt game on this next-door farm (M. van Schalkwyk, interview, 11/04/2013).

4. Inkbospan (established in 1993): Inkbospan and Koppieskraal (number 5) are closely linked. They are owned by the same family, with Koppieskraal currently being occupied by Esbe and Willie Knoesen, the parents of Landa Conradie who lives at and manages Inkbospan with her husband. Inkbospan, like Rooipan and Loch Maree, used to be situated on the old route to the Park, before the R360 was established (L. Conradie, interview, 10/04/2013). It was originally started by Esbe in 1993 and, like Lizette's, her business also started as a farm stall selling home-made goods to tourists on their way to the Park (E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013). This led

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<sup>10</sup> Prior to 1985, there had been a longstanding agreement in place that allowed the original farmers and their families to make use of the land on the condition that they did not ask for help from the government with regard to water provision. However, the new generation of farmers who were not willing to struggle with the nomadic farming lifestyle that the arid landscape dictated, threatened to move off the farms, leaving the border land vacant at a time when having people to monitor the South Africa-Namibia border had never been more essential. As a result, 450 km of pipelines were laid, extending to approximately 30 km south of Askham (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013).

to accommodation being offered at both farms. Inkbospan offers self-catering chalets and camping facilities.

5. Koppieskraal (established in 1991): As has been explained above, Koppieskraal and Inkbospan are owned by the same family. Koppieskraal is one of the most remote guesthouses in the study area, and also one of the most unique. Only one group of guests can be accommodated at a time and, though the facilities offered are basic, Esbe and her husband Willie, who have lived in the Kalahari their entire lives, believe that the silence and darkness imposed by the lack of electricity and modern appliances are an essential part of the overall experience (E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013). They have a series of unique attractions including incredible rock formations and rare species of vultures nesting on the farm.

6. Rea Guesthouse and Bushcamp (established in 2005): Rea is situated just a few kilometres away from Inkbospan, on the same gravel road that used to make up part of the old route to the Park. It is a hunting farm run by Nicolene Knoetze, the daughter-in-law of Lizette Knoetze from Rooipan. Nicolene echoed the feelings of Retha and Magda from Loch Maree and Dune Valley with regard to the unpleasantness caused by having hunters staying within the main farmhouse (N. Knoetze, interview, 26/03/2013). For this reason, once again two kinds of accommodation are offered – guesthouse accommodation for the tourists and a rustic field camp for the hunters. Nicolene went on to explain that the remote and rustic nature of the field camp is actually preferable for the hunters themselves, as it allows them the freedom to do as they please without having to be concerned about bothering the owners or other guests (N. Knoetze, interview, 26/03/2013). Another interesting point was that they had been fully booked for the hunting season for several years, and that the same groups of hunters returned to Rea each year, eliminating the need for them to take on new groups (N. Knoetze, interview, 26/03/2013).

7. Askham Post Office Guesthouse (established in 2001): Askham Post Office is a fully equipped guesthouse in the refurbished building that was once the area's only post office. Askham is the only sizable village between Upington and Twee Rivieren and it is where many people on their way to or from the Park choose to buy petrol and basic supplies such as bottled water, tinned food and firewood. Johanna Du Toit manages the Post Office Guesthouse as well as the Diamond T Coffee Shop.

8. Diamond T Gift and Coffee Shop (established in 2012): The Diamond T is the only establishment in the study that does not offer accommodation. Though there were other shops, petrol stations and bottle stores in the study area, they did not meet the requirements of a 'tourist establishment' due to the kind of customers that frequented them, as well as the nature and extent of their advertising and its intended target market which was primarily local

residents. While these other shops cater mainly to the people of Askham and Andriesvale, the Diamond T Coffee Shop is clearly aiming at a different target market altogether. Owned and run by Johanna Du Toit (who also runs the Askham Post Office Guesthouse), it is advertised in the Red Dune Route booklet alongside many of the guesthouses and hunting farms and, in addition to this, the very nature of what the Diamond T sells sets it apart from all the other shops in the Kalahari. In addition to offering freshly prepared coffee and small meals, the Diamond T also sells gifts and curios. The restaurant itself is beautifully decorated and opens up into a small but immaculately maintained garden. Flowers in little vases can be found upon each tablecloth-covered table, and this kind of attention to detail is also reflected in the food it serves. Due to the scarcity of fresh produce in the area, the menu is not very big, but certainly diverse enough to please most tourists stopping over en route to the Park or those staying in the Post Office or any of the other guesthouses in Askham. Therefore, although unique in this list of establishments, there is no doubt that the Diamond T deserves to be included.

9. Kalahari Sands Guesthouse (established in 2000): Kalahari Sands is made up of a series of units within Askham. Hannetjie van der Westhuizen manages these units, some of which belong to her and some of which are owned by friends who have moved out of the Kalahari and given their permission for her to incorporate them into her business. Though at the time of the interview Hannetjie offered camping on a section of her property, she revealed that she would soon be eliminating this option due to a lack of demand and profitability (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013).

10. Murray Guest Farm (established in 2009): Murray Guest Farm is situated just outside Askham on the untarred R31, direction Van Zylsrus. It is owned and managed by Minette Rossouw who also runs Askham's petrol station and grocery store with her husband. Murray caters to both hunters and tourists and adopts the same rules as all of the other hunting farms with regard to the different kinds of accommodation offered to these two very different kinds of guest (M. Rossouw, interview, 9/04/2013).

11. STS Kalahari Game Reserve (established in 1996): STS is a collection of adjacent farms situated along the R31. The combined size of these farms totals 52 500 acres, making STS by far the largest game farm in the area. STS does welcome tourists but the vast majority of its clientele are hunters and it is first and foremost a hunting-based business (Y. Koortzen, interview, 28/03/2013). Although the business changed hands during my time in the field, the manager, Yvonne Koortzen retained her position. Yvonne introduced me to a strange contradiction within the Kalahari hunting industry. She described how, even though they were fully booked for the coming season, and that they had been fully booked for the last few seasons,

they were considering moving to livestock farming due to the unprofitable nature of the hunting industry in the Kalahari (Y. Koortzen, interview, 28/03/2013). This strange trend was echoed by several other establishments and shall be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

12. Loch Broom Paradys (established in 1992): Loch Broom Paradys, originally started in 1992, was started by a lady called Marianne who, along with some of the other guesthouse owners at the time, was instrumental in setting up the Red Dune Route – a central advertising hub for the Kalahari's many guesthouses. Following the death of her husband, Marianne left the Kalahari and the business was taken over by Maryke Barlow. A great deal of expansion has been carried out by the new owners and, in addition to accommodation, Loch Broom Paradys now also offers conference facilities. The farm has gone from being able to accommodate four people (excluding campers) to being able to house seventy people in a series of lodges, chalets and private units (M. Barlow, interview, 27/03/2013).

13. Gemsbokkie Farmhouse (established in 2006): Gemsbokkie is a game farm owned and run by Lourens Botma. It is situated on the R31 (direction Van Zylsrus) and, although campers are welcome, it is primarily a hunting farm and caters almost exclusively to hunters. Like Yvonne from STS and Nicolene from Rea, Lourens indicated that Gemsbokkie had been operating at maximum capacity for many years and was fully booked for the coming hunting season (L. Botma, interview, 28/03/2013).

14. Breekduin (established in 2006): Breekduin is a guesthouse located on the R31 direction Rietfontein. It is owned by Mossie Willemse, a Griqua gentleman, minister and school teacher who has lived in the area his entire life and who inherited the farm from his father (M. Willemse, interview, 23/03/2013). Although it was established in 2006, the guesthouse was not in operation during my research period as Mossie was in the early stages of constructing a new building that would offer both accommodation as well as conference facilities. Mossie stressed that he would never allow hunting on his farm, and that he rather wanted to make money through tourism and farming (M. Willemse, interview, 23/03/2013). Ultimately, he wants his wife to be able to run the business while he concentrates on his teaching and farming (M. Willemse, interview, 23/03/2013).

15. Strauss Guesthouse (established in 2000): Strauss Guesthouse is situated a few kilometres away from Breekduin along the R31. It is owned by the Mier Municipality and is leased to applicants within the Mier community on a five or ten year basis. At the time of my last visit to the area, it was being managed by a lady from the Mier community called Christina Strauss. She indicated that her lease would soon expire and that she did not plan to renew it (C. Strauss, interview, 9/04/2013).

16. Kalahari Info and Tented Camp (established in 2011): This unique establishment situated just outside Rietfontien, and as close to the Namibian border as one could hope to be, is run by a lady named Gertruida Bott. In addition to running the Majestic Lodge (now Strauss Lodge) for several years, for almost a decade she and her husband ran an extremely successful guesthouse called Klipkolk which was located close to Koppieskraal, just outside a village called Philandersbron (G. Bott, interview, 9/04/2013). Having started the business from scratch and worked hard for many years to make it a successful and iconic Kalahari destination, she and her husband were informed by the Mier Municipality that their lease was not going to be renewed<sup>11</sup>. Despite being devastated by the news, Gertruida immediately started working on the Kalahari Info and Tented Camp which serves the dual purpose of offering comfortable and unusual accommodation in fully furnished tents, as well as providing an information centre for guests and passers-by (G. Bott, interview, 9/04/2013). The reception area is equipped with a wall full of brochures and flyers advertising the various attractions and places to stay in and around the Park.

17. Kopano Restcamp (established in 1995): Kopano consists of a small group of chalets situated very close to the small village of Andriesvale. It can only accommodate eight people and is owned by a man named Charl Page who also runs Andriesvale's only grocery store. During the period of time when the R360 from Andriesvale to Twee Rivieren was in the process of being tarred, Charl allowed the chalets to be rented on a relatively long-term basis by contract workers working on the road (C. Page, interview, 25/03/2013). During this time they got slightly damaged and he has not been able to complete the repairs necessary to bring them up to the required standards for tourists. However, the renovations were underway during my time in the field and Charl predicted that the chalets would be ready to accommodate tourists in time for the launch of the Bloodhound Project, which will attempt to break the world land speed record at the nearby Hakskeenpan in 2015 (C. Page, interview, 25/03/2013).

18. Molopo Lodge (established in 1970): Molopo is the oldest, largest and most well established lodge in the area surrounding the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. In addition to offering accommodation in the form of chalets, rondavels, tented chalets and camping, the main lodge also has a fully stocked bar as well as a restaurant with a detailed menu specialising in local cuisine such as springbok, gemsbok and ostrich. Other facilities include a small petrol station, a swimming pool and large screen television facilities equipped with DSTV. The bar and restaurant are open to the public and, other than the Diamond T Coffee Shop in Askham and the Kgalagadi Lodge just outside the Park, this is the only establishment in the area offering cooked

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<sup>11</sup> Although Klipkolk is now once again open, at the time of my fieldwork it was closed and unoccupied, which is why it does not appear in this list.

meals, making it something of a gathering point for tourists as well as local residents. Molopo is one of the self-proclaimed 'Northern Cape Famous Lodges', all of which are owned by a man by the name of Jeán Lambrechts. At the time of my visit his son, Reinhardt, was in charge of the Molopo Lodge and I was able to conduct the interview with him.

19. Kalahari Skerms en Ruskamp (established in 2010): This establishment is by far the most basic and rustic in the study area, with no fixed structures and only the most basic ablution facilities. It is an area of land on the R360 between Andriesvale and Twee Rivieren on which a series of large bomas (or *skerms* in Afrikaans) made of sticks have been constructed. A local man by the name of Rotha manages the land and allows people to camp there and go on game drives over the dunes in their own vehicles.

20. Kalahari Trails (established in 1997): Kalahari Trails is another unique guesthouse for several reasons. It is owned and run by Prof Anne Rasa, known to guests and locals simply as 'Prof', who is originally from Wales but has been living and working in the Kalahari for several decades. She began working in the Park in 1988 researching various aspects of the lives and biology of desert creatures and purchased the farm on which Kalahari Trails is situated in 1997 with the intention of restoring it to its former natural glory (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). The land was quite badly degraded when she bought it but since then she has allowed it to function as naturally as possible and with little interference (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). The abundance and diversity of plants, mammals, birds, insects and reptiles that can be seen at Kalahari Trails suggests that this goal has indeed been achieved. Given her extensive knowledge on the desert ecosystem, Anne offers her guests the chance to accompany her on early morning walks through the reserve during which she points out the tracks and spoor of all the animals that have been active during the night, as well as large number of other attractions ranging from geology to insects and mammals both large and small. Accommodation is available in the main guesthouse, in private chalets, tented chalets and in the campsite. Kalahari Trails is where I stayed for the majority of my time spent in the field.

21. Rooiduin (established in 2010): Similar to Kalahari Skerms, Rooiduin is a very basic establishment offering only camping and dune-based activities. Alida Mouton, the proprietor, indicated that she intended to diversify the kind of accommodation offered through the construction of chalets but could not provide a timeframe for this plan as she did not have the necessary funds available to begin construction at the time of the interview (A. Mouton, interview, 4/07/2013).

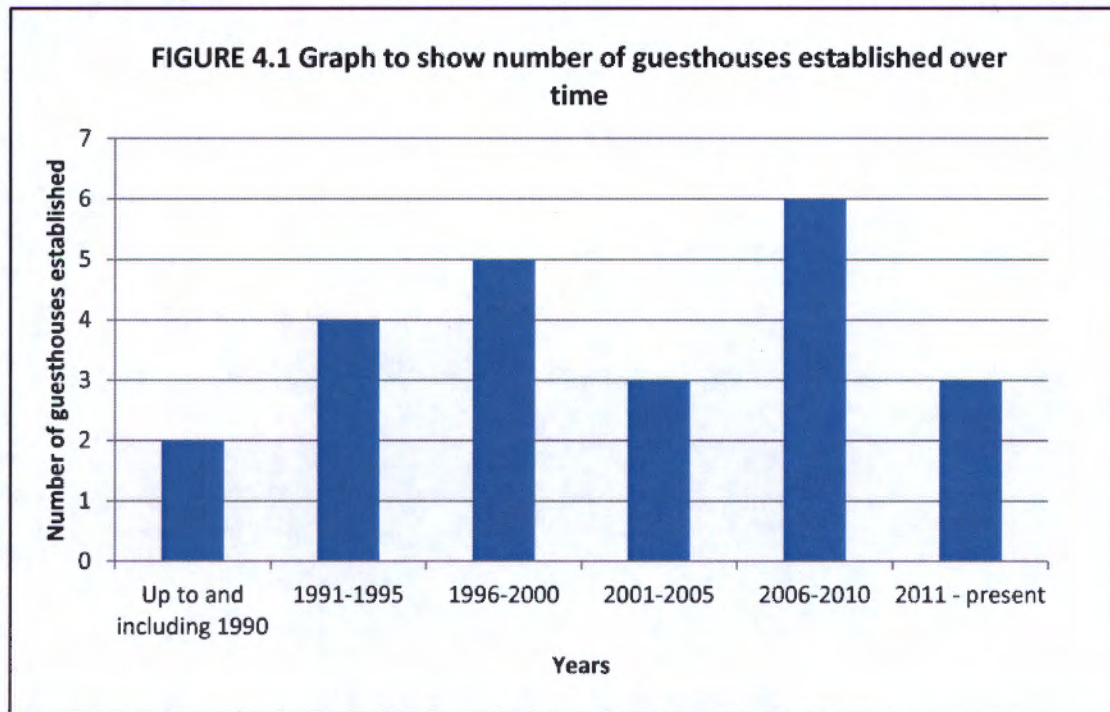
22. Kgalagadi Lodge (established in 2012): Kgalagadi Lodge is the newest establishment in the study area, having opened its doors shortly before my first visit to Kalahari in 2012. Situated

only 5 km from the entrance gates at Twee Rivieren, it is the closest one to the Park. In addition to offering accommodation in chalets of varying sizes, Kgalagadi Lodge also has a well-stocked shop and bottle store as well as a small restaurant for guests and passers-by on route to the Park. It is run by Denise and SJ Koortzen and owned by SJ's parents. The family has lived in the Kalahari for three generations and Denise and SJ have been involved in tourism in the area for 15 years (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013). Prior to opening the Kgalagadi Lodge the couple managed Dreghorn, a now dormant hunting farm. As a result, they were able to provide a very useful comparison of the two industries.

