

Capitalism and Private Nature Reserves: the Taming of Mala Mala land claim

Dissertation presented for the degree of Master of Science in Environmental and
Geographical Science

by

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June 2020

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Declaration

This dissertation is submitted by me to the University of Cape Town for the award of a Masters degree. It is research work carried out by me under the supervision of Professor Maano Ramutsindela.

I know the meaning of plagiarism and declare that the work in this dissertation is my own in conception and execution. The contribution from the work or works of other people has been credited accordingly.

Signed by candidate

Khadra Ghedi Alasow

Acknowledgements

The study reported in this dissertation would not have been possible without the valuable contribution of many individuals to whom I would like to extend my sincere gratitude. I am thankful to my supervisor, Professor Maano Ramutsindela, for his guidance, encouragement and mentorship. He has taught me the value of deep critical thinking that aims at observing the connections and disconnections that define our everyday life. The intellectual insight I have gained during this journey, I will treasure dearly.

I am grateful for the financial contributions that supported this dissertation. The support from the Andrew Mellon Foundation through the Social Science Research Council not only assisted me financially, but also gave me the opportunity to network with other Mellon Fellows globally and to engage in discussions on research and academia. I am also grateful for the funding from the National Research Foundation and the University of Cape Town (through the Schroder Foundation). While tertiary education remains exclusionary due to high tuition fees, these networks of financial aid have given me the opportunity to pursue a passion that would otherwise not have been possible.

I would like to thank all the participants in this study. I appreciate the time taken by each individual to explain to me their thoughts and opinions. This research carries deep meaning for many, and I truly hope that it makes a positive contribution towards effective land restitution.

Lastly, and very importantly, I thank my family and friends for their support and motivation. Thank you for the endless discussions and debates that helped me refine my thoughts and ideas.

Abstract

Capitalism has evolved globally by disciplining its key features to suit new markets and changing socio- economic environments. These features include private property, labour and neoliberalism. Whilst capitalism has managed to become a well-established system, occasionally it is confronted with challenges which expose its callous nature. In South Africa, land restitution calls into question capitalism's operation as it disrupts the conventional process of profit accumulation. This is evident when looking at the manner in which land claims are settled in private nature reserves that are under a land claim. Private nature reserves have been structured to bring together capitalism's key features of property, labour and neoliberalism and therefore become interesting sites on which to study how they react to land restitution.

This study uses Mala Mala Game Reserve to investigate how capitalism unfolds in the game reserve. It specifically looks at the conservation business, labour conditions, and the settlement of the land claim in the reserve. It begins by analysing the structuring of the conservation business to fit capitalism's objective of profit accumulation. The emphasis here is on the relationship between capitalism and nature, and how the conservation business is built on the commodification of nature. It traces the business foundation of Mala Mala over time to understand how the reserve became a luxurious safari destination that target a small, select group of wealthy, mainly international tourists. The reserve promises quality wildlife viewing and luxury accommodation for its guests, which it is able to offer through the commercialisation of nature in a manner that is often viewed as ethical to the greater public, yet a closer look at the operation of the reserve shows the unaccounted cost of exclusion, dispossession and exploitation. These impacts are further contextualised in the second part of the study, which documents the structuring of labour as a condition for building the reserve's economic success.

Labour is an important necessity for capitalism's operations and its conditions show us the fierce manner in which surplus value is extracted. The creation of the cheap labour system in South Africa played an important role in building conservation areas. The success of conservation business in private nature reserves routinely depends on conservation labour. The study finds that cheap labour in Mala Mala is secured through the adoption of a migrant labour system. Such a system highlights the social 'cost' (labour) of capital accumulation that takes place in the reserve.

While the first two parts of the study explain how capitalism has shaped the conservation business in Mala Mala, the last section investigates what happens when this almost perfectly structured system is challenged through land claims. The study finds that the clash between conservation business and land restitution produce a model of land reform that chime with neoliberalism. Backed by government and landowners, the model separates business ownership from landownership in order to guarantee capital accumulation. This study contributes to our understanding of land restitution in private nature reserves in South Africa and the land restitution model it produces.

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List of Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Institute for South Africa
CPA	Communal Property Association
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KNP	Kruger National Park
LCC	Land Claims Court
NDP	National Development Plan
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGP	New Growth Path
NCPA	N'wandlamharhi Communal Property Association
NP	National Party
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RLCC	Regional Land Claims Commission
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SSW	Sabi Sand Wildtuin
TGCSA	Tourism Grading Council of South Africa

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Capitalism, conservation, and land restitution

The motives of capitalism, conservation and land restitution are seemingly different, with each of them pursuing a different agenda. While capitalism serves an economic function by exploiting resources to ensure the accumulation of maximum profit, conservation has an environmental function as it aims at restoring and protecting exploited resources. Land restitution on the other hand serves a social function by addressing historic injustices of land dispossession. Although capitalism, conservation and land restitution have different motives, the economic, environmental and social aims are interwoven and converge at different points of interaction. This convergence opens up an avenue through which we can gain a better understanding of the links between capitalism, conservation and land restitution their implications for societies in transition.

The relationship between capitalism and conservation has a long history. It is grounded in altering the human - nature relationship into commodities that can be sold or purchased in a manner that is environmentally conscious. This relationship has increasingly been developed over time as capitalism diversified from its conventional environmentally exploitative nature to infiltrate conservation initiatives that aim to address environmental degradation in various ways (a term referred to as green capitalism (Scales, 2017)). Many of these capitalist infiltrations happen through an ‘invisible hand’, as economist Adam Smith notes, and result in unaccounted benefits as well as damages on a local, national and international scale. In many places, the capitalist system was institutionalised in the 1970s, in the form of neoliberalism, a system which Castree (2010) more generally explains as an approach that orders human affairs in a way that priority is given to the market. Advocates of this system argue that it offers

individual freedom to society, however, this so called ‘freedom’ depends on an individual’s relationship to the market, where the rich would be at a greater advantage than the poor. As a result of its inherent bias, the private sector plays a great role in the economy and therefore in society as well.

States have adopted this system as a way to develop themselves both economically and socially. While the relationship between capitalism and nature is conventionally looked at in an exploitative manner, where natural resources are extracted and sold in an unsustainable way causing environmental degradation, ironically neoliberal conservation has turned around this negative image and has given capitalism a new face. Neoliberal states have facilitated this new integration of capitalism through the private sector’s involvement in the commodification and privatization of nature in conservation areas. Over the last two decades the growth of conservation as a land use has been evident in the growth in privately owned protected areas (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe, 2010). Conservation has opened new opportunities for capitalism to ‘fix’ its inner problems as Harvey (2005a) puts it, as it prevents further biodiversity loss and species extinction (that was created by exploitative capitalist production in the first place).

Private parks are part of a global emergence of luxury ecotourism, which uses capitalism to nurture new forms of exclusion along financial lines. Capitalists have motivated land use conversion to private nature reserves by stating that they are adding value (through tourism) to the land by bringing wildlife to it (Brooks et al., 2011) thereby being economically efficient in a moral, environmentally friendly manner. Wildlife tourism is based on the image of ‘pure wilderness’ isolation which is commodified and sold as a product. Capitalism has manifested itself in nature through the conservation businesses and as a result of accommodating the tourist

market, it has pushed back other values (Peluso, 2012; Büscher et al, 2012; Ramutsindela, 2015). Many have theorised about capitalism as an ideology, but the physical progression of capitalism is difficult to trace. This is because of capitalism's ambiguous backdoor influences in society's decision making. One practical way in which we can see how capitalism unfolds is in private nature reserves that are under a land claim, where changes in land ownership obscures (and can possibly disrupt) the operation of capitalism in the reserve. This is because key characteristics of capital accumulation in these areas involve property and labour.

Private property offers a simplified platform for capital accumulation as land, assets and natural resources are privately owned by one or a few individuals or a company. This is different from national parks which still have a public responsibility to uphold through the state. In addition to the aspect of property ownership, surplus labour value also forms an important part in capital accumulation. Surplus labour in conservation areas can be used in order to understand the degree of exploitation taking place. The social 'cost' of capitalism is not widely analysed in nature conservation, yet it plays a fundamental role in its success.

While South African national parks have received some attention in analysing the impact of neoliberal policies and its social consequences (Ntshona et al, 2010; Büscher et al, 2012; Snijders, 2014; Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013;), the same cannot be said about private wildlife reserves. The exception to this is literature on farm workers in private game reserves (Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014) and on a narrow focus on the financial viability of private game reserves (Schmidtz and Willot, 2003 and Langhoz and Kerley, 2006). This scant literature does not go deep into the 'cost' of production in private reserves. Some work has been done on farm workers in general as a theme of land reform (Ntsebeza, 2013)

The features of a capitalist system are magnified when there is a disruption in its operation. In the case of South Africa, land reform is seen as a disruption to capitalist mode of operations. Land dispossession in South Africa is a difficult and complex problem to solve, mainly because it is integral to the economic system. It is a historical problem of exploitation through land alienation and has become increasingly difficult under complex political, social and economic conditions in the neoliberal state. Land claims in private nature reserves give us the context in which we can understand how capitalism negotiates its profits. It also assists our understanding of land policy by seeing how the state approaches conflicting agendas of restitution versus economic interests. The settlement of land claims in private nature reserves helps us to understand the goals and value systems that get suppressed, compromised or promoted.

This study uses capitalism as a theoretical lens for understanding how Mala Mala Game Reserve maintained its business interests in the face of land restitution. This game reserve is amongst the oldest private game reserves in South Africa and hit the spotlight of national and international media when the biggest land claim in the country's history was settled here in 2013. The land claim was settled in the form of restoration without compromising the business of the reserve, thus it becomes interesting to investigate the negotiations and agreements reached in the settlement. How did capitalism negotiate its profits? What was/was not accommodated during these negotiations? The Mala Mala case study brings together labour and private property and allows us to understand how business interests shape the settlement of land claims in South Africa.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand how capitalism unfolds in South African private nature reserves under land claim.

To achieve this aim, the three objectives of this study are:

- a. To analyse how the private game reserve is commodified
- b. To document the creation of labour in Mala Mala Game Reserve
- c. To investigate the Mala Mala land claim settlement.

This study is significant in that it shows how land restitution is complicated by the conditions put forward by capitalism. It demonstrates the long-standing relationship capitalism has with the private game reserve by firstly looking how it commodifies nature and structures labour, and then shows how opposing interests (such as a land claim) is dealt with accordingly to fit capitalist ideals.

1.2 Contextualizing Mala Mala Game Reserve as a site for capital accumulation

Mala Mala Game Reserve is situated within the Sabi Sand Complex, Bushbuckridge, Ehlanzeni district, and is a world-renowned tourist destination. It is located on the eastern side of the complex and shares an unfenced boarder with Kruger National Park (KNP) (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1. 1 Location of Mala Mala Game Reserve (Source: www.malamala.com)

The game reserve was founded in 1962 as a commercial ecotourism destination and is praised for its exclusive luxury lodges and wildlife, and plays an important role in the national and international tourism market. However, irrespective of the reserve's tourism success, the reserve is built on land which has a long history of African exclusion, exploitation, and

dispossession. Unjust colonial and apartheid policies forced Africans to lose their subsistence livelihoods through loss of land, livestock, and natural resources. With a new, democratically elected government coming into power in 1994, a new constitution included provisions for land reform in order to address the legacy of the past. As a result, land reform policies were formulated to allow those dispossessed of their land to claim it back. In 1996 a number of individuals placed land claims over the Sabi Sand area, including Mala Mala. These individuals were grouped together as the Mhlanganisweni community by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) for the purpose of the land claim administration. The Mhlanganisweni community lodged their claims over 65,000 hectares, most of Sabi Sand, and Mala Mala is the first reserve where the claim was successful and led to the restoration of 13,184 hectares of land to the community. Many land claims that have been lodged in the Bushbuckridge area are still pending and have frustrated many communities that have been waiting over 25 years for the restoration of their land rights. Restoration of land in protected areas to the communities is largely unsuccessful as it is complicated by the government's preference for nature conservation (Shabangu, 2014).

Landowners in the Sabi Sand were fiercely opposed the land claims. This is evident not only in the prolonged court cases but also in the threats by landowners against employees who are part of communities claiming land. In the Mala Mala case, the landowners did not dispute the validity of the land claims but did approach the court to determine the feasibility of restoration. Much of the debate about the settlement of the land claim was around the amount of compensation the landowners were to receive. After many complex negotiations and questionable decisions, the land claim was eventually settled in November 2013 for a total of R1.1 billion, making it the most expensive land claim settlement in South African history. A full discussion of this land claim is in Chapter 6.

In theory, the restoration of highly valued private property to the Mhlanganisweni community appears as an important step towards the transformation of the country. However, a closer inspection of the settlement agreement and its long-term implications reveal compromises, ambiguities, and contradictions (cf. Chapter 6). The Mala Mala case study brings together key factors for the operation of capitalism, namely private property and labour. It also provides insight into the resilience of capitalism in the context of land claims. This behaviour warrants an investigation into three areas of capitalism in private game reserves. First, how capitalism penetrates into these reserves. Second, how it commodifies nature and creates conservation labour. Third, how it influenced the outcomes of the land claim to protect business interests in the reserve.

1.3 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 2 uses the intersection between capitalism and nature conservation to provide a theoretical grounding of the study. This is achieved by unpacking the relationship between society and nature, and that between capitalism and nature. The focus is on how these relationships unfold in South Africa's private nature reserves under a land claim. The chapter explains three aspects of the relationship capitalism has with the private nature reserve, namely the commodification of nature, conservation labour and land reform. It acknowledges that South Africa operates within a global capitalist system from which it has adopted its neoliberal approach to land reform and nature conservation. This approach requires a deeper understanding of capitalism in nature conservation, especially conservation business in private nature reserves, which has become a new niche area for capital accumulation. Profit making in private nature reserves is partly dependent on the structure of labour, which enables the exploitation of surplus labour. The chapter shows that conservation labour is a requirement for

the conservation business but remains understudied in research on private nature reserves. The last part of the chapter gives a brief overview of land reform in South Africa and highlights how a capitalist lens could help us better understand the complications of the land reform process. The chapter concludes by highlighting the contribution of this study to our understanding of complexity of land restitution in private game reserves in South Africa.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology that was used to answer the research questions. A qualitative approach was adopted to give an in-depth analysis of the research objectives. The study used mixed methods that brought together archival material, observations and interviews with key respondents to understand the trajectory of the Mala Mala land claim. The data collected through these methods was analysed thematically to better answer the research question and to draw conclusions.