23. Kalahari Bird Song (established in 2002): Kalahari Birdsong is the only establishment within the study area that is located in Botswana. A gravel road in Botswana runs parallel to the R360 in South Africa for approximately 30 km from the Park's entrance gates. Unlike in South Africa, where there are several different roads crisscrossing the study area, in Botswana this gravel road was one of only two roads that fell within the 100 km radius from the Park's entrance. Kalahari Birdsong was the only tourist establishment to be found on these roads and is run by a local councillor named Fredrick Titus. Fredrick gave me a great deal of insight into a series of factors that were unique to his establishment, such as its position between two border posts and the series of both positive and negative impacts this has on business (F. Titus, interview, 30/03/2013). Kalahari Birdsong offers chalets and camping and Mr Titus believes that the rustic nature of the accommodation is where its appeal lies. He also described an interesting trend that he had observed over the years which is that people from Botswana who do not normally have access to facilities such as air-conditioning and satellite television opt to cross the border and stay at the Molopo Lodge, whilst tourists from South African cities prefer to 'rough it' in the more basic and rustic kinds of establishments like Kalahari Birdsong (F. Titus, interview, 30/03/2013). As will be elaborated on later in this chapter, Fredrick was one of the first respondents to emphasise the importance of the idea of wilderness to visitors to the Kalahari.

#### **4.3 Trends in guesthouse establishment**

Having provided a brief description of each of the guesthouses and their often unique sets of features and circumstances, it is now important to look more broadly at the trends that become apparent when one examines the group as a whole.



#### 4.3.1 Number of guesthouses established over time

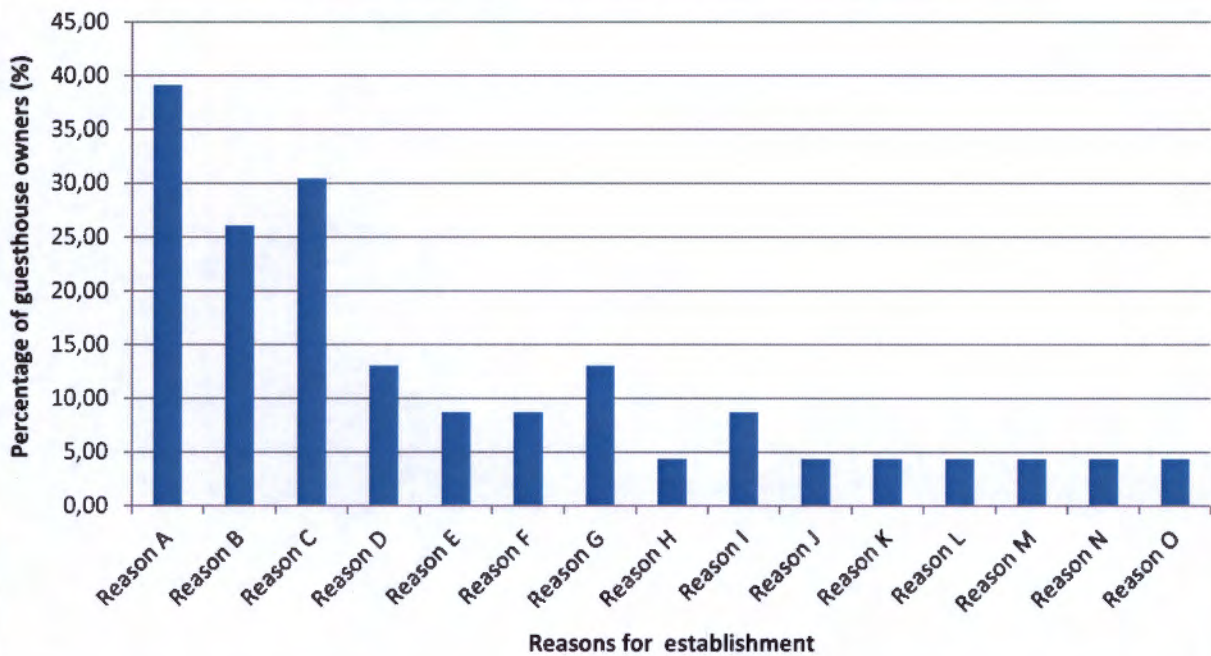
Figure 4.1 shows the trends in guesthouse establishment over time. The Molopo Lodge was the first establishment outside the Park to offer accommodation to tourists. The Lodge opened its doors in 1970 and for almost twenty years it was the only available stopover between Upington and the KTP. There is a certain degree of controversy between guesthouse owners regarding whose establishment was the first to rival the Molopo Lodge. This is perhaps due to the fact that, with many farms such as Rooipan, Loch Broom Paradys and Inkbospan, the demand for accommodation preceded the official establishment of their guesthouses, so the exact date can be subject to interpretation by the proprietors. However, after almost twenty years of minimal growth in the tourism industry in the area surrounding the Park, four new guesthouses were established in the five years immediately following 1990. This statistic was increased to five new establishments in five years between 1996 and 2000. Although one may have expected this upward trajectory to have continued, especially given the promises made by proponents of TFCAs regarding their ability to bring about a fast and noticeable rise in tourism to the areas in which they are created, only three new guesthouses were opened in the five years immediately following the establishment of the KTP in 2000. This number then doubled during the next five year period with six establishments opening between 2006 and 2010.

Although these quantitative data do provide a good introduction to the various trends in tourism development in the area surrounding the Park, the one dimensional view they provide does not attempt to answer the question of why the area developed as it did and what factors influenced these trends. In order to get a more detailed account of the trends and changes in tourism development over time an examination of the various reasons given for the guesthouses' establishment is necessary. This examination of the qualitative answers given by respondents as to why they chose to set up their businesses, as well as a quantitative analysis of the number of times each reason was given, will add depth and meaning to the trends and changes in tourism and tourism development identified above. Figure 4.2 shows what percentage of respondents gave each reason as one of their reasons for establishing their business.

#### 4.3.2 Boredom: the foremost reason given for the establishment of guesthouses

When asked the question 'What made you decide to set up your guesthouse?' many different reasons were given by respondents, but the one that was stated more often than any of the others was that starting a guesthouse gave the farmers' wives something to do. This surprising motivation was given by 39.1% of the respondents, the majority of whom were the wives themselves. Nine out of the twenty-three guesthouse owners listed this among the reasons for the original establishment of their businesses, and five of these gave this as their only reason. During my interviews with the guesthouse owners and managers, seventeen of which were women, it became clear that there are several aspects to this seemingly straightforward motivation for starting a business. The first and most basic of these is the simple fact that, with their husbands working all day on farms which can span several square kilometres, loneliness can become quite a significant problem. The size of the farms has a notable impact here because, not only does it mean that they are unlikely to see their husbands for the majority of the working day, but it also has an impact on their ability to socialise with other women on surrounding farms and in surrounding villages. This is not to say that they do not visit one another, but the roundtrip required to visit a friend living two or three farms away could easily mean travelling a distance of 70 km or more on roads that are impassable in anything other than a 4x4. As Magda from Dune Valley stated, "You can't just sit ... I can't do nothing ... Nobody ever visits because they're very stuck on their farms" (M. van Schalkwyk, interview, 11/04/2013). In addition to this, the majority of the women I interviewed were over the age of fifty and had children who were already grown up, and who had either married and moved

**FIGURE 4.2 Graph to show the percentage of guesthouse owners who gave each reason as one of their reasons for establishment**



Reason A	To keep the wife occupied and semi-independent
Reason B	Because of the demand for accommodation by tourists travelling to the Park (pre-2000)
Reason C	To accommodate hunters
Reason D	To diversify income in times of drought
Reason E	To accommodate people travelling to and from a border post
Reason F	To showcase an area of unspoilt nature
Reason G	Because of the demand for accommodation by tourists travelling to the Park (post-2000)
Reason H	To accommodate contractors/ government employees
Reason I	No reason given
Reason J	Because their ancestors instructed them to do so
Reason K	Had to take over the business from family who moved away
Reason L	For a change of industry/ lifestyle
Reason M	Previous business was shut down by the Mier Municipality
Reason N	Bought the business as it was going for a good price
Reason O	To offer services the Park does not

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away (mainly the girls), worked with their father on the farm during the day (mainly the boys) or had left the area to study or pursue a different lifestyle.

<sup>12</sup> Because some of the guesthouse owners gave more than one reason for setting up their businesses (and because some declined to give any reasons at all), the total number of entries does not match the number of establishments. A total of 39 responses were gathered from the 23 guesthouses and for this reason the percentages in Figure 4.2 do not add up to 100.

Apart from the aforementioned loneliness, boredom was the most prevalent complaint among the women I interviewed. The isolation caused by the distance between farms is partly to blame for this, but the large scale isolation of the Kalahari region as a whole also has an impact. Bearing in mind that the closest guesthouse in the study area is situated over 100 km away from Upington, the Kalahari is an undeniably remote and isolated place to live. For those not actively engaged in farming or formal employment (of which there is very little to be had), this isolation can lead to boredom for the wives of these farmers. Many of the guesthouses were therefore started in order to combat this because, as Esbe from Koppieskraal stated, "it's something to do, because you are just here in the Kalahari and you have something to get your mind running and keep yourself busy with more than just being a housewife" (E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013). In addition to simply being a cure for boredom and loneliness, some of the respondents emphasised the sense of achievement they experienced from being able to successfully set up and run their own business. One respondent felt that it was particularly important for modern women to learn how to manage money and about what it takes to run a business. However, the importance of actually earning an income from their guesthouses varied from person to person. Some of the women valued the company and experience above the financial gain, stating that meeting new people from all over the world enriched their lives and made their worlds bigger (R. Stadler, interview, 12/04/2013; M. van Schalkwyk, interview, 11/04/2013). One such interviewee even admitted to being so starved of company during the quietest summer months that she did not even charge some of her guests. On the other hand, others derived more joy from the freedom that financial semi-independence granted. Retha from Loch Maree was one such interviewee who described to me why earning her own money was so important:

You don't have to look in the husband's eyes for money. That's why I do it, to be independent in a way. I don't have to say what I do with the money, it's nice for us. And I don't have to feel *skuldig* [guilty] if I buy something. And I can buy stuff for my house as well, you know, I don't have to think he has to do it every time, you know, you help him (R. Stadler, interview, 12/04/2013).

Therefore, whether it's to earn their own money, to expand their skillset, to enrich their lives by meeting new people and learning about foreign countries, or simply to occupy their days and minimise loneliness, the wives of the Afrikaans farmers who have worked the land for generations are no longer content to be 'just' housewives and this has proven to be the most prevalent reason for the establishment of guesthouses in the area.

#### 4.3.3 Hunting: the second-most prevalent reason for establishing a guesthouse

The second most commonly stated reason for offering accommodation in the Kalahari is to provide somewhere for hunters to stay. Seven of the guesthouses gave this as one of their reasons for establishment. The regulations and practices associated with hunting vary from country to country. In South Africa, the hunting of game is permitted on privately owned land (such as game farms) and even in some game reserves and national parks (Baker 1997, p. 313). In the Kalahari, the majority of hunting activities take place on private game farms which make up approximately 26% of the total surface area of the Northern Cape (van der Waal & Dekker 2000, p. 152) and, in my study area, were owned almost entirely by white Afrikaans families. Novelli *et al.* (2008, p. 73) explain that non-consumptive ecotourism practices such as game viewing, require the land "to have sufficiently spectacular scenery and/or sufficiently dense and diverse wildlife populations" but that "[h]unting does not have the same stringent requirement, and can be profitable anywhere as long as there is a reasonably diverse wildlife population". This is especially true in the Kalahari where vegetation is sparse and the scenery, though beautiful, is fairly homogeneous. As was briefly explained in the previous section, most of the hunting farms cater to tourists as well as to hunters and because of this they provide two very different kinds of accommodation for their two very different kinds of guests. The first kind is guesthouses which, like on the other farms that cater solely to tourists, are generally located close to, if not within, the main farmhouse and are equipped with all the amenities one would normally expect to find in a guesthouse or bed and breakfast, such as electricity, television, air conditioning and en suite bathrooms with hot and cold running water. These lodgings are reserved for tourists and people stopping over and in this way they hardly differ at all from the accommodation offered to similar clientele on the non-hunting farms.

The second kind, however, is a great deal more basic, and takes the form of bushcamps which are often located some distance from the main farmhouses. These bushcamps are generally not equipped with electricity or any of the luxuries one would find in the guesthouses. It is here that the hunters stay, and this contributes to an argument frequently made in favour of this consumptive practice – that "hunters require fewer services and accommodations and less infrastructure [than tourists], thus keeping wildlife habitats more pristine" (Baker 1997, p. 307). Their relegation to these rustic camps is motivated by two factors. The first is that these groups of mainly white middle-aged Afrikaans men generally prefer a more rustic camping-like setting that allows them a closer connection with the outdoors, as camping and *braaiing* are very much a part of Afrikaans culture, and the Kalahari in particular has historically been very

popular with Afrikaans South Africans (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). In addition to this, all five of the respondents whose establishments boasted both a guesthouse and a bushcamp stated that they would not tolerate hunters staying in their guesthouses, due to their notoriously unruly behaviour. In the interviews with these owners and proprietors, the same description of their hunting clientele was provided many times over. The hunting parties consist almost exclusively of white Afrikaans men, many of whom treat the expedition as an excuse to engage in behaviour that would not typically be tolerated at home, or in the presence of their wives and families. This behaviour, as it was described to me, consists mainly of round the clock alcohol consumption, often resulting in the misuse or unintentional destruction of the establishment's facilities and infrastructure. The bushcamps are therefore set up to be virtually indestructible, which accounts for their minimalism and austerity. Therefore, with the proprietors not wanting such carryings on taking place in their homes, and the hunters preferring a more rustic setting themselves, having these bushcamps located a few kilometres away from the main residence is mutually beneficial.