In Chapter 4 the focus is on the conservation business. It specifically interrogates the character of the conservation business and its modes of capital accumulation. The first part of the chapter discusses the institutionalisation of capitalism and the commodification of nature. It then recounts the history of economic development in Sabi Sand Complex as an entry point into the development of Mala Mala. Finally, it analyses the development of the business model of Mala Mala to underscore the links between tourism and conservation.

Chapter 5 documents conservation labour within the context of capitalism. The chapter starts by explaining the relationship that capitalism has with labour and outlines the origins of cheap labour in South Africa. It then contextualises conservation labour as an aspect of cheap labour by giving a historical account of labour in the conservation area and its continuation in present

day Mala Mala. Lastly, it contextualises contemporary labour dynamics in the game reserve and draws attention to the exploitation of labour in conservation areas.

Chapter 6 investigates the settlement of Mala Mala land claim within the context of neoliberal conservation in private game reserves. It approaches land restitution from a capitalist perspective to account for how capitalism negotiates its profits when two conflicting agendas (restitution and profit accumulation) come together. The chapter begins by documenting the history of land dispossession in the region to foreground the land claim in a constitutional democracy. It then outlines the Mhlanganisweni's journey to becoming successful land claimants and analyses the settlement agreement.

Chapter 7 draws together insights from the various chapters to conclude on the relationships between capitalism, nature conservation and land claims using Mala Mala Game Reserve as a case study. It argues that the business model of conservation constrains land restitution in private game reserves and makes it difficult to address the injustices of the apartheid past. The Mala Mala land claim settlement shows a superficial form of restitution that does not address tangible changes to the many levels of injustice. In addition to this, the study highlights the toxic relationship that capitalism has with labour, and how this relationship unfolds in nature conservation spaces. The chapter concludes that capitalism limits social and environmental transformation and that this should concern researchers working on land reform and conservation.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

2.1 Introduction

Capitalism is used as lens for this study because it grounds the political economy of everyday life. It plays a major role in organising global and local relationships to fit a structure that allows profit accumulation. Since the aim of this study is to better understand the operations that take place in private nature reserves and highlight how land restitution is complicated in these spaces; capitalism provides us with the tools to investigate this. This chapter analyses how nature was commodified and labour organised to ensure profit accumulation in the reserve. These processes help us to understand the impact of land reform on the functioning of the game reserve. This chapter provides a theoretical background for understanding how capitalism connects or disconnects the private game reserve and the land claim.

2.2 Positioning South Africa in the global capitalist system

Capitalism has been a topic of study for many years and its attributes in Africa has been a subject of heated debates (Chitonge, 2018). Whilst many theorists have commented extensively on its history, development and impact, Karl Marx remains the seminal theorist of the capitalist system. Marx has grounded our understanding of the political economy. Capitalism creates underlying economic forces that dictate relationships and behaviours that are functional for capital accumulation. On a global scale this means political, social and economic systems are orientated around forces of capital accumulation. Although capitalism has a strong influence- it is rather ambiguous without set rules. Polanyi (1944) made the point that within a capitalist market system social visions become obscured due to the priority economic activity is given.

Polanyi's views on economic liberalism has generated important debates around economic freedom and the actual human freedom, and how these relate.

Due to capitalism's ambiguous nature- it manifests itself and operates in areas of change and crisis. With African states reaching independence in the second half of the twentieth century, capitalism was able to adapt itself to a new developing world. Since the 1970s capitalism took on a new phase in the form of neoliberalism, an ideology promoting economic liberalism through which capitalism infiltrates into many aspects of everyday life. David Harvey provides insights into the ways in which the neoliberal state enforces capitalism with profound effects. Harvey (2005a) states that with neoliberalism, power relations become more and more skewed over time. He explains that "international competition and globalisation can be used to discipline movements opposed to the neoliberal agenda within individual states" (Harvey, 2005a: 70). Thus, the freedoms of the few are favoured above the freedoms of the masses along financial lines.

Neoliberalism has influenced South Africa's symbolic hegemonic role on the African continent (Alden and Schoeman, 2015). Scholars such as Marais (1998), Peet (2002) and Padayachee and van Niekerk (2019) have contextualised international and national influences on building the neoliberal state in South Africa. Peet (2002) documented the changing ideology from socialist to neoliberal development in post- apartheid South Africa. In his analysis the involvement of the international community becomes clear. Peet (as well as Marais (1998)) state that during the political negotiations at the end of apartheid, the international community as well as the National Party (NP) put a large emphasis on the condition that economic opportunities should not suffer when the new, democratically elected government takes over. In the 1990's the World Bank proposed a market friendly transformation and advocated for a

‘holistic approach’ towards achieving both development and social safety nets (Peet, 2002). The Freedom Charter illustrates the African National Congress (ANC)’s deep socialist roots, however negotiations during the 1980s and 1990s refocussed objectives to be more economically accommodating. Padayachee and van Niekerk (2019) show that what led to the adoption of capitalist centred economic policies is a confluence of various forces. This confluence includes the pressure of the international community, the premeditated actions of the NP and partly the overwhelmed ANC that was “struggling to cope with competing demands and pressures” (Padayachee and van Niekerk, 2019: 87). Prior to political negotiations of the 1990s, the apartheid government had already embarked on ‘economic liberalism’, making its operations unambiguously market- orientated (Padayachee and van Niekerk, 2019). This was well developed with the assistance of the Central Economic Advisory Services, the South African Reserve Bank, the Central Statistical Services, the Treasury, and agencies such as the Development Bank and Land Bank; all well respected economic institutions. As a result, when negotiations commenced, the NP held their market friendly position which was challenging for the ANC to interrogate and oppose, especially because the party itself was struggling to introduce its own agreeable economic policies.

Finally, an outward-looking economic approach was adopted, where poverty alleviation was envisioned through job creation to be delivered by expanding the private sector, especially in labour-intensive industries (Peet, 2002). Economic policies adopted during the negotiation process have shaped the policies pursued by the post-apartheid state. Economic wellbeing has been put at the forefront which the South African government justified by announcing that social wellbeing will be achieved *through* economic wellbeing. The first economic policy was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994 which centred on the importance of economic growth *and* the equitable distribution of this growth. However, soon

thereafter (due to increasing pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to achieve strong economic growth) in 1996 a new economic policy called the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme was introduced. This programme included the objectives of the RDP, but focused on faster economic growth through tax reforms, tighter fiscal stance, and budget reforms. GEAR largely failed to reverse unemployment, to provide resources for social service delivery or to achieve enough progress towards equitable wealth distribution.

Later in 2005 this policy was replaced by Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA). ASGISA still claimed to uphold the objectives of the RDP and aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment. This economic policy however had low levels of implementation of its aims and therefore was replaced by the New Growth Path (NGP) framework in 2011. The NGP maintained its emphasis on economic growth through the generation of a green economy to assist with high unemployment rates and inequality. With this policy again, emphasis was put on the economic growth and justified that this growth will help reduce unemployment and inequality. The latest economic policy was introduced in 2013 as part of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 which claims to move towards building a more inclusive economy.

The introduction of new economic policies has always been said to be in response to the social ills said to be caused by unemployment in the country. However, six years after the introduction of the NDP, unemployment in South Africa has been increasing (24.8% in 2011, 27.5% in 2017 and 30.1% in the first quarter of 2020 (StatsSA, 2020)). This, as some may argue, is due to the neoliberal state's structurally skewed economic emphasis. With neoliberalism theoretically

being able to provide a free market to improve human welfare, Harvey (2005a) has demonstrated that neoliberalism and democracy do not go hand in hand.

Neoliberalism uses the rule of law to favour the aspirations of the market (thereby the wealthy elites and companies), and often does not give a democratic value system between the different constituencies involved when a conflict arises. Even though neoliberalism endorses a close relationship between the market and the political interference of the state (through regulation), it is also accompanied by a “deeply contradictory endorsement of excludable, private property rights and commodification created and defended by the state” (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004: 276). Lerner (2000) has argued that this privatization and deregulation transfers power away from democratically elected governments in order to ensure that there is a global service provision towards private capital to enhance and maintain opportunities for capital accumulation. Peet (2002: 79) concludes that the “interests of global institutions and local business federations were synthesized in a hegemonic neoliberal discourse that has learned to turn a compassionate face on social problems moralized as poverty, illness and ignorance”. Harvey (2005a) outlines that neoliberalism sees the absence of private property rights as being one of the key institutional barriers to economic development and it will protect society against the ‘tragedy of the commons’. This contradictory analogy feeds into capitalism’s ‘craving for space’ and its constant need to ‘fix’ its inner problems (such as the destruction of natural resources) through expansion (Harvey, 2001). Scholars have made it clear that there seems to be a strong relationship between politics and capital. It is important therefore to analyse this relationship and its impact.

2.3 The conservation business – capitalism in its newest form?

Many scholars have made it clear that states have embodied capitalism through privatization. Some scholars argue that global capitalist interests have motivated neoliberal states to facilitate private sector involvement in the commodification and privatization of nature through nature conservation (Castree, 2011; Fletcher, 2011 and Büscher et al., 2012). This takes place especially in developing countries, where ecotourism has become a tool for development (West and Carrier, 2004). As a new ‘environmental crisis’ is upon us, capitalism is not only largely responsible for this crisis, but has also provides solutions to this crisis. Some scientist argue that the current rate of species extinction and biodiversity loss is detrimental (Rands et al., 2010; Noss et al., 2012; Wilson, 2016), and therefore argue that we are currently situated in an ‘environmental crisis’; hence solutions have been put forward to mitigate this ‘crisis’. One of these mitigation strategies is to increase the number and size of conservation areas. Some argue for the target of protected areas to be as high as half the earth (Wilson, 2016). As a result, land is increasingly becoming acquired for nature conservation and exclusive lifestyle projects (Zoomers, 2010). Fletcher and Neves (2012: 66) argue that ecotourism is seen as a tool for manifold capitalist fixes through the promise of “spatial, temporal, time- space, environmental, social, and psychological fixes”.

Conservation is often seen as the ‘solution’ towards this environmental crisis and is advocated for by many scientists and academics (Locke, 2014; Wilson, 2016; Dinerstein et al., 2017). However, literature has also shown there to be very valuable critique, not towards the ideology of conservation, but *how* conservation is conducted globally. One fundamental critique towards conservation is the consequences of capitalism’s manifestation in conservation initiatives (McAfee, 1999; Heynen and Robbins, 2005; Ramutsindela, 2007; Castree, 2008a, b;

Brockington, Duffy and Igoe, 2008; Sullivan, 2009, Brockington and Duffy, 2010; Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013; Ramutsindela, 2015). Many critical scholars have argued that capitalism thrives on this ‘crisis’ (Sullivan, 2009) and that this ‘crisis’ opens opportunities for capitalism to infiltrate and ‘fix’ problems through the market. Green Marxists have originally predicted that the environmental crisis may threaten capitalism’s operation, however this crisis is precisely the source of new forms of capital accumulation (Brockington and Duffy, 2010), *essential* for contemporary capitalism to thrive (Fairhead, Leach and Scoones, 2012; Corson, MacDonald and Neimark, 2013). Büscher et al. (2012) have theorized neoliberal conservation to consist of ideologies and techniques that are grounded on the premise that nature can only be saved through capitalist interventions. Scales (2017) defines green capitalism as being a form of environmentalism that is centred on the way in which markets operate. Here the economic concept of capital is incorporated into the ideology of ‘natural capital’. This ideology fits well into neoliberalism which promotes economic thinking, minimal involvement of the state and individual liberty.

The links between capitalism and nature have resulted in the global phenomena of green grabbing, where land and natural resources are increasingly being appropriated for environmental means (Fairhead, Leach and Scoones, 2012). Authors such as Moyo (2008) and Borras et al (2012) have very importantly shown how this phenomenon of green grabbing has resulted in the ‘control’ of land and natural resources all over the world. In this case of green grabbing, conservation is used as a tool to control the use and access to land and resources. Ramutsindela (2002b: 73) has further shown how globalization “externalizes the control and use of natural capital (land, water and biological resources)”. Death (2016) argues that understanding international and transnational politics play an important role in explaining African environmental politics and the production of Africa’s green states. He further

categorized the types of African states that have resulted in conflict/ cooperating with the international community. Death (2016)'s categorization places South Africa as an inspirational leader, and a philanthropic hero according to the international community. The country's approach to environmentalism is seen as an example to which other African countries should aspire.

The relationship that capitalism has with the nature is both physical and social. Marx helps us understand much of the social relationships that capitalism dictates i.e. the labour value theory. Harvey (2005a) makes the point that in reality, the core of neoliberalism is the maintenance and restoration of class power and privilege. Capitalism has found a special niche in private nature reserves, as their relation to private property, luxury lodges and exclusive wildlife ownership provide an ideal opportunity for capital accumulation. Brooks et al (2011) analyses this through the lens of 'third nature', a terminology which refers to landscape's re-imagination in the service of wilderness tourism. Where first nature refers to the 'original' natural environment (termed by Hegel and later Marx) and second nature which refers to the application of human labour to landscapes, a contemporary move towards third nature appears to be a global re-imagination of landscapes (Brooks et al., 2011). Recent scholarship has highlighted that this appropriation of nature not only relates to the transformation of labour, but also more purely the biophysical environment (Kay and Kenney-Lazar, 2019). The relationship that capitalism has with nature arises from appropriating both social and physical aspects of nature. By adding wildlife onto the land and creating a tourist market, the property value continues to increase.

The global drive for conservation on private land is reflected in Southern Africa (Bond et al., 2004). The increase in private protected areas in less-industrialised nations (Serenari et al.,

2017) is evident in the gradual increase of private game reserves in South Africa's countryside (Spiereburg and Brooks, 2014). Conservationists have predicted that they will continue to increase in numbers and geographical area in the near future (Sims- Castley, Kerley and Greach, 2005). Although literature has demonstrated significant growth of nature reserves on both a global and local scale, not enough studies have paid attention to the multifaceted implications of these reserves. Josefsson (2014: 259) outlines that "in the South African context, the colonial present reveals itself not only in terms of access and control over resources, but also as socio-spatial relationships on and around game farms". Contextualising and understanding the socio- spatial relationship of nature reserves is vital for ensuring conservation that is ethical and fair.

Globally there is a growing body of literature that contextualises some compromising conditions associated with private protected areas. For example, Serenari et al. (2017) use case studies of Los Ríos, Southern Chile to analyse the impact of private protected areas on the wellbeing of local people. Their findings suggest that local people are seen as a threat by conservation agencies and therefore often excluded from reserve governance. This is a common characteristic of protected areas and is evidently seen on an international scale.