Although it can be an irritation and an inconvenience, the hunters' bad behaviour is tolerated due to the fact that the income to the hunting farms from one group of hunters alone can exceed the money made from guesthouse trade for the entire rest of the year (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). This is the case even though the vast majority of hunting in the Kalahari is meat and biltong hunting, not the very much more lucrative trophy hunting, with the main two species being the indigenous springbok and gemsbok antelope. The average hunting trip lasts approximately five days, with the actual hunting typically taking place during the first two days followed by three days spent either on the farm or visiting the park while the meat is processed. Due to the summer temperatures that reach well over 40 degrees Celsius, the hunting season is restricted to the winter months from approximately April to August. Such is the demand for hunting in the Kalahari that the representatives of all four of the main hunting farms (Rea, STS, Gemsbokkie and Loch Maree) stated that they were fully booked for the 2013 hunting season. In addition to this, they predicted that they would be just as full in 2014, with several already having bookings secured for the next season. This confident forecast can be attributed to a surprising trend common to all of the hunting farms. Retha from Loch Maree explained that 90% of their hunters visit every year, and so only 10% of their openings are made available to new groups (R. Stadler, interview, 12/04/2013). Both Yvonne from STS and Lourens from Gemsbokkie stated that they had been operating at maximum capacity for many years, with Yvonne going on to explain that the vast majority of their thirty annual hunting groups return each year (L. Botma, interview, 28/03/2013; Y. Koortzen, interview, 28/03/2013). Similarly,

Nicolene from Rea described how the same hunters “book them full” each year and, as a result, have become “like family” (N. Knoetze, interview, 26/03/2013). However, due perhaps to both the high demand for and the lucrative nature of game hunting in the Kalahari, a great deal of controversy surrounds the subject.

Many of the business owners who do not allow hunting on their farms and who have taken a more non-consumptive approach to tourism have a series of objections to hunting and the way in which it is carried out in the Kalahari. The first and most prevalent criticism is that many of the farms in the area are over-hunted. This belief was expressed in various ways by many of the respondents, including some who had previously been involved in the hunting industry like Denise and SJ, owners of the newly formed Kgalagadi Lodge, who stated that they “were in the hunting business for five years. There is not enough game left in the Kalahari to do commercial hunting” (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013). Lizette from Rooipan justified this claim by explaining that biltong hunters require a large quantity of meat to make their trip worthwhile, and that one group could easily (want to) shoot 50 springbok and 20 gemsbok per visit (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). Similarly, Anne from Kalahari Trails explained that many of the hunting farms are experiencing this problem, not only because they allow the hunters to shoot too many animals at once, but also because they allow hunting to take place too frequently (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). By depleting the game population, owners of hunting farms are forced to purchase live game from auctions to replenish their stock each season. Anne went on to express her confusion regarding this practice by explaining that if the owners of such farms would simply allow their animals to live and reproduce for even one season then they would not have to spend so much money purchasing more live game every year (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). Prior to my interviews with the hunting farm operators, this practice of purchasing live animals just in time for them to be shot by hunters did seem counter intuitive, when the owners of such massive farms as STS could presumably double their profits by allowing the antelope to multiply in number naturally and for practically no cost at all. Of course this would mean forgoing a season’s hunting or, at the very least, reducing the number of hunting groups or the quota that each group was permitted. I therefore assumed that there must be a good reason for them having chosen to operate in this way, and that it must somehow be more lucrative than the traditional practice of allowing game to multiply naturally. The confusion was only exacerbated following my interviews with proprietors of the hunting farms. During the interview with Yvonne from STS she informed me that they were seriously considering moving to livestock farming as hunting was simply not proving profitable for them (Y. Koortzen, interview, 28/03/2013). This was despite the fact that that all 30 of their hunting

slots were fully booked for the next season, as they had been the previous year. Although she did not elaborate on this seemingly baffling trend, the explanation that seems most plausible is that hunting farms are simply not able to put a sufficient mark-up on game purchased at auctions to be profitable, and still attract the number of hunters they require.

Switching to livestock farming was one of two strategies put forward to me by Yvonne. The other way in which she and the owners of STS were considering attempting to increase their profits was by purchasing different kinds of game to offer to hunters, other than the springbok and gemsbok offered by most other farms (Y. Koortzen, interview, 28/03/2013). Although she did not give me permission to elaborate on the kinds of game they were hoping to introduce, the objections posed to this tactic by other farm and business owners in the area are the same regardless of the species. STS are by no means the first to attempt this and Anne Rasa, having lived in the area since the mid-1980s and studied various aspects of the lives and biology of a series of desert animals, was able to recount to me a similar occurrence that took place on one of the bushman-owned farms close to hers several years prior to my visit. Black wildebeest had been introduced to this farm despite the fact that not only are they not indigenous to the area but that they are also not permitted to be kept close to the indigenous blue wildebeest, for fear of cross breeding. They were nonetheless introduced and, after a few months, the vast majority of them had died. She went on to say that

they're turning many of these hunting blocks into what I would call shooting zoos. You go to an auction, you pay so much for these animals and then you sell them to double your amount and make sure you get a hunter or a client who will come and shoot them before they die themselves (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013).

Although over-hunting and the introduction of non-indigenous species that are ill-suited to the harsh conditions of the Kalahari are the two objections to hunting that were the most cited, poor hunting practices was a close third. Due to the tendency of most hunting parties to consume large quantities of alcohol while on their trips, some believe that, in most cases, certain standards and practices are not always adhered to during these excursions (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). I was told a series of disturbing stories by farmers located next to certain hunting farms who claim to periodically find animals that have been shot and wounded but not killed. Due to the fact that verifying such stories is difficult if not impossible to do, this aspect of the Kalahari hunting industry shall not be elaborated on. One interesting point, however, is that many game farm owners who are not actively engaged in the hunting industry but who

periodically find themselves with a surplus of live game often choose alternative methods of population control, despite the money they could make from allowing hunting to take place on their farm. One such farm is Koppieskraal whose owners, Willie and Esbe, explained to me during my interview with them that when their springbok and gemsbok populations grow too large, Willie, despite the fact that he is retired, culls them himself so as to minimise stress for the animals and to eliminate the possibility of bad hunting practices taking place on his farm (E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013).

The other option available to farmers who do not wish to allow their excess game to be hunted is live game capture. Over the last twenty years, Anne Rasa has employed both of these techniques to deal with excess game at Kalahari Trails. She explained that, though game capture is a great deal more expensive and therefore less profitable than hunting, it nonetheless has two important advantages. The first of these is that, though the process can be quite stressful for those animals that are captured, it is a great deal less traumatic than hunting for those that are left behind (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). Similarly, hunting from moving vehicles teaches game to be fearful of them, which impacts negatively on the chances of being able to conduct tourist related activities such as game drives on the same farms that allow hunting. Game capture therefore makes for tamer animals (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). The second advantage pertains to genetics. Because they are given a quota to fill, hunters will typically attempt to shoot the largest, most impressive individuals, leaving behind the smaller, weaker ones. This in turn affects the size and quality of the next generation of antelope bred from those left behind (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). Game capture and culling, on the other hand, are indiscriminate. Whole herds, including males, females and lambs are collected in the case of game capture, or shot in the case of culling, leaving an equally diverse group of individuals behind.

#### 4.3.4 The less-frequently cited reasons for guesthouse establishment

Having explored two of the most prevalent reasons for setting up a guesthouse or bushcamp in the Kalahari – to cure boredom and to accommodate hunters – some attention must now be given to the other reasons. As Figure 4.2 shows, catering to tourists visiting the park prior to 2000 scores almost as highly as the hunting industry when it comes to reasons given for guesthouse establishment. This reason and its significantly less cited post-2000 counterpart shall be discussed in detail at the end of the list. I shall therefore move on to the reason

mentioned by 13% of respondents – income diversification in times of drought. As has already been explained, most of the businesses are situated on working game or livestock farms. Farming in the Kalahari, an area that experiences only 150–200 mm mean annual rainfall (Thomas and Leason 2005, p. 119), is a difficult enough feat at the best of times. This becomes even more challenging in years that experience below average rainfall and therefore below average yields. 13% of respondents gave this as one of the motivating factors for them starting their tourist business. However, although they did credit their guesthouse with helping to subsidise their income, they were also very quick to point out that the vast majority of their income still came from farming. In one such interview I asked which was the more reliable source of income and was told that the money gained from offering accommodation is “not an income to rely on, honestly, it’s just something for the winter ... I can’t say it’s my income, not at all” (M. van Schalkwyk, interview, 11/04/2013). This is one of the main factors contributing to my belief that the majority of the guesthouses within the study area do not operate as proper, financially viable, self-sustaining businesses, as shall be discussed later in the chapter. The next two reasons were each cited by two respondents (or 8.7% of all respondents). Both Anne from Kalahari Trails and Fredrick from Kalahari Birdsong stated that their motivation for starting a tourism business arose from the desire to create and to showcase an area of pristine and unspoilt nature (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013; F. Titus, interview, 30/03/2013). While Anne focuses on the diverse and abundant desert life active on her reserve, Fredrick emphasises to guests the quietness, peace and relaxation that comes from staying in an area of natural beauty. The other reason that received two mentions was the need for accommodation by those travelling to or from one of the area’s many border posts. With a border post at Rietfontein, another at Bokspits and a third at Twee Rivieren, this northern tip of South Africa’s Northern Cape experiences a large amount of cross-border movement. Given that the border gates close at 16h30 sharp every day, the availability of nearby accommodation is essential for those who have either been locked out or who wish to be waiting at the border post when it opens at 08h00. As Figure 4.2 shows, there were also several other answers that were given by only one person each, and they range from messages from ancestors to negotiating a good deal on a business that was being sold.

One of these single-mention reasons deserves slightly more attention than the others. Although only one individual stated that they started their business in order to make money by providing services that were unavailable in the KTP, it should be noted that this tactic was nonetheless adopted by many of the other guesthouses too. Anne was the only respondent to list this among her reasons for buying her farm and establishing Kalahari Trails. The services that she is

referring to are her morning and evening walks that she offers to guests, during which she educates those who accompany her on the habits and lifestyles of the smaller desert creatures such as birds, insects and small mammals that would normally be overlooked when travelling by car in the Park (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). Although the other proprietors may not have started their businesses with the aim of providing special and unique services in mind, it has nonetheless become a common method used by more than half of them to secure their share of the tourist market. Loch Broom Paradys, for example, offers conference facilities, while Koppieskraal has camels that can be used to take guests for rides through the dunes. Similarly, the well-established Molopo Lodge offers a series of unique facilities such as a swimming pool and petrol station. Even some of the smaller guesthouses are able to offer unique attractions, such as sandboarding that can be enjoyed at Rooiduin and a vulture restaurant that is soon to be introduced at Breekduin. However, not all establishments are able to offer entirely unique attractions, resulting in a certain degree of overlap. The two most common services offered were game drives on the various farms and home cooked meals prepared by the farmers' wives. Only the hunting farms seem to be exempt from this trend, perhaps due to the fact that the demand for hunting is sufficiently high to eliminate the need for diversification of the services on offer. Those farms aside, all of these different services and attractions exist for the same two reasons – to attract the attention of tourists and passers-by and equally importantly, to encourage them to stay for longer than just one night. Despite these creative and varied tactics, 75% of the purely tourism-based establishments (meaning those which do not offer hunting) nonetheless reported that the majority of their business came in the form of one night stopovers en route to or from the KTP<sup>13</sup>.

#### **4.4 The effect of the establishment of the KTP on surrounding businesses**

Having looked at all the reasons for establishment not directly linked to the need to provide accommodation to tourists, it is now time to elaborate on those respondents who cited a demand for accommodation by park-bound tourists as one of their reasons for setting up their businesses. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, this group has been divided into two sections – those that were established prior to the park becoming a TFCA in 2000 and those that were established thereafter. This is an important distinction to make in order to establish what effect the transfrontier status of the park had on surrounding businesses. Given the emphasis that

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<sup>13</sup> This percentage is based only on the responses of the sixteen respondents who chose to answer this question. Of the 18 purely tourism-based guesthouses, twelve answered "yes", 4 answered "no" and 2 declined to answer the question pertaining to whether or not stopovers constituted the majority of their business.

many proponents of TFCAs place on increased tourism following the creation of a transfrontier park, the results of my interviews came as quite a surprise. Only nine out of the twenty-three respondents volunteered the demand for accommodation by tourists as a reason for starting their business. Before I elaborate on the ratio of businesses set up before and after 2000, it is important to first look at this combined total of nine out of twenty-three, or 39.1%. The fact that only 39.1% of respondents claim to have started a tourist business in order to cater to tourists traveling to the Park has one of two implications for the remaining 60.9%. Either these remaining fourteen guesthouse owners did not start their guesthouses to cater to passing park-bound tourists – such as those engaged in the hunting industry or those catering to government officials or border-crossers – or they were motivated by something other than a pre-existing demand for accommodation – such as those started by housewives out of boredom. Regardless, the fact remains that respondents were encouraged to give as many reasons behind the establishment of their business as they saw fit, and only nine identified a pre-existing need for accommodation by park-bound tourists as a reason.

This surprising set of results was the first of many clues that led me to the conclusion that many of these establishments are not run like 'proper' businesses. By this I mean that, unlike most commercial businesses operating in a free market economy, the survival of these businesses is not dependant on their profitability. During the course of my research, there were several other factors that contributed to this theory. The first and most obvious of these, as has already been explained, was the fact that the majority of the guesthouses were started as and treated like hobbies by farmers' wives. Strongly linked to this was the instance of a guesthouse being shut down shortly before I arrived, due to the divorce and the subsequent relocation of the wife of one such farmer. Similarly, during my first fieldwork session, I was unable to secure interviews with three of the guesthouses as they were closed on account of the women being out of town visiting friends and family. In addition to this, even when judged on purely economic grounds, the majority of the guesthouses fall short in terms of entrepreneurial viability. This is especially the case for the twelve guesthouses located on working game or livestock farms. Many of them offer accommodation within the main farmhouse or in other remodelled farm buildings for which no rent needs to be paid. Similarly, farm workers are 'borrowed' from the main farm in times of high occupancy to help with cleaning and other household chores. With utilities such as water, electricity, satellite television and air conditioning already in place within almost all of the farm houses, little has to be spent on extending these services for outside guests. All of these factors contribute to significantly lower overhead costs than would be present in purely commercial enterprises.

In addition to this, many of the businesses who chose to share their estimated occupancy levels with me described a situation that would see most 'normal' guesthouses unable to sustain themselves. Nicolene from Rea stated that their guesthouse (which is kept separate from their hunting activities) gets approximately one visit every five weeks (N. Knoetze, interview, 26/03/2013), while Fredrick from Kalahari Birdsong revealed that months go by without any visitors at all (F. Titus, interview, 30/03/2013). What makes the situation even less financially appealing is the nature of the average visit. As has already been discussed, because almost all of the non-hunting establishments are not end destinations in and of themselves, the vast majority of their clientele stay for only one night, as a stopover on the way to the Park. This need for places to spend the night can be attributed to a number of factors, such as the large distance between Upington and Twee Rivieren, the strict and well policed rules prohibiting late arrivals and night time driving within the Park, and the desire of many visitors to be at the gate when the Park opens so as to enjoy the abundant wildlife active in the early morning before it gets too hot. Although many of the guesthouses would not exist were it not for the business provided by this need to break the journey, a one night stay does not allow for economies of scale to be utilised by the proprietors. When the majority of one's clientele stay for only one night, all towels and linen need to be replaced each day, as do consumables such as soaps or complimentary foodstuffs, not to mention the higher administrative costs of a series of one night stays compared to longer bookings. Therefore, as Figure 4.2 confirms, hardly any of the reasons for establishment that were given show any real entrepreneurship or neoliberal business sense. While this is certainly the case for many of the smaller guesthouses, there are several exceptions such as the Molopo Lodge and many of the hunting farms who do adopt a more neoliberal approach in the operation of their businesses.