In the context of South Africa, Ngubane and Brooks (2013) have used case studies in KwaZulu Natal to raise the concern that land claim beneficiaries of private game farms are often pushed to continue land use under conservation even after the land was transferred to the community. They warn that this may not speak to the aspirations of the community and therefore raise questions about the efficiency of this form of restitution. Their findings are not different from the Mala Mala case, where the restoration of the land to claimants was conditional to the continued use of land for conservation. Another case study shows how philanthropy is used in

private nature reserves to actively manipulate important societal concerns. Ramutsindela (2015) uses the case of Londolozi private game reserve (situated adjacent to Mala Mala) to argue that the trajectory of land claims, and the organisation of labour inside the nature reserve is strategically used by the private owners in the shadow of philanthropy. These case studies corroborate the social implications of private nature reserves in Mala Mala. Scholars have called for a deeper analysis into private nature reserves and the influence they have on the environment *and* society (Serenari et al., 2017; Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014; Ngubane and Brooks, 2013).

Literature on South African national parks have highlighted the relationship between these parks and land reform, local communities, environmental sustainability, tourism, international markets and state policies (Ramutsindela, 2002a; Büscher et al, 2012; Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013; Snijders, 2014). Although more multifaceted research on national parks is still needed (especially in terms of understanding their contemporary and future implications), private nature reserves have attracted even less attention in the literature. Due to the rapidly growing number of private nature reserves on a global scale, there is a need to investigate this growth and the implications thereof. Private game reserves produce “sealed- off pockets of wealth” (Mkhize, 2014) which produce new forms of inclusion and exclusions (Brooks et al. 2011) along financial lines. The operation of capitalism in these private game reserves calls for attention to the consequences of the commodification of nature in spaces where land rights are protected in law.

2.4 Labour – an understudied requirement in conservation spaces

Labour plays a key role in the production of green economies. The conservation business is no exception to this requirement. In conservation areas the tourism industry relies on the supply

of cheap labour to ensure the maximisation of profit. These spaces are often well known for their positive output (environmentally and economically), but little is said about the labour required for the production of tourism services. This is because labour seems to “be hidden in the guise of ‘inclusivity’ or ‘participation’” and is often not contextualised through the economic lens of production (Neimark et al., 2020: 504).

Marx has given us a comprehensive account of the infamous relationship that capitalism has with labour. Marx (1976: 782) has noted that “capitalist accumulation itself constantly produces... a relatively redundant working population, i.e. a population which is superfluous to capital’s average requirements for its own valorisation and is therefore a surplus population”. A surplus of labour refers to capitalism’s nature of producing a redundant labour supply (reserve) that can easily be exploited because workers are disposable. In addition to this characteristic, surplus labour itself refers to the more intimate relationship that capitalism has with labour as the source where it extracts its surplus value (profit). Surplus labour is a concept developed by Karl Marx and refers to the labour that produces a value over and above what is required for the reproduction of a workforce or individual worker (Cornwell, 2017). In a capitalist society, workers will produce labour that is more than what is necessary for their survival - thereby creating profit for the capitalist class. By analysing how surplus labour manifests itself in a working environment we can investigate the levels of exploitation that are taking place. This is important as society today depends directly or indirectly on the sale of their labour power.

While Marx gives us a good foundational understanding of the relationship between labour and capitalism, some neo-Marxists have deepened our understanding of the development of capitalism in South Africa. Scholars like Trapido (1971), Wolpe (1972), Legassick and Wolpe,

(1976), and Levy (1982) have analysed the creation of the working class in South Africa through the cheap labour system. Not only have they used a Marxist lens to understand the foundations of capitalism but have also developed this theory further to contextualise more local experiences of politics, race, and economics. In South Africa, racist legislation was used as a tool to secure a cheap labour force, hence Slovo (1988) argued that race and class relations in the resistance struggle have to be seen as one.

Segregation was a mechanism used to organise cheap labour for capitalism. Wolpe (1972:426) argues that the creation of labour reserves (bantustans) in South Africa goes beyond previous capitalist theory as the “system of cheap *migrant* labour perfects the instruments of labour coercion”. This understanding of capitalism is grounded on local experiences of the system by which the working class in South Africa is created and also exploited. The analyses of the working class in South Africa provide an entry point into understanding how labour is organised in conservation areas.

Recent literature by Neimark et al. (2020) discusses the role of the eco-precariat in the shaping of ecosystem services and products. They identify the ‘eco-precariat’ as “a diverse, but distinctive socio-economic group that provides both formal and informal labour for an ever-expanding service-based green economy” (Neimark et al. 2020: 498). Their study helps us better contextualise the green economy by giving special attention to the uneven labour dynamics that assists the production of these spaces.

Very few people have theorized how labour manifests itself in conservation areas. Sodikoff (2009) and Neimark (2012) are some of the few who analyse conservation labour using case studies of Madagascar. Neimark (2012) analysed the workforce of modern bio prospectors

within emerging theories of neoliberal conservation and has shown the undermining of ‘unskilled labourers’ compared to other stakeholders considered more ‘skilled’ (e.g. scientists and conservationists). He argues nature to be reconstituted where “labour is mechanized within sites of production, raising a host of new ethical questions surrounding the practice” (Neimark, 2012: 981). Sodikoff (2009: 443) argues that the reliance on cheap local labour is what has maintained “historical interdependence of agriculture, wage work and forest conservation in Madagascar”. The lack of literature regarding conservation labour is not necessarily about the lack of political sympathy towards these labourers, but points towards the bigger issue of “the way in which conservation has been imagined” (Sodikoff, 2009: 445; Neimark et al., 2020).

Castree (2000: 26) explains that because capitalism is growth-orientated, competitive and labour intensive, “nature becomes *internal* to the economic system”. Conservation is often seen as not fitting into the category of ‘production’, which is misleading and builds into the misconception of the way we understand ‘labour’ in the context of conservation. Conservation labour refers to any form of labour conducted in protected areas. Investigating conservation labour helps us understand the way in which labour power is extracted from workers in conservation areas. What is deemed necessary labour and how is surplus labour created? This is an important question to ask in order to understand how labour operates in conservation areas. Conservation labour has been dimly theorized in the literature, yet in the context of capitalist production, it plays a vital role. Chapter 5 will discuss how conservation labour is structured in Mala Mala. For now, we note that capitalism does not only shape labour in conservation spaces but has also influences land reform policies and practice.

2.5 Land reform in a capitalist society

All around the world land reform policies have had influences from the market (Wegerif, 2004). South African liberation came at a time where globalizing capitalism was at a hype and became deeply entrenched in international political relations (Bernstein, 2003). The newly elected democratic government was pushed into adopting neoliberal policies by putting emphasis on economic growth with the aim of using this growth to restore historic injustices. The literature on South African land reform overemphasizes the influence of capitalism on land reform through the ‘willing-buyer, willing-seller’ principle adopted by government (Hall, 2004; Wegerif, 2004; Lahiff, 2007; Ntsebenza and Hall, 2007; O’Laughlin et al, 2013; Cousins and Walker, 2015). There is also a recognition of the influence of the private sector on land reform through public-private partnerships (Davis, 2014).

Although it is true that the willing-seller willing-buyer principle is not an appropriate method to solve historic injustices in an equitable manner, the literature does not go far enough in investigating multifaceted relationships between capitalism and land reform. The literature has indicated that by using the market as a tool to solve land claims already skews the programme in the advantage of those already in possession of the land, and disadvantages those who cannot afford to buy the land (Lahiff, 2007). Cash payments is a common method used to solve land claims as it is an easy alternative to settle the land claim without interfering with the ‘normal’ operation of business on the land. Financial compensation towards the claimants often takes place in both the urban and rural areas when the government finds it too expensive to compensate the contemporary landowner for the land. When land claimants are given financial compensation, they no longer have any entitlement to the land, therefore giving the current landowner the security of not having to share their profits with them. In the case where

claimants do get the land back (which is rare), conditions are often put in place so that the land is still used in a 'profitable' manner.