Returning to the initial discussion – regarding those businesses owners who cited a pre-existing demand for tourist accommodation outside the park as one of their reasons for establishment – what is even more surprising than the relatively low number of respondents who gave this answer is the fact that, of the nine guesthouses who did, six were set up prior to the establishment of the KTP, leaving only three that were started after the year 2000. Although both of these groups prove that the Park does indeed draw tourists to the area who then patronise surrounding businesses on their way through, one of the main purposes of the interviews, and indeed of this project as a whole, is to ascertain what effect becoming a *transfrontier* park had on businesses and tourism in the area. It can safely be assumed that,

though the businesses that opened their doors to cater to the demands of passing tourists prior to 2000 may well owe their existence to the Park, their original presence had nothing to do with the TFCA, as they were already in operation before it was officially established. However, that is not to say that the three post-2000 guesthouses were necessarily a direct result of an influx of tourists to the area following the official formation of the KTP. The combination of a. citing a demand for tourist accommodation outside the park as their reason for establishment and b. opening their doors after the year 2000, is still not enough to confidently conclude that the formation of the TFCA is to thank for the establishment of these three businesses. To put it another way, while it is true that their clientele are en route to the transfrontier park, it cannot be assumed that they are visiting *because* it is a transfrontier park. Therefore, in order to ascertain what kind of role the creation of the KTP has played, the focus of the discussion must now shift from looking at the reasons for establishment of the twenty-three guesthouses to the trends and changes in tourism and tourism development they experienced over time, beginning with the interview question 'What change or factor has had the biggest influence (good or bad) on your business since its inception?'.

## CHAPTER 5

### Changes inside and outside the KTP and their Effects on Local Businesses

#### 5.1 Introduction

When asking respondents what change or factor had had the biggest influence on their business since its inception, the question was kept as vague as possible so as not to deliberately lead them to what I assumed would be by far the biggest change of the last 15 years – the formation of the Transfrontier Park. I was of course aware that the owners of some of the younger guesthouses would perhaps not be able to cite the formation of the TFCA as an influence, but I certainly expected it from those who had already been in operation prior to 2000. Even in the case of young businesses, I was still anticipating a certain level of retrospective praise for this ground-breaking agreement between the two countries, especially since the majority of farm owners and their families have lived in the area for generations, meaning that, even if their tourism business was not in operation in 2000, they would nonetheless have been present during that time and would have noticed any changes to the number of visitors to the area. However, only one out of the twenty-three respondents volunteered changes in the park as an answer to this question. This respondent was Hanneltjie from Kalahari Sands Guesthouse who explained that, when she started her guesthouse in the year 2000, the Park had only three camps – Twee Rivieren, Mata Mata and Nossob – but that since then many more camps had been established (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013) (see Figure 5.1). The effect on outside businesses of changes within the park will be discussed in more detail shortly. At this stage, it is simply important to note that in-park changes were only volunteered as an answer by one respondent. The change or factor that had by far the most impact on businesses in the Kalahari was the tarring of the road from Upington to Twee Rivieren.

This answer was volunteered by seventeen of the twenty-three respondents, and almost every individual gave a different account of how exactly the tarring of the R360 has had an impact on their business and the region as a whole. That is not to say that there were not overlaps and similarities between the various accounts and, unsurprisingly, these similarities appeared most between guesthouses situated close to one another. Before describing these accounts, it is first necessary to explain the various differences between the two routes. Figure 3.3 from Chapter 3 shows both the old route (in green) that was used before the creation of the R360, and the new



**Figure 5.1** Map of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park  
Source: SANParks ([www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org))

tarred road (in blue) that leads from Upington to Twee Rivieren. Not only is the new road tarred, it is also a very much more direct route, making the old road almost completely redundant except of course for those who live or work on farms in the area. In one of my very first interviews, Lizette Knoetze from Rooipan explained how the road to the KTP, or rather the KGNP as it was then, actually changed three times. The very earliest route followed the N10 north from Upington for roughly 60 km before turning off onto a gravel road which went past

Noeniput and eventually to the Park. Park officials then informed tour operators of a better route – the green route in Figure 3.3 – which, although still a gravel road, was significantly shorter. Due in part to the high number of trucks on this road, the majority of which were transporting salt from the many pans in the area, council considered it to be a very dangerous route. As a result, the route was not signposted at Upington, although it nonetheless became the ‘non-official official road’ to the Park (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). The tarring of the R360 began in 1994 and was completed in a number of stages. First, the initial 80 km out of Upington were tarred, followed by another stretch of approximately 40 km and so on, until just the two arms leading from Andriesvale to Rietfontien and Tweerivieren were left untarred. The tarring of the final stretch of the R360 from Andriesvale to the Park was undertaken as a hand-driven *werkskepping* (job creation) project as part of the Expanded Public Works Program, and was designed to alleviate unemployment and poverty in the area by employing local people to pave the road. However, “after three years and too many babies, because the women were also included, the government gave it to a contractor to complete it” (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). The R360 was eventually completed and this is now the official route to the Park, as depicted in blue in Figure 3.3.

## **5.2 Effects of the tarring of the R360 on local businesses**

Though the tarring of the R360 from Upington to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park was cited by the majority of guesthouse owners as having been the change with by far the most impact on tourism – and life in general – in the area in the last 15 years, not all respondents were in agreement as to whether these impacts were wholly positive. The results show a pattern in this regard – those businesses situated in the same region (in relation to the R360) tended to have similar opinions on it. The first of these groups is those located closest to the Park, on the stretch of road between Andriesvale and Tweerivieren (numbers 17 to 22 in Figure 3.3). Not only was this the last stretch of road to be tarred, it was also the part that took the longest, due to the aforementioned *werkskepping* policy that was employed. Anne Rasa described some of the downsides of living in the area while the road was being tarred. By far the worst of these was the fact that, due to the amount of water involved in the tarring process, boreholes were dug every five kilometres to service the construction and this resulted in her farm’s borehole drying up (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). She went on to explain that many of the other farms in the area experienced the same problem, and that one has not been able to find water since (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). In addition to this, she experienced higher levels of crime and theft during the period of time when the road immediately in front of her farm was being tarred.

Similarly, the constant dust and noise created by the construction resulted in some of her visitors leaving prematurely, especially since one of the main attractions of Kalahari Trails is its peace and quiet (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). One might assume that these short-term inconveniences were experienced in equal measure at one point or another by all guesthouses situated close to the R360. They were, however, undeniably worse for those on the section of the R360 that was included in the *werkskepping* program as it took hundreds of local workers three years to complete approximately 30 km of road (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013; A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). Although they lasted longer than for those situated elsewhere on the R360, these inconveniences were nonetheless short-term problems, and they have not prevented the guesthouse owners in this area from appreciating the overwhelmingly positive effect the completed road has had on their businesses. The proprietors of Kgalagadi Lodge stated that the tar road alone has increased tourism by between 50 and 60%<sup>14</sup> (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013). Similarly, Reinhardt Lambrechts from Molopo Lodge strongly believed that the tarring of the R360 had much more of an impact on tourism than the establishment of the Transfrontier Park (R. Lambrechts, interview, 6/04/2013).

Another group of establishments who were quick to sing the praises of the tarred road were those located within Askham (numbers 7 to 9 in Figure 3.3). Given that the village is situated directly adjacent to the R360, it came as no surprise that the business owners' opinions of the road being tarred were unanimously positive. Johanna from the Diamond T Coffee Shop and the Askham Post Office Guest House even went so far as to say that "when it was not a tar road, only a gravel road, people did not want to go to the park" (J. Du Toit, interview, 26/03/2013). This viewpoint was supported by Hannetjie from Kalahari Sands Guesthouse who explained that the tarring of the road has been the most important occurrence in the area's recent history, due to the slow and dangerous nature of the old route (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013). Nevertheless, although she was very clear about the tar road having contributed significantly to the increase in visitors to the area, Hannetjie also introduced an interesting counter point, specifically affecting guesthouses between Upington and Tweerivieren. This point was that, due to the poor quality of the old road, tourists travelling to the Park used not to be able to drive very fast, and it therefore added several hours to their trip, over and above the

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<sup>14</sup> Though Kgalagadi Lodge was set up after the road was already completed, Denise and SJ have both lived in the area for several decades, and were involved in the managing of Dregghorn, another lodge that was closed shortly before my fieldwork began. They have therefore been actively involved in tourism in the area for long enough to have been able to observe such changes.

two and a half hours that it currently takes to travel to the Park from Upington. The creation of the new road has therefore made it a great deal easier for visitors to complete the drive to Twee Rivieren in one go, thereby reducing their need for places to stop over for the night (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013). However, although they may be *able* to travel to the Park without stopping for a night on the way, there are still many factors that lead plenty of visitors to choose to make use of the various guesthouses on the way (aside, of course, from the unique attractions and selling points of the individual establishments themselves as discussed already), such as the desire to break their journey if they have travelled from further afield than Upington, or to be able to be at the Park gates when they open in the early morning so as to get a whole day's game-viewing in and to enjoy the abundant wildlife active in the coolness of the early morning. Another reason to be at the Park gates early is the lengthy travel time required to get from one lodge or campsite to another within the Park. Given that both speeding and driving after sunset are strictly prohibited, if one were to arrive at the entrance gate at Twee Rivieren with the intention of spending the night at Nossob Rest Camp, but without allowing for the four and a half hours of drive time required to get there safely, one would not be allowed to enter the Park<sup>15</sup>. Early arrival is therefore very important, especially since some of the more remote camps such as Grootkolk can take up to seven and a half hours to reach and, for this reason, one night stopovers made by tourists en route to the Park are still the most common kinds of accommodation request experiences by most of the non-hunting guesthouses. Indeed, these rules are why the Kgalagadi Lodge exists, as SJ explained: "The main reason we opened was for people to stopover the first night before going into the Park and to stopover the last night before going back... because of the gate times" (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013).

Another person to recognise this dual effect of the new road (bringing more visitors to the area while at the same time allowing them to travel more quickly and directly to the Park ) was Lizette from Rooipan, which was one of the guesthouses making up the next group – those who were bypassed by the new road (numbers 1 to 6 in Figure 3.3). In addition to describing this phenomenon, she was also able to give me an in-depth insight into what effects the old road had on the establishment of the area's earliest guesthouses (of which Rooipan was certainly one), and what changes occurred when the R360 was tarred. Lizette explained how, in the late 1980s, there was "not a tree" between Upington and the Molopo Lodge, and that tour operators would often stop at her farm, situated on the old route, and ask if their clients could use her bathroom (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). This happened so often that in 1990 she decided to set up

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<sup>15</sup> The travel times required to get to each camp are calculated by the park authorities and are advertised on their website and on the information leaflet given to all visitors.

a tea room to cater to the tours. Not long after that, the tour operators persuaded her to set up a guesthouse, which she proudly claims was the first in the area (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). Although she may have been the first<sup>16</sup>, her story is not unique. Esbe from Koppieskraal, who lived on Inkbospan (their family's other farm) in the 1990s, also described how she too set up a farm stall on an area of land adjacent to the old road which went directly past Inkbospan. There she sold homemade goods which helped to subsidise her family's income during a five year drought that took place in the late 1980s (E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013). Similarly, customers frequently requested accommodation and that resulted in the creation of both Koppieskraal and Inkbospan guesthouses. Unfortunately, the formation of the new road resulted in the closure of their farm stall and the loss of that income (E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013). However, her story differs from Lizette's in one key way. While Esbe, who has since retired to Koppieskraal, enjoys having the road to Upington tarred for her own personal trips, she and her daughter Landa, who currently runs Inkbospan, both agree that the tarred road was undeniably bad for business (L. Conradie, interview, 10/04/2013); E. Knoesen, interview, 11/04/2013). Lizette, on the other hand, feels that even though the new road bypassed her farm, the increased number of tourists it has brought to the area – especially the number of tourists travelling in their own cars – has nonetheless led to an increase in business for her guesthouse. This is a view shared by both Magda from Dune Valley Guest Farm and by Retha from Loch Maree. This means that, unlike guesthouses in the other areas, this group does not share a common opinion on the impact of the tarred road on the success of their businesses.

One possible explanation for these differences in their experiences could be the varying extents to which they were bypassed. Although the new road no longer goes directly past the entrance to Rooipan, the guesthouse is only 2 km off the R360. Similarly, a detour of only 5 km is required to get to Dune Valley, which is less than the original journey required to get there from the old route. This proximity to the new and improved main thoroughfare could explain why these businesses have enjoyed greater visitor numbers since its construction. Conversely, Landa and Esbe from Inkbospan and Koppieskraal may feel that the new road has done them a disservice due to the fact that they are approximately 17 km and 50 km away from the R360 respectively. Loch Maree Guest Farm on the other hand has not been negatively affected despite having been bypassed to a much greater extent than Inkbospan. This is more than likely due to the fact that a large portion of Loch Maree's visitors are hunters, making it an end destination in

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<sup>16</sup> There is a great deal of speculation and disagreement among guesthouse owners as to whose was really the first. This is perhaps due to the relatively high number of establishments that were opened in the same five year period (1989-1994) and the fact that many offered accommodation before they officially set up a guesthouse, so the exact ages of many businesses are not entirely clear.

and of itself for these visitors, and not as reliant on passing traffic as some of the purely tourism-oriented guesthouses. Three out of four of the final group of establishments (numbers 10 to 13 in Figure 3.3) are in a similar situation. These three are Murray, Gemsbokkie and STS, all of which are also hunting farms and are located on the R31 East outside Askham. This gravel road leads to Van Zylsrus and eventually to Kuruman and, although slower, it is a much more direct route to the area than the R360 for those travelling from the Transvaal. However, because they are not dependent on passing travellers and, because all three farms are generally fully booked long before the hunting season starts, the tarring of the R360 has had little effect on their businesses. Conversely, the owner of Loch Broom Paradys, the only other establishment in this last group, feels quite differently. She, like Landa from Inkbospan, feels that the tarring of the R360 has dramatically reduced the number of park-goers that now travel past her guesthouse and, since she too does not offer hunting on her farm, this has had a significant negative effect on her annual turnover (M. Barlow, interview, 27/03/2013).