Land claim settlements in protected areas have been met with varying degrees of controversy. Scholars have argued that conservation seems to carry a higher weighting than the needs of local citizens (Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013). Land claims in private nature reserves help us understand the entanglement of property and capital. They are often seen as interfering with the tourism market and therefore dealt with accordingly to compromise and accommodate the capitalist mode of operation. The private sector is increasingly playing an important role in land reform, which has been one of the biggest reasons land claims have been so difficult to settle (Lahiff, 2007; Kleinbooi, 2009; Greenberg, 2010). Some critics argue that the influence of capitalism is evident in land reform policies which have deliberately accommodated large scale farms (due to them being deemed more economically viable) instead of providing support for small scale production which have been proven to be important for both household consumption and the market (Lahiff, 2007; Hall, 2009; Cousins and Scoones, 2010). It is clear that these large-scale farms reflect the interests of capital as they are profit orientated.

The restoration of historic injustices whilst maintaining an economically productive and sustainable usage of the land has proven to be difficult for government to maintain (Davis, 2019). Not only have the land reform programmes largely failed, but contemporary equitable growth has been deteriorating as well. Evidence of this is seen in studies showing the increase of forced removals of Africans from farms in the first decade after apartheid (Wegerif, Russel and Grundling, 2005; Atkinson, 2007) and the high economic privilege and wealth that the white minority in South Africa uphold (Southall, 2004; Murray and Simeon, 2007).

One can make the connection between the race and class when it comes to understanding the land question in South Africa. Lorenzen (2015: 174) argues that when it comes to land reform, “it must factor in how current landowners benefitted from the grid of laws and policies that advanced white ownership”. It is important to understand the impact of this advantage in the context of contemporary inequality. Apartheid has structurally allowed whites to uphold a higher class and contemporary continuations of these systems contribute to South Africa’s growing inequality. More (2017) further shows the importance of race in the class debate by outlining that it is most often in the Marxian case that black people are exploited to the degree that they are seen as workers only. He outlines that capitalism from a Marxists perspective limits the understanding of the effects that structural racism has on being able to access the capitalist system. Steve Biko argues that compared to white people, black people own close to nothing (in terms of production, land, etc.). They “depend upon the economic interests of white people to succeed” (cited in More, 2017: 238).

White domination and control over South Africa’s land and its resources was part of the apartheid system, however, with the end of apartheid, white control over land remained by adjusting to neoliberal policies adopted by the state. One of the ways in which white control over the land was secured, was through wildlife-based tourism (Ramutsindela, 2004; Spierenburg, 2020). Josefsson (2014) illustrates the colonial presence of game farms by drawing important connections between private farms and their maintenance of identities exclusion whether it is physical (game fences) or abstract (through ‘othering’ identities of race, language and culture). A trend in land use change took place in post-apartheid, where farmers converted their land into nature reserves which capitalist argue to be more economically viable. The government was open to this change as it saw game reserves as an opportunity for foreign investment through tourism, which the state claims contributes to rural development. However,

many have argued that land redistribution and conservation in South Africa have been in conflict with one another (Ramutsindela, 2002a, 2004; Kepe, Wynberg and Ellis, 2005; Ntshona et al, 2010; Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013). In many cases land used for conservation is preferred over other land uses as it is deemed more profitable. Land claims are often seen as a threat to conservation and are usually settled by means of financial compensation, or in some cases alternative land. They are often dealt with in alternative measures where full rights to the land are not restored back to those who were dispossessed, and the accumulation of capital can continue unharmed.

2.6 Conclusion

A further investigation into capitalism's relationship with nature, labour and land reform in private nature reserves can assist us to better understand the social, economic, and environmental complexities in South Africa. Castree (2011) and Gutto (2014) have rightfully outlined that there appears to be a gap in the understanding of neoliberal theory and practice when it comes to commodification, privatization, commercialization, and marketization of the environment. Ramutsindela (2002b: 75) contextualizes this finding in South Africa by outlining the need to understand how capitalism manifests itself in natural capital and in what form "states and biodiversity entrepreneurs create conditions for the commercialization of natural capital, and the manner in which these gains are used and distributed". It is therefore important to add to this literature to enhance our understanding of neoliberalism in practice. This contribution can be done by examining the relationship capitalism has with private property and labour in a private game reserve under a land claim.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Concise conclusions can only be drawn if the research methodology is appropriate to investigate the subject matter. This chapter discusses the methods used to understand how capitalism unfolds in private nature reserves under a land claim, using Mala Mala Game Reserve as a case study. This case study scrutinises labour and the commodification of nature to highlight capital interests in conservation sites. Data were collected through archival material, interviews, field visits, and participant observations. The first section of this chapter discusses the research approach and design. It then presents the case study and describes the nature of the field visits, interviews, observations, and document research, and how these were analysed. The chapter ends with presenting details of the ethical consideration of this research as well as the limitations of this study. The methods chosen for this study were appropriate in helping us understand the nuances of conservation in private nature reserves.

3.2 Research approach

This study uses a qualitative approach as it is best suited to understand the nuanced unfolding of capitalism in private nature reserves. Sutherland et al. (2018: 8) notes that a qualitative approach is useful to “explore the diversity of value positions among different stakeholder groups”. Furthermore, it enables the researcher to gather information *and* also take into consideration how and why decisions pertaining to the information were made.

Since capitalism is deeply entrenched in the neoliberal state, it becomes important to investigate how it is structured in decision making platforms. In private nature reserves (that are under a land claim), there is a need to understand the complication that comes with pursuing conservation business and land restitution together. The challenge of land reform in South Africa has been widely researched; leading to arguments that it is inadequate to address both the historical injustice and current developmental goals.

The complexity of land restitution in South Africa can be understood better by using a capitalist lens to analyse the settlement of land claims. When it comes to nature conservation in privately protected areas, capital accumulation rests on two pillars: labour and private property. Paying adequate attention to land restitution, labour and the commodification of nature has the potential to reveal the dynamics of capitalism in private nature reserves. Understanding the interconnections between these three require that decision making should be captured at the governmental level, management of the reserve, all the way down to the lived experiences at the local level.

3.3 Research design

An unstructured research methodology was adopted to explore the role of capitalism in private nature reserves. This methodology means that data collection did not follow a set sequence but rather information was derived from different sources as it became available. According to Wutich and Gravlee (2010: 188) “exploratory research questions are used to understand new phenomena- uncovering how they work and developing new models to describe them”. They explain that unstructured methodology usually best investigates these questions as it was designed to collect both primary and secondary data. While secondary data such as books,

government reports and newspapers were able to give a good overall and factual basis of the research objectives, primary data in the form of interviews were able to clarify some gaps and provide more nuanced information pertaining directly to the research question. By using both primary and secondary data sets the researcher was able to openly explore the themes of this study while effectively verifying the information gathered. While the method was organised to first collect secondary data and then follow up with the collection of primary data, the researcher remained open to collect the data as it became available.