The new road has therefore affected different establishments differently. Whether a business was affected positively or negatively (or not at all) depends on two factors – the kind of establishment (hunting or tourism) and the length of the detour required to reach the establishment from the new road, compared to its proximity to the old road. Nevertheless, one factor that remains the same throughout all the interviews, regardless of the nature or location of the respondent's business, is that the tar road has been the most important recent development for tourism in the area. Even those whose individual businesses were impacted negatively by the change of route were able to admit that the tarring of the R360 had an overwhelmingly positive effect on tourism in the area as a whole. Although none were even remotely as prevalent as the tarring of the road, several other tourism-influencing factors were volunteered by respondents. One such factor was the Bloodhound Project, which is an ongoing attempt to break the world land speed record using a highly specialised car. The testing takes place at Hakskeenpan, a very large flat pan close to Rietfontein that has been specially tended to provide the perfect conditions for such high speed endeavours. Due to the exciting nature of these sorts of events<sup>17</sup>, they are often attended by several hundred people at a time and, although many choose to camp on the pan, several guesthouses such as Strauss, Molopo and Kalahari Info and Tented Camp reported high levels of occupancy during these times (G. Bott, interview, 9/04/2013); R. Lambrechts, interview, 6/04/2013; C. Strauss, interview,

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<sup>17</sup> Although several events pertaining to motor vehicles (such as classic car shows and off-road vehicle races) occur there each year, the Bloodhound Project's attempt to break the land speed record is set to take place in late 2015 (The Bloodhound Project, n.d.).

9/04/2013). Although they are perhaps less measurable or tangible than the Bloodhound Project, several other factors ranging from South Africa's newfound political stability following the end of apartheid to the introduction of cell phone reception to the area in 2010, were also cited by guesthouse owners as having contributed positively to tourism in the area. Similarly, some reported factors such as the global financial crisis in 2008 and a perceived increase in national crime rates as having had damaging effects on their businesses (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013; R. Lambrechts, interview, 6/04/2013). However, by far the most interesting trend of all was the fact that only one out of a total of twenty-three respondents volunteered an answer that pertained to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

### **5.3 Effects of changes within the KTP on local businesses**

Because all but one of the respondents neglected to mention the Park when asked about factors that had influenced tourism in the area in the last fifteen years, a separate question had to be added to the interview in order to prompt them to explain what effect, if any, the creation of the TFCA had had on tourism. The question elicited varied responses. Some had no opinion on the matter at all and others took some time to fully understand the question. Of those who did offer an opinion, the majority felt that the creation of the TFCA had had no impact at all on tourism inside or outside the Park. When asked why they believed this to be the case, two reasons were given. The first of these was the fact that, unlike in the formation of many other TFCAs in Southern Africa such as the GLTP, there were never any fences or barriers dividing the two parks to begin with. South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park, although owned by different countries, have always been treated and managed as one, with the Park even being referred to as "The Kalahari Cross-border Park" in SANParks' 1993/1994 Annual Report. Although a great deal more will be said about this later in the paper, it is important to note that, as far as local businesses are concerned, very little changed in 2000 except the name of the Park.

The second reason why respondents felt the formation of the TFCA had had little impact on tourism is that, in order to access Botswana's half of the Park from South Africa, a vehicle equipped with four wheel drive is required. The roads that lead off the Park's largest road that hugs the South Africa – Botswana border (see Figure 5.1) to the Botswana side of the Park are of such poor quality that tourists traveling in normal sedans are unable to make use of them. It is for this reason that many guesthouse owners outside the Park make statements like: "Of the

people that come and visit me, only a very small amount do go through into Botswana ... and even the 4x4 people return the way they came" (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). However, for those with four wheel drive vehicles, the challenge posed by the poor road conditions is often seen as part of the fun and, as Retha from Loch Maree added, "the wildness of the Botswana side of the Park gives them a chance to try out their new toys" (R. Stadler, interview, 12/04/2013). The "toys" to which she is referring are the various off-road functions of the vehicles, and the expensive and often quite highly developed additions and specialisations that many 4x4 enthusiasts add to their arsenal. Lizette and Retha were not the only ones to point out just how popular the Park is with 4x4 drivers. Johanna from the Diamond T explained that 4x4 enthusiasts are generally the same kind of people who like parks that offer a sense of wilderness, and that the size of the KTP as well as the low level of development in the Botswana side allow such visitors to feel that they were truly "in the wild" (J. Du Toit, interview, 26/03/2013). Similarly, Hanneljie from Kalahari Sands Guesthouse explained that "only the 4x4 people care" that the park is a TFCA because they are the only ones who can access more than one half of it (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013). Although these responses make it clear that being able to cross from South Africa into Botswana is certainly a draw card, what is slightly less clear is that this draw card is not a new one. Given that there was never a physical border in the Park separating South Africa and Botswana, the only thing potentially holding anyone back would have been the capabilities of their vehicle because, as Landa explained, "you always could go through, you just had to say at Twee Rivieren that you were going that side" (L. Conradie, interview, 10/04/2013). Therefore, though the rebranding of the Park as 'transfrontier' in 2000 may have made more tourists aware of the fact that they could now cross from one country to another within the KTP, this was not in fact a new development.

Another change suggested by some respondents that is, in reality, not an actual change is the idea of animals now being able to roam freely within the Park, where before they were restricted by fences and borders. Given the fact that there were never any such dividers, animals of all sizes have always been able to cross state lines unhindered. This was nonetheless put forward as a positive change by some of the guesthouse proprietors. Others however had a less positive view of the environmental changes that have taken place within the Park in the last fifteen years. Unsurprisingly, the respondent with the most first-hand information on the subject was Anne Rasa. However, the views expressed are her own rather than those of her guests and will therefore be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Other guesthouse proprietors shared the second-hand information that they had received in the form of reports from guests on their way back from visiting the KTP. Johanna summed up most of these reports by stating

that “the people now are not very impressed with the Park” (J. Du Toit , interview, 26/03/2013). She based this on the testimonies and accounts of those visiting the Diamond T Coffee Shop and Askham Post Office Guesthouse after having spent time in the Park, and made specific reference to complaints regarding poor management and an inadequate supply of water for the animals. This assertion was echoed by Nicolene who stated simply that “the Park must pull their socks up” (N. Knoetze, interview, 26/03/2013) as well as by Retha who also volunteered the fact that many of her guests had complained about the dryness of the Park and about the fact that they had seen more animals in Loch Maree’s comparatively small reserve than they had during their stay in the KTP (R. Stadler, interview, 12/04/2013). Although the Kalahari is a notoriously dry and arid region, the dryness to which most of the respondents are referring is that of the Park’s waterholes. Although these man-made waterholes do change the landscape and tarnish the Park’s sense of wilderness, they are nonetheless essential due to the fact that the animals’ access to fresh water in rivers to the south is prohibited by the Park’s perimeter fences. The lack of adequate water for the animals was a common complaint among guesthouse visitors and is somewhat justified by the statements given by a number of respondents living and working in and around the KTP, as will be explained in greater detail in section 6.4.

The last set of comments regarding the changes to the natural environment of the Park came from SJ from the Kgalagadi Lodge who stated that “we have a lot of complaints [about the Park]. Tour operators, they come in, they don’t want to stay there, they want to stay here; the people are not happy” (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013). They seemed more concerned than most about the perceived drop in standards within the Park, even going so far as to say that “some parks are going forward, some parks are going backwards” (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013) and indicating that the KTP is the latter. The reason behind their higher than average concern became apparent when SJ stated that

the people staying here are going to the Park, so if it wasn’t for the Park, we wouldn’t open here ... that’s why we said it’s important for us that the quality and stuff doesn’t go too much backwards because then the people wouldn’t come here (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013).

Clearly, with their closer proximity to the Park comes a higher degree of dependence on it and, with that, a greater desire for standards to be maintained within the KTP.

Another interesting change that was perceived differently by different people was the steadily increasing number of lodges within the KTP. As described earlier, only one of the respondents –

Hannetjie from Kalahari Sands – answered the original question of ‘What change or factor has had the biggest influence (good or bad) on your business since its inception?’ by referencing how few lodges there were in the Park prior to 2000 when Kalahari Sands was established, compared to present day numbers (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013). She described how, in addition to there being so few beds to be had within the Park, there were also only a handful of other guesthouses outside the Park at the time but that, in the fifteen years since then, both kinds of accommodation have multiplied in number (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013). Although anyone living in the area would certainly have to agree with that observation, some do have differing opinions regarding the effect that this increase in in-Park accommodation has had on surrounding businesses. One might assume that an increase in the amount of accommodation available in the Park might threaten to reduce the number of tourists looking for accommodation in the area surrounding it. However, having studied the KTP’s visitation data (an analysis of which will be undertaken shortly), it is clear that, although the number of beds has indeed increased, occupancy levels have remained relatively high throughout the last twenty years, with only a few minor fluctuations. This is a well-known fact among guesthouse owners and, as a result, the idea that an increase in beds within the Park could jeopardise occupancy rates in the establishments surrounding it was not put forward by any of them.

Although no one suggested that the Park’s increasing capacity was bad for business, some felt that it had not necessarily had a positive impact on their businesses either. Both Maryke and Lizette made the point that the new camps, lodges and chalets built within the Park are effectively irrelevant to the surrounding businesses since the Park’s occupancy level remains the same – very high – and, as a result, accommodation is always required outside the Park (M. Barlow, interview, 27/03/2013; L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). This point emphasises the fact that it is not the capacity of the Park but rather its level of occupancy that affects surrounding businesses. This was very surprising, given the importance placed by guesthouse owners on the business provided by one night stopovers made by tourists en route to the Park. One would have expected that the combination of an increase in Park capacity and no change in its level of occupancy would have necessitated an increase in visitors to the area and, as a result, more business for surrounding guesthouses. However, only Hannetjie from Kalahari Sands cited the Park’s growth as a factor that had influenced her business (H. van der Westhuizen, interview, 21/03/2013). Most other respondents who chose to comment on the matter agreed with Lizette and Maryke that changes to accommodation within the KTP had not affected outside guesthouses, but for different reasons. Both Reinhardt from the Molopo Lodge and SJ

from the Kgalagadi Lodge felt that an increase in the same type of accommodation that the Park has always offered has not and would not affect their businesses. For Reinhardt, this is because the Molopo Lodge offers a much higher standard of accommodation than that which is available in the Park <sup>18</sup>, as well as a series of addition facilities that the Park does not offer. He therefore believes that, until the Park decides to rival the Molopo Lodge in terms of quality of accommodation and facilities, their flow of guests will remain unchanged (R. Lambrechts, interview, 6/04/2013). Similarly, SJ believes that “there is demand for places for people to stay outside the Park but still enjoy the animals without all the politics going on in the Park” (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013), although he did not care to elaborate on the nature of the politics. These differences show that, though most would agree on what the changes to the Park have been, there is nonetheless a great deal of diversity when it comes to deciding on what effects and impact these changes have had on tourism in the area.

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<sup>18</sup> At the time of the interview, !Xause Lodge was the only private lodge located within the KTP and, although the standard of accommodation at !Xaus may well rival that of the Molopo Lodge, it is considerably more expensive.

## CHAPTER 6

### Neoliberalism Inside the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

#### 6.1 Introduction

Having discussed the various changes that have taken place outside the Park, as well as the in-park changes as perceived by those living and working just outside its borders, it is now necessary to assess the actual changes that have taken place within the Park over the last twenty years, which can be summed up by one concept – neoliberalism. The neoliberalism of the KTP took place through two closely linked channels – the establishment of the Transfrontier Park and the introduction of SANParks' "Commercialisation as a Conservation Strategy" (CCS) plan, both of which were implemented at roughly the same time. The establishment of the TFCA was undertaken partly as an attempt to increase tourism, while the commercialisation strategy was introduced solely in order to generate additional revenue for South Africa's national parks (SANParks 2001), partly through the stimulation of tourism. Though these two strategies are interlinked and were developed and executed concurrently, their attributes and progression will nonetheless be described separately, for ease of explanation.

#### 6.2 Commercialisation as a Conservation Strategy

SANParks' CCS policy was formally implemented in June 1999 and was applied at a national level, thereby affecting all parks under their supervision. Like the formation of the KTP, the strategy was agreed upon and adopted in 1999 but only really came into effect in 2000 when SANParks explained that its goal was "to re-focus on the core conservation business while simultaneously leveraging the expertise of private enterprise to deliver identified aspects of the commercial operations" (SANParks 2001, p. 98). This undeniably neoliberal strategy was achieved through four channels.

##### 6.2.1 The first channel: tourism concessions

The first of these channels was tourism concessions, which were awarded to private parties through the public tender process. SANParks decided to retain control of all large rest camps as well as all campsites, partly in order to ensure that cheap access to parks remained available to

the public, and partly because they generate the bulk of SANParks' annual income (SANParks 2001). Therefore, only the smaller camps were made available for privatisation. In the early stages of the strategy, eleven camps were identified for potential privatisation, the majority of which fell within the KNP, but one of which was located in the KTP. This was the Klein Skrij Pan Lodge which was built by DEAT in order to benefit the ǀKhomani San and Mier communities, following their successful land claim and the subsequent creation of the !Ae!Hai Heritage (Contract) Park. This lodge, situated within the Contract Park, was earmarked for potential privatisation in 2001, as the two communities recognised that they did not possess the relevant skills and training required to manage a luxury tourist facility, but would in fact not be fully operational until mid-2007 (Grant, 2012). There were a number of factors to blame for this delay, including limited private sector interest (perhaps due to the harsh and remote nature of the location) as well as the considerable amount of negotiation that was required to appease all three groups of stakeholders – SANParks, the private operator and the ǀKhomani San and Mier communities. However, after a lengthy process, concession was awarded to Transfrontier Parks Destinations (TPD), a black-empowered lodge management company. Following the completion of this process, SANParks (2007, p. 15) released the following statement:

As part of the land claim settlement in favour of San and Mier communities, funding for the development of a “co-operation lodge” was provided by DEAT. The lodge was to be developed in the community land that would be retained for conservation purposes and the dividends from the lodge would be shared between the communities and SANParks. As the lodge was envisaged to be a fully catered facility, SANParks was also tasked to source a suitable private operator for the facility. Typically, as with similar supply driven products, limited interest was shown by the private sector. After four years of deliberation SANParks awarded the contract to a private party in an agreement that will result in significant benefit to the communities.

The Klein Skrij Pan Lodge was renamed '!Xaus Lodge' and is still run and managed by TPD. Given that !Xaus Lodge is managed on behalf of the Mier and ǀKhomani San communities,

the Community representative organisations receive a monthly rental from the operation of the lodge based on its turnover. Almost all the lodge employees are drawn from the local communities where unemployment is rife. After the first ten years of operation, a ǀKhomani San and Mier Community Trust will be established to receive a 10% equity stake in the lodge management company. Any asset acquired through donor or grant funding is owned by the lodge and therefore its communities (Transfrontier Parks Destinations (TPD) 2014, p. 1).

### 6.2.2 The second and third channels: the outsourcing of services and facilities

The second channel through which the Commercialisation as a Conservation Strategy plan was implemented was the outsourcing of all shops and restaurant facilities within South Africa's parks. By the end of the 2000/2001 financial year, all of SANParks' restaurant and retail facilities (bar one in the Karoo National Park) had been outsourced, a move which they estimated had, even after less than a year, directly resulted in at least a 50% increase in SANParks' net income (SANParks 2001). All such facilities within the KTP were outsourced to EJ Viljoen and Associates, however, by 2013, their contract had expired and SANParks had resumed control of all restaurant and retail facilities within the Park<sup>19</sup>. Closely related to this is the third channel – the outsourcing of services such as gardening and janitorial services. This has certainly been the aspect of the strategy with the least impact on the KTP, perhaps due to the fact that the Park is 250 km away from the nearest town equipped with services such as laundromats, as well as the fact that the rustic, semi-desert nature of the Park eliminates the need for services such as gardening.