First, the researcher reviewed the written materials on land reform, conservation, labour, and capitalism in South Africa through the lens of Marxism. The lens was helpful for conceptualising and analysing labour and capital accumulation. It was also necessary for understanding how the capitalist system functions so as to relate its attributes to the conservation business. A review of literature undertaken provided the background for understanding the relationships between capitalism, conservation and land reform.

Secondly, the researcher collected archival material. This included research reports of the land claim, court case documents, settlement agreements and progress reports. The numbers and texts included in these documents and their written justifications were important factual data that helped in formulating the research questions. Both local and international newspapers were also consulted as they documented a wide range of opinions on the land claim.

Thirdly the researcher collected primary data through interviews and field visits. These included attending DRDLR parliamentary portfolio committee meetings, where observations were made on the political debate around the subject matter. This was followed by interviews that took place on various levels with government officials, community lawyer, Communal

Property Association (CPA) committee, Mala Mala management, workers, and anyone else who had knowledge about the subject. Each stakeholder was asked both factual aspects about the case as well as their own thoughts and opinions on the settlement agreement, labour and the business operations of the private game reserve. Interviews were both structured and unstructured. Key participants were identified through the analysis of the secondary data, and later through a snowballing effect where one participant often led me to other key stakeholders that have good knowledge on the subject. In order to draw credible conclusions from this study, it was important to give all stakeholders a platform to share their views and opinions. Thus, the researcher approached these aforementioned stakeholders, each of whom had valuable (although different) perspectives to add to the topic.

The research objectives together with knowledge gained from the literature were used to develop interview questions posed to the respective stakeholders. The collection of both primary and secondary data took place between April 2018 and July 2019. The areas where the data collection took place include, Cape Town, Pretoria, Mbombela (former Nelspruit), Hazyview, Mala Mala Game Reserve and Lillydale village.

3.4 Conducting research through a case study: Mala Mala Game Reserve

A case study helps explore theoretical concepts. While the theory lays out the foundation for exploring the research question, a case study allows us to see the empirical evidence. Yin (2018: 15) defines case study as an “empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context may not be clearly evident”. He highlights the importance of this method as it provides an all-round ‘mode of inquiry’ into the subject matter. Case studies

allow us to zoom in and contextualise lived realities in a broader theoretical debate. The case study allows us to see characteristics which can be analysed to determine their broader meanings. It is important to give theoretical significance to the characteristics of the case study so that we are able to engage in broader debates on the subject, and not merely keep it case specific (but still remaining cautious of generalisations). It is because of this reason that qualitative research fits well into this research as it is not merely descriptive, but analytical as well.

Private property, labour and the commodification of nature in Mala Mala Game Reserve help us to understand the reaction of capitalism to ‘disruptions’ caused by land restitution. They are useful for understanding the model in which land claims in private nature reserves are settled in South Africa. Yin (2018) indicates that a case study benefits from theoretical foregrounding as it guides data collection, design and analysis. Furthermore, it relies on many sources of evidence as data should overlap to ensure verification. These sources of evidence can be in the form of documentation, archival records, interviews, field observations, participant observations or physical artefacts. Mala Mala Game Reserve enables us to effectively capture data by making use of evidence from court cases, reports, newspapers, parliamentary discussions, interviews and observations through field work. Initially a theoretical framework was structured to guide the researcher to the various areas of data collection. Its theoretical grounding needed a case study to explore some of these theoretical characteristics in practice. There was no need for a comparison of more than one case study as this research was more focussed on characteristics of private game reserves (private property, labour, land restitution), which are common traits in private nature reserves affected by land claims. The nature of the research was fundamentally analytically grounded in theory and less comparatively descriptive. As a result, one case study that was sufficient in addressing the aim of the study.

Fieldwork in Mala Mala was conducted through observations and interviews with workers, land claim beneficiaries and the game reserve management. The researcher spent a day in the game reserve where the manager explained the operations of the reserve. Thereafter the researcher was also given a tour of Mala Mala main camp where she sporadically interviewed some of the workers while observing the interactions taking place. In addition to this some fieldwork also took place outside the game reserve to ask questions about the game reserve, labour and the land claim. For example, in Lillydale village the CPA (land claim beneficiaries) was interviewed and in Hazyview the community representative acting on the Mala Mala board was interviewed. This took place over a period of a week (6th June 2019 till 11th June 2019). These fieldtrips played an important role as the researcher was able to incorporate geographical observations of the physical environment (both Mala Mala Game Reserve and the villages surrounding Sabi Sand) into findings, enabling the researcher to better contextualise the data.

3.5 Data Collection

Documentation in the form of emails, minutes of meetings, reports, Hansards, aerial photographs, and newspaper articles in mass media or local community newspapers, all formed an important part of collecting both primary and secondary information. Documents (and historic images) carry factual information that is not created for the specific study, but rather for the purpose they served at a specific time for a specific organisation. These forms of written information were sourced from different organisations, namely the Land Claims Court (LCC), DRDLR, parliament, historians, Mala Mala management and CPA committee. Newspaper articles found in Daily Maverick, City Press, Oxpeckers, and the Lowvelder were sourced as they highlighted some of the public viewpoints around land restitution and Mala Mala.

These documents provided important quantitative information (such as the land valuation reports) as well as qualitative information illustrating justifications and perspectives. The data extracted from these documents was complimented with the data obtained through interviews. The data was obtained from the interviews by setting up key questions that would allow the interviewee to express their knowledge and opinions on the themes covered in this dissertation. Various stakeholders gave information on the land claim, business and labour of Mala Mala by commenting and explaining the decisions reached and the justifications thereof.

3.6 Interviews

Interviews and document analysis work hand in hand as interviews help clarify and elaborate on the information gained through the documents. They provide an explanation of decisions reached on the subject matter. They also highlight personal views on the subject and can take into consideration perceptions and attitudes of the individuals concerned. The interview questions were used to guide the conversations around the research objectives and to capture important themes. However, questions were also structured to be open ended so that individuals can share their perspectives without being confined. The researcher listened to different voices while avoiding to enforce personal views. ‘How’ and ‘why’ questions helped structure conversations to find both the participant’s explanation and perspective on decisions made regarding the subject matter.

Even though this research project commenced in February 2018, interviews only took place towards the end of November 2018 and the fieldwork itself only much later in June 2019. This was because it took a long time for the researcher to form relationships with the relevant

stakeholders. The research topic in itself is a politically contentious subject, and as a result many participants were hesitant to agree to an interview. However, this long waiting process enabled the researcher to learn about the politics of the case and helped put the information gained into perspective. Reservations to meet with the researcher also contributed to the understanding of the contentions between the different stakeholders. Nonetheless, the researcher explored alternative avenues (by attending general meetings) to get in contact with potential participants.

Through the snowballing effect, once the researcher got in contact with one participant, this participant often introduced the researcher to someone else with relevant information, thereby building the researcher's report. The first of these general meetings took place in Cape Town on 9 October 2018 where the researcher attended a parliamentary portfolio committee meeting and observed discussions on Mala Mala and land restitution. Here the researcher connected with a senior government official which later led to an interview with this individual taking place on 11 April 2019. Furthermore, on 12 November 2018 the researcher conducted an interview with a journalist who documented the aftereffects of the Mala Mala settlement. This interview opened possibilities for interviewing a landowner in Sabi Sand in Cape Town on 27 November 2018. These interviews were very informative interviews that helped the researcher build connections for the interviews that took place in 2019.