### 6.2.3 The fourth channel: the construction of new commercial developments

The fourth and final step in this neoliberal overhaul of South Africa's National Parks however did have a very visible impact on the KTP. This was the construction of a large number of new commercial developments. During the 2000/2001 financial year, the Commercial Development Department (CDD) was established by SANParks in order to oversee the entire commercialisation strategy for all of South Africa's parks. Although this fourth stage – the planning and execution of new commercial developments – was not technically a part of the original CCS plan, it was nonetheless managed by the CDD. In order to fund these new developments, the CDD applied for a loan of R65m from the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) who, as their name suggests, are “a national development finance institution set up to promote economic growth and industrial development” (Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) 2014, p. 1). SANParks did not attempt to hide or disguise the fact that this loan and the developments that would arise from it were purely capitalist endeavours. Indeed, they emphasised this point by stating that, once a certain portion had been used to upgrade park infrastructure, “[t]he balance will be used for commercial development projects, which must earn a real return after both interest and capital repayments (SANParks 2001, p. 99). During the 2000/2001 financial year, the KTP's portion of this money was used to upgrade the

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<sup>19</sup> SANParks attempted to outsource these facilities again in 2013 but there were no acceptable offers made by private parties.

existing facilities at Mata Mata and Nossob as well as to construct a new wilderness camp on the South African side of the Park (SANParks 2002) and, during the next financial year, another wilderness camp was built, in addition to a new fifteen-unit tented camp overlooking the Auob River (SANParks 2003). There are two important points regarding the implementation of the fourth stage of the commercialisation strategy that require emphasis. The first is SANParks' open and undeniable shift in focus from "pure" conservation to "the conservation business" that took place between 1999 and 2001. The second is one that could easily be overlooked, due to the fact that nothing was said about it within in any of the reports. This is the disproportionate amount of development and investment that took place during this period (and during the following decade) within South Africa's side of the Park, compared to Botswana's. Although there were several reasons for this, such as Botswana's laws at the time that prohibited such investment in protected areas, the imbalance must nonetheless be observed, as should the fact that no mention was made of it despite the concentrated focus at the time on transfrontier conservation and all its benefits.

### **6.3 The neoliberal effects of the formation of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as a TFCA**

Although the agreement to manage the two parks as one was reached in 1999 (and that the two parks had been managed as one since the 1930s), the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park was only formally opened by the Heads of State of South Africa and Botswana on the 12th May 2000. SANParks' 2002/2003 Annual Report states that the phenomenon of transfrontier conservation "has been hailed as another step in the right direction for Africa's tourism development" and that "[t]he development of these transfrontier conservation areas in southern Africa will not only contribute significantly to the conservation of biodiversity, but also create a major attraction to tourists" (SANParks 2003, p. 10). Although these claims regarding the positive effect of TFCAs on tourism were repeated in a number of subsequent annual reports and applied to the formation of various other transfrontier parks, very little explanation or justification was given by SANParks for these assertions.

#### **6.3.1 Why the creation of the KTP was meant to attract more tourists**

In the case of the formation of the KTP, three explanations of why visitor numbers were expected to increase were briefly mentioned in the annual reports spanning the years immediately before and after the establishment of the TFCA. The first of these was the increase in media coverage immediately following the Park's formation. The 2000/2001 Annual Report

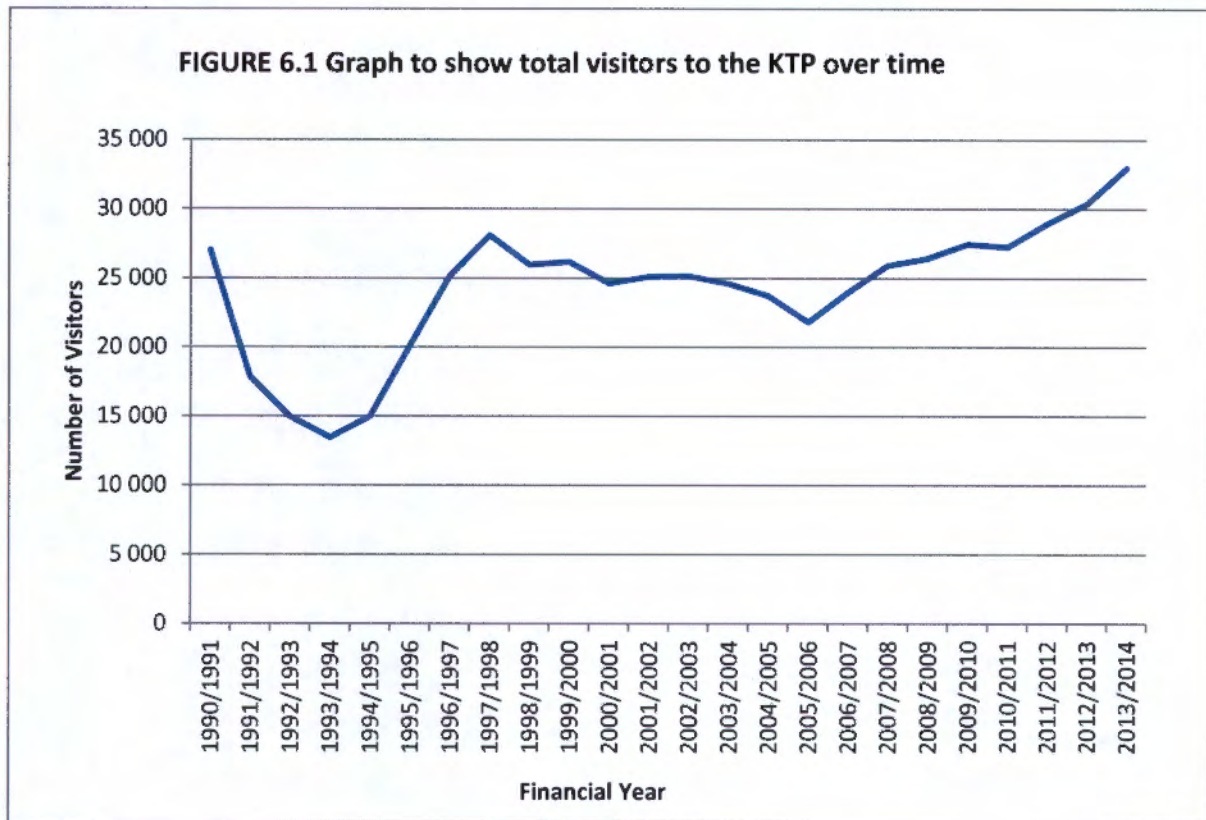
describes how the Park regularly found its way into newspaper articles and that it received frequent mentions on radio and television due to the transfrontier park being the first of its kind in Southern Africa (SANParks 2001). This is closely related to the second reason for increased interest in the Park – the novelty factor. There were several aspects to this factor, including the aforementioned newness of the TFCA concept in Southern Africa, as well as the spectacle created by the massive size of the newly combined park, and the resulting wilderness feel created by this. Other than the steady increase in development in the Park (which will be discussed in greater detail shortly), the only ‘new’ attraction was the ability of 4x4 enthusiasts to travel freely from one side of the Park to the other, which was the third tourist attraction to be mentioned in the annual reports. Although this freedom of movement was always present, as was pointed out by residents and business owners living outside the Park, many people may not have been aware of this until SANParks produced a Kgalagadi 4x4 Brochure, funded by SA Toyota, to explain the various 4x4 options within the new park. Despite only referring to these few factors in the build-up and aftermath of the formation of the KTP, SANParks’ confidence in the power of TFCAs to increase tourism was nonetheless made very clear. An example of this confidence was published in the 2002/2003 Annual Report, where it was “estimated that the potential number of tourists that could visit these [transfrontier conservation] areas – once the infrastructure is in place- could number 8 million a year” (SANParks 2003, p. 10). The following section will explain why such confidence was in fact misplaced.

### 6.3.2 An analysis of the KTP’s tourism data

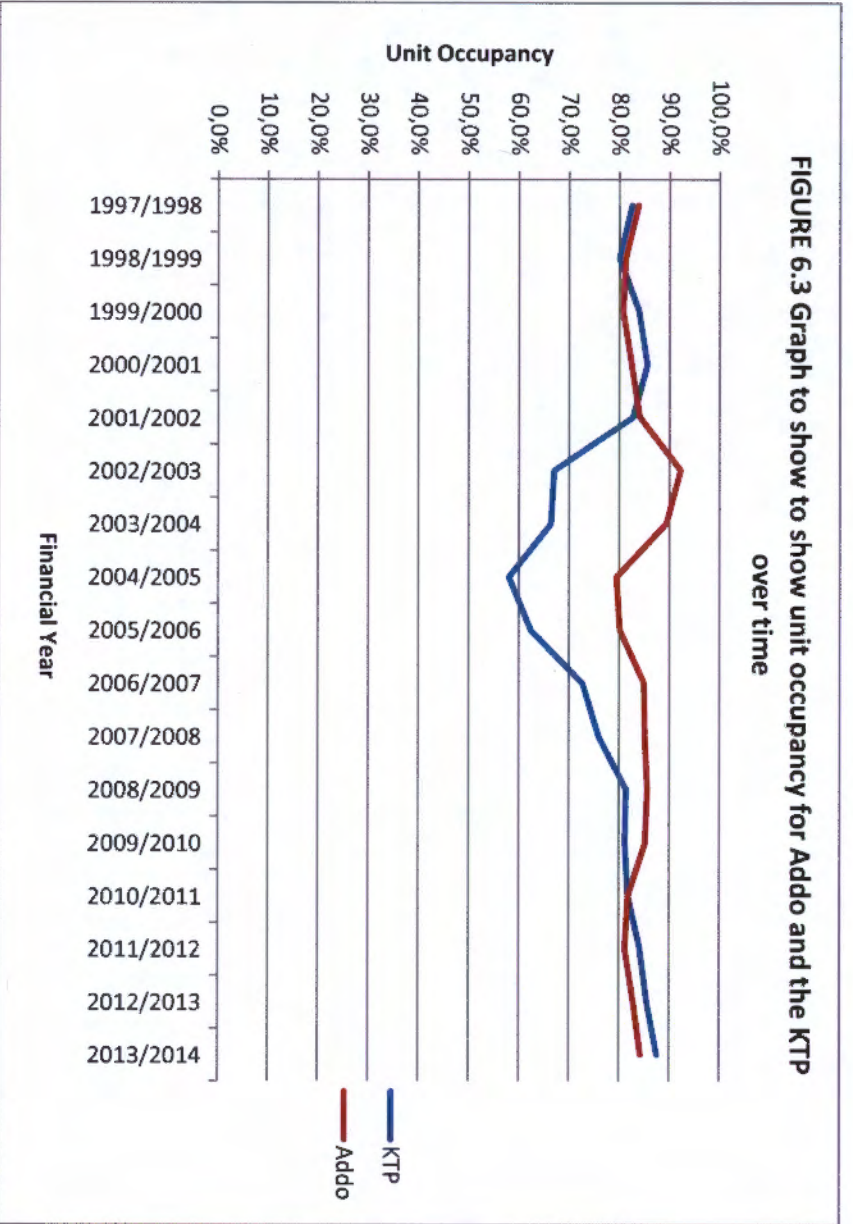
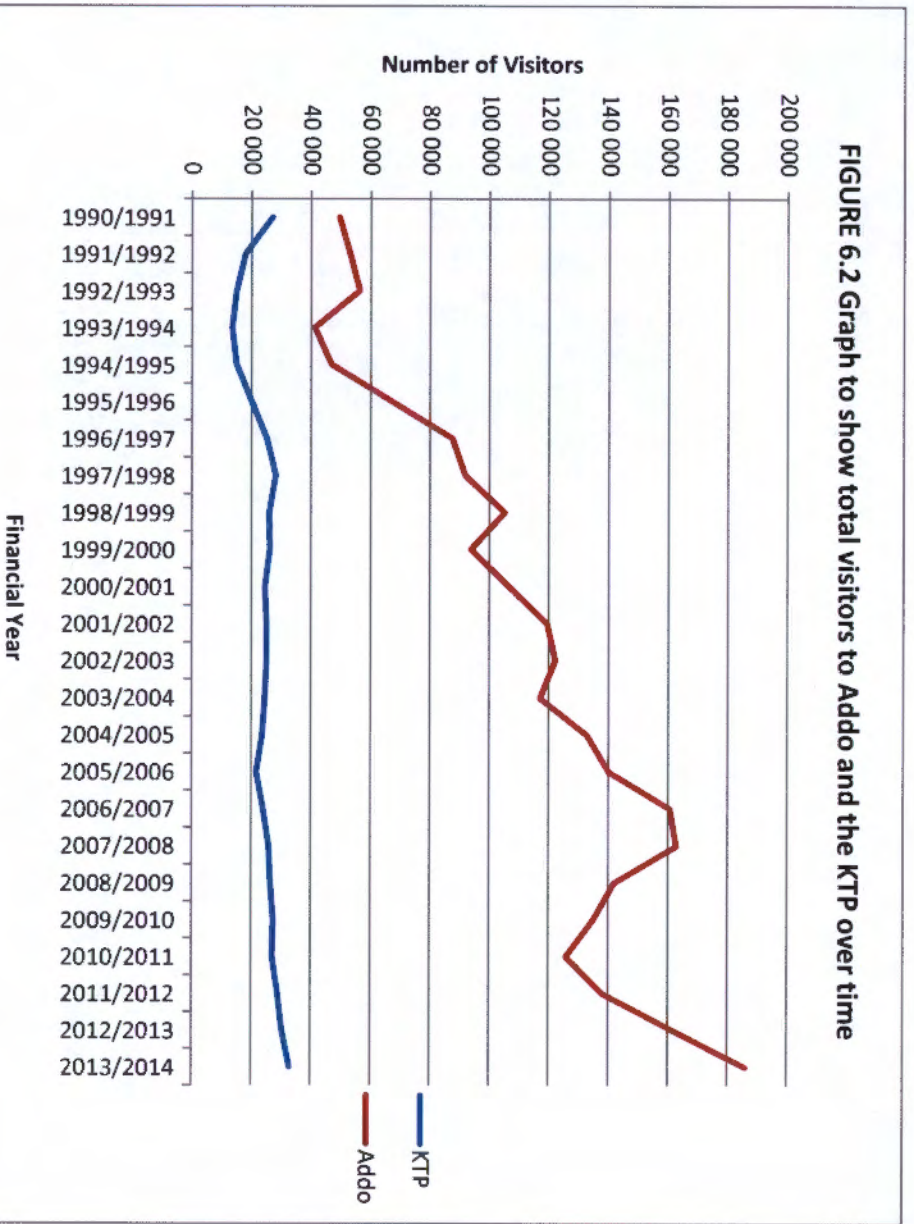
An analysis of the KTP’s tourism data shows that, regardless of which kind of data is examined, be it occupancy rate or total visitor numbers, the establishment of the Transfrontier Park in 2000 did not lead to an increase in tourism. Figure 6.1 shows the changes in visitor numbers to the Park over time. As can quite clearly be seen in the graph, not only did visitor numbers remain relatively stable in the years surrounding the establishment of the TFCA, but a slight decrease can even be seen in the early and mid-2000s. The KTP was officially launched as a TFCA on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2000 and, given that South Africa’s financial year<sup>20</sup> begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> April and ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March, one would have expected the 2000/2001 financial year to reflect the expected rise in tourism, as the first 11 months of the new park’s existence fell within this financial year. However, to the contrary, visitor numbers dropped by 5.9% from 26 185 in 1999/2000 to 24 627 in 2000/2001. A small recovery of 2.2% was seen over the next two

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<sup>20</sup> This is the duration of the financial year for the South African government only. The financial year for individuals is from March until February the following year.



years, followed by three years of steady decline, culminating in the lowest visitation numbers in over ten years being recorded in 2005/2006. Although there may have been several external factors to blame for these fluctuations, such as the drawn-out tarring process of the last section of the access road, the fact remains that, not only did the visitor numbers not rise after 2000, but it took almost 10 years for the Park's figures to return to where they were the year before the TFCA was formed. However, these fluctuations of one or two thousand visitors per year can be put into perspective by a comparison with another park's data. As has already been explained in the methodology chapter, the KTP's figures will be compared to those of the Addo Elephant National Park, primarily due to the fact that it is a national as opposed to a transfrontier park which therefore allows for valuable comparisons to be made. The point of these comparisons is to try and establish which changes were experienced by both parks and which occurred exclusively in the KTP. Given the very different attributes of the two parks, including their size, attractions, number of beds and proximity to large towns and cities, there is little to be gained from simply comparing their total number of guests every year, as Addo far exceeds the KTP in that regard. Rather, it is the differences in their tourism trends and changes over time that are important, and these will help to test the claim that TFCAs automatically lead to increased tourist numbers. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show the total visitor numbers, and the unit occupancy over time respectively.



Although Figure 6.2 shows the large disparity between the two parks' total visitors each year, there is another much more important difference. Overall, the KTP's graph is a great deal flatter than Addo's, and nowhere is it flatter than immediately after the creation of the Transfrontier Park. SANPark's annual reports did not give a timeframe for the expected post-transfrontier tourism increase, but the emphasis they placed on all the positive media exposure directly after the TFCA was formed, as well as their 4x4 marketing campaign in 2001, implies that the forecast rise was expected relatively soon after the official launch of the new park. An analysis of the changes that occurred in the first five years of the new millennium is therefore important. If one takes the total visitation figures of both parks from the year prior to the KTP's formation (1999/2000) and compares them to those of 2005/2006 when the KTP was five years old, the results show conclusively that transfrontier status alone does not necessarily lead to an increase in tourism. This is because, after 5 years of official transfrontier existence, visitor numbers to the KTP had dropped by 16.7%, whereas Addo's had risen by 49.5% over the same five years.

If unit occupancy figures are considered for the same time period, the picture (as shown in Figure 6.3) is even more damning. Addo's figures spiked during these five years, but returned to almost exactly where they were in 1999/2000, whereas the KTP's occupancy dropped as low as 58% in 2006, and ended at 62.4% in 2006, 25.6% lower than what they were the year prior to the TFCA's formation. One could go into great detail trying to identify and isolate the various factors leading to the different tourism patterns in both parks, but that is not the point of this comparison. The point of the comparison is to confirm or negate the claim that TFCAs bring more tourism, and the above analysis shows conclusively that, in this case, they do not. The total number of visitors to the Park during the 1990/1991 financial year – ten years *before* the Transfrontier Park was established – was 27 023. The total number of visitors to the Park during the 2010/2011 financial year – ten years *after* the Transfrontier Park was established – was 27 244. This astoundingly small change in actual visitor numbers proves incontrovertibly that the appeal of the Park has not been affected by its becoming a TFCA. This suggests that the original 'pull factors' that attracted people to the Park twenty years ago have not changed or increased simply because it became a TFCA. It can therefore be said that an increase in the size of a park without an increase in attractions (or pull factors) is not sufficient to bring about an increase in tourism. However, though this combined attempt at neoliberalism may not have had the desired impact on tourism, it has had several knock-on effects.

#### **6.4 The effects of neoliberalism within the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**

Having described the two channels through which the neoliberalism of the KTP has taken place – SANParks' CCS plan and the formation of the TFCA itself – and the varying degrees of success that each has had, it is necessary to look at the side effects that these strategies have had on the Park and the surrounding businesses that depend on it. There are two main factors that will be described in some detail within this next section – a change in the style of Park management and an increase in development within the KTP.

##### 6.4.1 Effects of the change in management of the KTP

While the change in management may not be a knock-on effect of the formation of the TFCA (as the management changes began a few years prior to the Transfrontier Park's official establishment), it does show a great deal of correlation with SANParks' commercialisation strategy. The management change to which I am referring was the phasing out of the traditional park wardens. As was briefly explained in the introduction, the formation of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and its subsequent management and protection over the next sixty years was undertaken by a few, now almost legendary, Afrikaans families. I was fortunate enough to secure an interview with a member of one such family, Elias le Riche, whose insight proved invaluable to my research project as “[t]he history and development of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park is inseparable from the well-known le Riche family” (van Wyk & le Riche 1984, p. 21). During our interview, Elias le Riche described his family's involvement in the Park's formation:

My family asked Minister Piet Grobler – that year was a lot of poaching in the park – to make it a national park. So they decided to take him on a hunting trip in the Nossob to show him what's happening there, because there was a lot of poaching ... from the Botswana side, from the South African side and from the Namibian side. And then before he went back, he promised he'll make it a national park. And he did that, and they appointed my father's brother [as Park Warden], he stayed at Gemsbok Plains from 1931 to 1934 then he died of malaria (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013).

Following the death of Johannes (Elias's uncle described in the passage above), Elias's father, Joseph or 'Joep' as he was known to most, “was requested to take over responsibility for the park. He agreed to do so temporarily. This 'temporarily' was extended to into 36 years” (van Wyk & le Riche 1984, p. 25). Following Joep's retirement, his son (and Elias's older brother)

Christoffel, became Warden but died unexpectedly a few years later. It was at this point that Elias became the fourth le Riche to occupy the Park Warden's station, a position he held until 1995. Elias, who now lives on his farm just outside Andriesvale, described the shift in focus of the Park's management as he perceived it by stating that "the Park has a very big problem. Nowadays it is only about tourism. In the early days it was nature conservation, and it has totally changed" (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013). These feelings were echoed by Anne Rasa who, having spent a great deal of time working and studying in the Park during Elias's time as Warden, believes that since he left, "the last three wardens have been what I call tourism wardens; they haven't been the old style wardens, the police wardens. I think those are being phased out" (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013). This neoliberal change in management from the traditional "police wardens", focused on protecting the area and eliminating poaching, to the series of subsequent "tourism wardens", focused on maximising the Park's tourism potential, is not an inherently negative change. However, many of the perceived knock-on effects of this shift in management are.

Two of the knock-on effects of these changes in Park management – as perceived by those with knowledge and insight into the Park's history as well as its current situation – have been an increase in poaching and a subsequent decrease in antelope herd sizes. It is important to note that, while this study does not attempt to confirm or negate these claims, it is nonetheless essential that they be included, due partly to the credibility and background of the two primary informants (Anne Rasa and Elias le Riche), partly to the fact that many of their claims are supported by data published in SANParks' annual reports, and partly to the importance of examining both the positive and the negative aspects of the neoliberalism of the KTP. During my time spent with Elias, he described how he used to patrol the entire park, including the Botswana side, on a regular basis looking for signs of poaching, and that he would take with him a number of people from Botswana in order for them to learn how to carry out such patrols themselves (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013). He went on to explain that, today, such patrols are no longer carried out and that, as a result, there is rampant poaching taking place of "everything from the bat-eared fox up to even lion" (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013). Anne Rasa shares this view:

This is my impression and it's been held up by research as well; nobody polices that park now, nobody is responsible for it. There's massive poaching going on; Namibia side, Botswana side ... Before, Elias le Riche used to fly patrol at least twice a week. His rangers would be out in the field for a week at a time and they would patrol the fence to Namibia, he would patrol through to Botswana, along the Botswana border [to see] if he could pick up tyre tracks and stuff like that.

Now there's nobody doing that ... South Africa says "No, they [the antelope] have all gone to Botswana" and Botswana says "No, they're all in South Africa". In actual fact, game ranches were opened all along the Botswana border. There's a very famous stretch northern part of the Park to south of Etosha, the pans up there, and the people are just poaching, lifting the fences, putting out salt [for the antelope], things like that, getting them through, closing the fences again. Nobody gives a damn (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013).

After hearing Elias le Riche recount stories of tracking down and apprehending poachers during his time as Park Warden, I asked how many had been caught since he left, to which he replied "there was not any poachers caught in the Park after I left; not a single one" (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013), which he insisted was due to a lack of policing, not a decline in poaching. Both he and Anne agreed that the amount of unchecked poaching taking place is responsible for the steady decline in the amount of game within the Park, which is most noticeable when one looks at antelope numbers. Though poaching is frequently reported on within SANParks' annual reports, the focus is almost entirely on the plight of rhinos, due to the current rhino poaching crisis in Southern Africa and the level of public concern regarding rhino conservation. Due perhaps to the absence of rhinos within the KTP, very little mention of poaching is made within its section of the report each year. However, estimated game numbers are included in annual reports and the KTP's figures certainly support the claims made by Anne and Elias. SANParks' 1989/1990 Annual Report describes how "[a] large herd of 3 500 springbok was seen near Nossob" (SANParks 1990, p. 31). Twenty-two years later, the 2011/2012 Annual Report states that a total of only 1441 – 2337 springbok remain within the entire Park (SANParks 2012). It must be emphasised that the first figure of 3 500 animals refers only to one herd of springbok, not the total number existing in the Park at the time which would have, presumably, been even higher. Although both Anne and Elias believe that poaching is the main culprit when it comes to the decline in game numbers, there is also another factor to take into account, pertaining to development and water availability. Therefore, having explained the knock-on effects of the management changes brought about by the neoliberalism of the KTP, it is now time to move on to the second effect of this neoliberalism – the increase in the amount of development within the Park.

#### 6.4.2 Effects of the increased development within the KTP

Far from being an unintended side effect of SANPark's CCS plan, the increase in number of camps and lodges in the KTP was one of the four main pillars of the strategy. During my

interview with one of the SANParks' officials stationed within the KTP, he explained that "when the transfrontier entity was established, a tourism master plan was drawn up whereby development nodes were identified in order to stimulate the visitation to the Park" (SANParks, interview, 8/04/2013). Figure 5.1 shows the locations of all of the camps within the Park, the majority of which were developed after 2000 in accordance with this tourism master plan, with three obvious exceptions being Twee Rivieren, Mata Mata and Nossob which long preceded it. In addition to showing all the camps and lodges in South Africa's side of the Park, Figure 5.1 also shows the absence of such camps and lodges in the Botswana side. There has always been a noticeable disparity in the levels of development of each country's side of the Park, but this is currently in the process of changing. In 2011, the DWNP set about changing this long-standing disparity by identifying five potential development sites within the Botswana side of the KTP. Three of these sites – Rooiputs, Polentswa and Union's End – are situated along the Park's main road that follows the border between the two countries, with the other two sites being located within the Mabuasehube section of the Park to the East. By the end of my time in the field, two luxury lodges at Rooiputs and Polentswa had been completed, with the plans for another at Union's End having been temporarily abandoned due to the absence of water at the site. During an interview with a Park official from the DWNP, I was informed that the two lodges that had already been completed could accommodate 24 people each, and were equipped with a honeymoon suite and Jacuzzi, and that the lodges that were yet to be built would also be privately owned and would, more than likely, follow the same pattern. When I asked the Botswana official why this sudden spurt of development had taken place, he informed me that when he joined, "the mission of the Department was more into conservation, rather than tourism, but slowly but surely now we are getting into incorporating both of them" (DWNP, interview, 20/07/2013). Clearly, though it may have taken slightly longer than in South Africa, neoliberalism has taken effect within Botswana too. These new lodges, though expensive<sup>21</sup>, will no doubt increase Botswana's tourism revenues. However, as with the change in management described earlier, these developments on both sides of the KTP have had various perceived impacts.

The first of these perceived impacts is the reduction in water availability (from boreholes) in the Park, caused by the over-extraction of groundwater used to service the many existing camps and in the construction of new ones. Once again, this study does not attempt to confirm or negate these claims, but merely to describe them. After explaining the effect that poaching has

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<sup>21</sup> During the interview the Botswana park official indicated that it would cost 2 800.00 Pula (approximately R3 400.00) per night to stay in these new lodges.

had on game numbers within the Park, Elias le Riche moved onto the equally worrying water situation, stating that “if you don’t look after your conservation, what will the tourists later come and look for? I come there sometimes, I see there’s nice swimming pools but the animals are standing without water ... the Kalahari doesn’t have the water for such a lot of lodges” (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013). Once more, his feelings were echoed by Anne Rasa:

I think nobody cares anymore. They have become very much focuses on greed, money. I mean now all these new camps and lodges that have been put up, it’s got to be income, income. And okay, so the tourists can’t see a herd of a thousand springbok anymore, they’ve never seen one anyway so they’re not missing anything ... The people are still coming so they [SANParks] don’t care. They’re fully booked, they’re always fully booked so I mean they don’t give a damn (A. Rasa, interview, 5/04/2013).

As with the decline in game numbers, this theory regarding the reduction in water availability is, to a certain extent, supported by those in charge. During our interview, the park official from Botswana’s DWNP described how the borehole servicing the Rooiputs campsite dried up following the development of the new private lodge at Rooiputs and, despite attempts to dig new boreholes, they were struggling to find water. He went on to explain that the private company running the new lodge was going to allow the DWNP to use their deeper borehole to service the DWNP-run Rooiputs campsite so, for the time being, the problem was solved (DWNP, interview, 20/07/2013).

The second perceived impact of the increased development within the Park is less tangible than the first and has been felt not just by Anne and Elias, but also by many of the other surrounding business owners. It involves the loss or reduction of the feeling of wilderness that one experiences when visiting the Park. The remoteness and rustic nature of the KTP, as well as its immense size and the fact that it traverses the boundaries of two countries, all contribute to this feeling of truly being ‘in the wild’. However, with the increase in development and therefore the capacity of the Park, many feel that this sense of wilderness is in danger of becoming lost. One such individual is Elias who believes that

they [SANParks] put in too many buildings and little camps in the Park. I think it takes the wilderness area away from people. A lot of tourists phone me and tell me, they don’t like all the little camps that are coming up, it takes away the wilderness feeling; ... the people like the Botswana side much more than the South African side because you don’t have such a lot of camps and things in the Botswana side, it’s I think it’s much more wild than the South African side (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013).

SJ from the Kgalagadi Lodge also felt that Botswana's (comparative) lack of development made it more appealing than the South African side of the Park because, "if you want to go to a park, you don't really want it to be over commercialised... and that's what they [the tourists] like about Botswana – it's very rural" (S.J. Koortzen, interview, 5/04/2013). Both Lizette from Rooipan and Charl from Kopano emphasised the importance of maintaining the Park's rustic quality in order for it to continue to appeal to those who visit from urban areas (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013; C. Page, interview, 25/03/2013). Lizette went a step further by stating that people are "hungry to get away from the cities" and that parks like the Kruger National Park had lost some of their appeal due to over-commercialisation (L. Knoetze, interview, 23/03/2013). Lastly, in addition to being threatened by over development, this illusion of being in the wilderness is also jeopardised by the increasing amount of congestion on the roads within the Park. This phenomenon has been brought about by the Park's increased capacity which has inevitably led to an increase in the number of cars on the roads and, since the number of roads in the Park has not risen, a certain degree of congestion is therefore inevitable. This was recognised as a problem by both the DWNP official and by Elias who explained that, during his time in the Park, the capacity of the roads was the limiting factor when determining how many people were allowed into the Park, not the number of beds (E. le Riche, interview, 12/04/2013).

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **Insights into the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This research project set out to answer the question of whether or not TFCAs bring greater levels of tourism and development to the areas in which they are established by using the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as a case study. In order to be able to answer this, two further questions needed to be asked. The first of these was 'What changes in tourism development have taken place as a result of the TFCA's formation, both within the Park and in the area surrounding it?', with the second one being 'What trends and changes can one observe when comparing the Park's visitation data prior to 2000 to tourist its levels after it became a TFCA?'. Through the investigation of these questions, I aimed to establish the extent to which the KTP has served as a platform for the expansion of neoliberalism. Although I am by no means the first to be questioning the process of neoliberalism in this way (see Duffy 2008), by answering these questions I aimed to gently critique the assumption that all nature-based economic activities are part of a wider neoliberal agenda. In order to do this, and to answer the research questions, a number of important points need to be extracted from the findings described in the previous chapters, starting with the most important – that, far from seeing an automatic increase following the establishment of the KTP, the link between tourism and the TFCA is in fact extremely tenuous. This final chapter will begin by situating the findings pertaining to the neoliberalisation of the KTP within the existing literature before moving on to a critique of the neoliberal assumption that all nature-based economic activities are part of a wider neoliberal agenda by providing a summary of the nature of the area's many guesthouses and game farms and the reasons for their establishment. Lastly, suggestions will be made as to the direction of future research.

#### **7.2 Situating the neoliberalisation of the KTP within the wider literature**

The existing literature on the subject of transfrontier parks shows that they are considered, in no uncertain terms, to be platforms for neoliberalism and capital accumulation due to the increased number of tourists that they attract (Timothy 2001, Hanks 2003, Ferreira 2004, Büscher 2010b, 2013). This is especially relevant since TFCAs generally rely on nature-based tourism which is emphasised in the literature as being the new arena for contemporary capital

accumulation, given that it appears to provide the spatial, temporal and environmental solutions to capitalism's various crises. However, this study has found that the formation of the KTP did not result in an increase in tourist activity of any kind. An analysis of the Park's visitation data from 1990 to 2014 shows a slight drop in total visitors to the Park immediately following its establishment as a TFCA in 2000. By 2006, visitor numbers were lower than they had been in ten years, though admittedly this only represented a decrease of approximately five thousand individuals per year. Similarly, in 2005 the Park's occupancy levels dropped as low as 58% after having remained stable at approximately 83% for several years prior to the TFCA's formation. Chapter 3 rationalised these trends and figures by comparing them to those of the Addo Elephant National Park and by taking various local, national and international changes into account. However, the conclusion remained the same – that transfrontier status did not lead to an increase in tourism in the KTP. Therefore, far from being “the glue that binds the different goals of TFCAs together” Büscher (2013, p. 58), increased tourism is by no means a guaranteed result of TFCA formation. These findings support and corroborate the work of Scovronick and Turpie (2009, p. 154) who concluded that an increase in the diversity of attractions on offer is required in order to boost a park's tourism performance, and that an increase in the area of a park alone would not be sufficient.

The second important point that must be made is the fact that the literature on TFCAs systematically ignores what takes place outside the parks. Very little attention is given to the developments and economic activities that transpire in the areas surrounding them, which is why a great deal of my time in the field was spent researching the many businesses situated on the periphery of the KTP and their various reasons for establishment. I did this in order to ascertain what connection or relationship, if any, these game farms and guesthouses had to the KTP and, in doing so, to be able to broaden the scope of enquiry into transfrontier conservation areas. The first point made in this concluding chapter was that the literature falsely credits TFCAs with automatically being able to bring about an increase in nature-based tourism, while the second point highlights the fact that hardly any mention at all is made in the literature about what is taking place outside TFCAs. Keeping these two points in mind, the rest of this final section will contribute towards filling these gaps by explaining the limited extent to which the economic activities witnessed in *and* around the KTP are indicative of the expansion of neoliberalism, beginning with those within the Park itself.

TFCAs are viewed in much of the neoliberal literature as platforms for the expansion of capitalism, primarily through the growth and promotion of nature-based tourism. As was described in Chapter Two, there are several aspects or manifestations of the process of neoliberalism, namely privatisation, marketisation, deregulation, reregulation and the use of market proxies, as well as several others that are of less relevance to this study. In order to answer the question regarding the extent to which the economic activities witnessed within the Park are indicative of the expansion of neoliberalism, they must be judged in accordance with these neoliberal principles. The first and most easily recognisable of these was the introduction of SANParks' Commercialisation as a Conservation Strategy policy, a nation-wide strategy that included both deregulation and market-friendly reregulation. This policy saw a reduction in the responsibilities of the state with regard to certain aspects of park maintenance and operations, and the subsequent reregulation which encouraged this gap to be filled by private entities. The goal of this policy, as articulated by SANParks, was "to re-focus on the core conservation business while simultaneously leveraging the expertise of private enterprise to deliver identified aspects of the commercial operations" (SANParks 2001, p. 98). This excerpt highlights another two aspects of neoliberalisation inherent within the commercialisation strategy – privatisation and marketisation. This privatisation took two forms. The first of these was the outsourcing of all shops and restaurant facilities within South Africa's parks. The management of these facilities within the KTP was taken over by EJ Viljoen and Associates who ran the Park's shops and restaurant for ten years. However, following the expiration of their contract, SANParks resumed control and are still in charge of them to this day.

The second form of privatisation that took place under the commercialisation strategy was the issuing of concessions within parks, which were awarded to private parties through the public tender process. Only one lodge within the KTP was privatised as a result of this strategy – the community-owned !Xaus Lodge. Although !Xaus and the land upon which it is situated are part of the Contract Park owned by the †Khomani San and Mier communities (and not the state), the lodge was not in operation prior to its privatisation and marketisation by Transfrontier Parks Destinations. !Xaus Lodge and the Park's one restaurant and three shops were the only privately-run entities within the KTP for almost thirteen years, up until the very recent addition of Botswana's private luxury lodges. The final aspect of neoliberalism that took place within the KTP was the use of market proxies in the management of the new SANParks-run lodges and rest camps that were constructed with money borrowed from a development finance institution. The condition that SANParks placed on the construction of these new camps was that they "must earn real return after both interest and capital repayments" (SANParks 2001, p. 99). This

cost-recovery implementation shows the use of market proxies within a government subsidiary (SANParks), and this in turn reflects the neoliberal shift in management style adopted by SANParks in the early 2000s. However, given that these camps were publically-run, we have no way of knowing whether this cost-recovery condition was met or not. Nonetheless, applying these neoliberal principles to the various economic activities within the Park paints rather a complex picture. Although the privatisation of the shops and restaurant did take place following the implementation of the CCS policy, they were all reclaimed by SANParks a decade later, showing that neoliberalism is not a simple, unidirectional process, and that some entities do indeed fall back into the public sphere. Similarly, it is arguable that the privatisation of !Xaus Lodge was more a result of the land claim that had recently been won by the ǀKhomani San and Mier communities than of the expansion of neoliberalism. The lodge was built by DEAT in order to benefit the local communities and stood dormant for four years until finally TFD agreed to run it on behalf of the Mier and ǀKhomani San. However, if one were to judge them at face value, with all the claims made about TFCAs in the neoliberal literature in mind, one could easily assume that both of these instances of privatisation were a result of the supposedly unstoppable spread of neoliberalism into areas of nature. These examples therefore show why it is necessary to be cautious when attempting to establish the extent to which the process of neoliberalism should be credited for economic activities that take place within TFCAs.

### **7.3 Critiquing neoliberal assumptions regarding nature-based economic activities**

Having explained the extent to which the economic activities witnessed inside the KTP are indicative of the expansion of neoliberalism, the final part of this conclusion will focus on the many activities taking place outside the Park. These sorts of activities are sometimes mentioned briefly in the literature under the heading of the supposed benefits that transboundary conservation is said to bring to local (often poor) neighbouring communities. However, more often than not, these economic endeavours are overlooked in the literature on TFCAs, and as a result the links between transfrontier parks and surrounding nature-based businesses are relatively unknown. As was illustrated in Chapter Three, the economic enterprises located in the area surrounding the KTP assume a number of different forms. Some, like the Molopo Lodge, are well established tourist facilities able to accommodate several groups at a time whereas others, such Koppieskraal and Kalahari Bird Song, are more casual, simple establishments offering accommodation to tourists at the owner's convenience. In addition to these, a number of the outlying establishments are hunting farms, most of which offer very rustic accommodation in the form of field camps. When looking at the area as a

whole, and when taking into account the many claims made by proponents of TFCAs regarding their inherently neoliberal qualities and capabilities, it is very easy to assume that the presence of these businesses is a direct result of an overflow of tourists (and an expansion of neoliberalism) from the KTP. However, as was explored in some detail within the previous chapters, there were many reasons for establishment given by guesthouse and game farm owners, and the two leading answers had very little to do with the Park. The simpler of the two reasons was the provision of accommodation in order to cater to the needs of hunters. All of these hunting farms are end destinations in and of themselves and do not rely on the flow of tourists to and from the Park. They stand alone as viable economic establishments that are independent of the KTP and, though some hunters do go on to the Park while their meat is busy being processed, their primary reason for visiting the area is to engage in hunting on these farms. The number one most popular motivation, however, for the establishment of guesthouses was a collective feeling of boredom and a lack of fulfilment among the wives of the Afrikaans farmers in the area. The remote and isolated nature of the Kalahari, combined with the extremely limited opportunities for employment or fulfilment in other sectors, resulted in many women deciding to pass the time by opening guesthouses on their farms to cater to passing travellers.

There are several key details within this motivation that need highlighting. The first of these is that the motivation on the part of these farm-bound women for opening their guesthouses was to give them something to do and to keep busy with and, as such, many of these establishments are treated more like hobbies than viable businesses. Some, for example, close their guesthouses for weeks at a time when they leave the area to visit their children in other parts of the country. Others only accept 'a certain calibre of guests' (ones with whom they assume they will have more in common and whose company they will therefore find more enjoyable) by outpricing the lower class guests or simply by pretending to be full in order to pick and choose the kinds of clientele with whom they wish to engage. On the other hand, one respondent admitted to being so lonely and starved of visitors that she didn't even charge guests who visited in the quiet summer months. In addition to these seemingly unprofessional actions on the part of guesthouse owners, these businesses are also not subject to the normal, often harsh, economic conditions and realities that most businesses operating in a competitive capitalist environment would be. No rent needs to be paid, labour is essentially free since workers are 'borrowed' from the farm when needed, and amenities such as satellite television are generally already in place within the main farmhouse, requiring little extra to be spent on extending these facilities to guests. Not only are the overhead costs therefore far lower than most normal economic

enterprises, but their turnover rate and occupancy levels would see most businesses unable to sustain themselves. The point needs to be drawn from these examples is that there is a great deal of economic activity taking place that is independently of the Park, and that these businesses have their own rationale and way of operating which is not captured by or reflected in the neoliberal literature nor the body of work pertaining to transfrontier parks.

When one sees small-scale economic activities mushrooming at the outskirts of a large hub like the KTP it is very tempting to link them to larger economic processes and, in doing so, label them as proof of the unrelenting spread of neoliberalism. Similarly, the neoliberal literature leads one to believe that any economic activities that are nature-related, be they within a TFCA or elsewhere, must be influenced by neoliberal trends and ideas. This assumption leaves no room for the more nuanced, localised, non-neoliberal explanations for the existence these enterprises, like the ones described above. This paper therefore emphasises the need for caution when attempting to ascribe neoliberal assumptions and explanations to economic process taking place on the ground. The need for caution is threefold. It must firstly be exercised when reiterating the assumption that TFCAs automatically bring about an increase in tourism. While this may be the case in some situations, it has not been the case in the KTP which proves that it is by no means guaranteed in all instances, and that an increase in area without an increase in attractions does not necessarily lead to an increase in a park's tourist appeal. Secondly, TFCA researchers must be aware of the numerous possible explanations for the presence of small-scale economic activities taking place in the areas surrounding (transfrontier) parks and must be careful not to equate their existence with that of the park's. Finally, caution must be exercised when assuming that all nature-based economic activities are part of a wider neoliberal process motivated by capitalist expansion and, in doing so, overlooking the many varied and locally determined reasons why nature-based economic activities are undertaken. Without being aware of these potential pitfalls, we run the risk of falling into the trap that so many researchers have warned against by ascribing neoliberalism a greater level of power and dominance than it deserves.

#### **7.4 Potential directions for future research**

Future research on the topic of TFCAs might explore the relationship between TFPs and contiguous game parks. In some instances (such as in the area surrounding the KNP), fences between privately owned nature reserves or game parks and TFCAs have been taken down,

thereby unifying these areas and increasing the overall size of the TFCA. It would be interesting to discover what kind of symbiotic relationship exists between these parks and private reserves and what factors help or hinder this relationship. Perhaps this is where some of the promises made by TFCA advocates might be realised. One might assume that this cooperation could lead to increased benefits for all involved. However, given that (to the best of my knowledge) there has been very little investigation into this area, it is equally possible that this unification could have unintended side effects and consequences for the various stakeholders. In addition to this, future research could involve more studies testing the tourism-related claims made by supporters of TFCAs. Such studies would help to validate (or challenge) the findings of this paper.

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## Appendix 1: List of Interview Questions

### Questions for Private Guesthouses/ Tourist Establishments during the Third Phase of Fieldwork (March/ April 2013)

1. How long have you been managing this guesthouse?
2. When was the guesthouse first established?
3. What kind of accommodation do you offer (e.g. camping, self-catering etc.)?
4. Roughly how many people can you accommodate?
5. Do you offer any other services as well (e.g. food, game drives, hunting etc.)?
6. Why did you decide to set up a guesthouse here/ take over this guesthouse?
7. What kind of people do you get staying here:
  - A. Locals or foreigners?
  - B. Hunters or tourists?
  - C. Other? If so, what?
8. What is your busiest time of year?
9. What is the average stay of your guests?
10. Do you undertake any advertising? If so, through what channels?
11. What changes to tourist levels have you perceived over the last 15 years (i.e. increase or decrease)? What do you think has caused this?
12. What change or factor has had the biggest influence (good or bad) on your business since its inception?
13. Does the development of the KTP make business sense to you? Why?
14. What impact, if any, did the establishment of the KTP in 2000 have on your business?
15. Do you get many people stopping over on their way to the KTP?
16. What is the name of the farm on which your guesthouse is situated? Do you own it?
17. Do you have any employees? How many? Where are they from?