In 2019 interviews kickstarted in Pretoria, where the researcher met with the Mhlanganisweni community lawyer on 25 February 2019 and a senior government official on 11 April 2019. Both these interviews introduced the researcher to other participants closer to Mala Mala Game Reserve, that were interviewed when fieldwork was conducted. Fieldwork commenced in June 2019, starting in Mbombela where the researcher interviewed a senior government official of

Mpumalanga Land Claims Commission on 7 June 2019. On the same day the researcher also met with a member of the Mala Mala board in Hazyview. The researcher travelled to Mala Mala Game Reserve on 10 June 2019 to interview the manager, assistant manager and workers of the game reserve. On the same day the researcher also met with the CPA in Lillydale village and interviewed the committee.

The questions posed to the interviewees were all related to the game reserve, the land claim and labour. All interviews (with the exception of one) took place face to face, because it allowed for a more thorough and comfortable conversation between the researcher and the participant. Key informants such as senior government officials, CPA, Mhlanaganisweni community lawyer, Mala Mala manager and board member were interviewed as they were directly involved in the Mhlanganisweni land claim settlement and were able to explain the process and the experiences of this settlement. Other interviewees were able to explain their experiences and perceptions of land restitution (Sabi Sand landowner) and labour (workers at Mala Mala). While core questions were posed to all stakeholders, some information was more specifically sourced from the relevant stakeholders. For example, questions about conservation labour were posed to all informants (land claim beneficiaries, government officials, and Mala Mala management), but since this study aims at understanding how capitalism organises and structures labour within the conservation business, focussed attention through interviews and direct observations was aimed at Mala Mala employees for empirical evidence. Each interview took place individually, except for the CPA, which was interviewed as a group of beneficiaries.

Digital inputs from radio and television broadcasting on the subject matter were also collected. Amongst these were interviews with the relevant parties which gave further insight into some of the opinions on the game reserve and land restitution. The South African Broadcasting

Corporation (SABC) and Power FM 98.7 in particular discussed Mala Mala Game Reserve and the land claim.

An audio recording device was used to capture the information of the interviews. This allowed the researcher to be fully involved in the conversation and not be distracted by hastily scribbling down the information revealed. It helped the researcher to listen and fully understand the participants view – and even come up with new questions for clarity and later listen to the details mentioned. Being able to record the interviews was very useful as it enabled the researcher to fully capture a large volume of information and include direct quotations of interview responses in the dissertation.

3.7 Direct observations

Direct observation helps with the contextualisation of answers to the research questions. From the initial stages of the study the researcher observed parliamentary portfolio committee discussions in order to understand government opinions on land restitution. Institutions (such as parliament) “influence social outcomes because they shape the expected costs and rewards associated with various actions” (Poteete, 2010: 59) The researcher sat on these parliamentary meetings (9 October 2018 and 27 February 2019) and listened to the debates and the justifications of decisions reached, and also observed the interactions among attendees. This helped with the formulation and clarification of research questions that were posed to the senior government officials in a later interview. With these observations, information was obtained on the details and hidden discussions of this case study that were not documented elsewhere.

In addition to the parliamentary discussions, the researcher did a great deal of observation during the fieldwork. The researcher visited Mala Mala on 10 June 2019 and walked around the Main Camp of the game reserve and observed the geographical layout of the area. These observations were of great importance to the question on conservation labour as it provided visual evidence and the necessary background for understanding interview responses to the questions. Although workers were interviewed, their labour conditions were also observed by the researcher. For example, the researcher observed the staff accommodation compounds, their architecture and location. The field visits formed an important part of data analysis as the researcher was able to understand spatiality and put it into the perspective of the themes discussed in this dissertation: land, labour and commodification.

3.8 Data Analysis

The analysis of the information took place on a continuous basis. As data was obtained, it was also analysed. The data from the documents was first analysed and then complimented with the information gained from the interviews. Analysing the documents helped the researcher find emerging themes and identify areas of ambiguity which could later be included and clarified through interviews. By using the theoretical framework as a basis (cf. Chapter 2), information was extracted from the documents that fed into answering the objectives of the dissertation. The documents highlighted the different perceptions of the land claims which enabled the researcher to analyse the information by putting it into perspective and context.

The first documents consulted was the court case which contained important information of each stakeholder and highlighted agreements reached and the justifications thereof. Parliamentary discussions around the Mala Mala land claim were also analysed by, tracing the

questions and answers posed to the minister of DRDLR and noting his responses and justification to the how and why the settlement was reached in this manner as per the record of proceedings in the Hansards. Furthermore, reports that were released by the DRDLR parliamentary portfolio committee, the Land Claims Commission, and historical reports that formed part of the research of the land claim were thoroughly analysed by categorising emerging responses, justifications and findings of the land claim and ordering them into the relevant objectives they addressed. For example, information that was specific to the conservation business (cf. Chapter 4) was grouped into themes (historical, Sabi Sand specific, contemporary dynamics, etc.) respectively. The researcher also searched media reports regarding the case study which were analysed by extracting local and international viewpoints of the settlement agreement. Here, areas of concern/ conflict were often voiced which helped the researcher understand the wider public's view on the land claim and related them to the findings.

The second phase of data analysis was on responses from the interviews that took place. These interviews aimed at filling some of the gaps in the documents as well as elaborating and clarifying perspectives on the research questions. After each interview the researcher wrote down notes based on the interview and because most interviews were recorded, the researcher was able to transcribe and analyse the interview in detail at a later stage. The responses of the different stakeholders were analysed by firstly grouping them according to the research objectives (i.e. commodification of nature, labour, and the land claim). From there, key information that revealed factual and opinionated representation of the stakeholder was filtered out. Information was verified through interview answers to the research questions. Interviews of government officials, the CPA, Mala Mala management and workers, all had relatively different opinions and perspectives on the research questions. Thus, their responses were all

analysed comparatively when it came to factual data, but separately when it came to perspectives on the subject matter.

The analysis of the interviews and documents formed an important part of data verification. While responses had different views on specific themes, factual information was verified by asking the different stakeholders the same standard questions. In some cases, this differed between stakeholders, especially when it came to the list of beneficiaries of the Mala Mala Game Reserve.

3.9 Limitations of the study

Although the Mala Mala land claim was settled in November 2013, it remains a highly contentious and political topic up to this date. The main point of contention is the large amount of money that the state paid to settle this land claim (R1.1 billion) and the way the state made this decision.

Although the wider public is displeased about the way the settlement was reached, disputes about this case still occur internally between the beneficiaries and the state, as well as within the community itself. During the time of this research, the main disputes between the state and the communities was the beneficiary list. There is disagreement between the number of households that are the beneficiaries of the Mala Mala settlement. While the Mhlanganisweni Community states that the Mavuraka community is not part of their land claim (as they have never lived on Mala Mala land), the Mavuraka group and the government disputes this and claim that they are part of the beneficiary list. The government states that 960 households should benefit, while the Mhlanganisweni community states that only about 275 households

are the rightful beneficiaries (after going through another verification recently the number of households went up to 448 as each wife was now counted as a household, previously only the husband was determined as a household). As the value of the settlement is so high, the government cannot justify paying such a large sum for a small number of households and is therefore pushing the Mhlanganisweni community to include the Mavuraka group onto the beneficiary list.

The divisions within the community itself are becoming increasingly contentious. These divisions mainly revolve around the beneficiary list, but also include more nuanced issues such as unequal access to benefits. Due to these disputes, at times it was difficult to source information for this study. Individuals were concerned about the intentions of the researcher and therefore frequently refrained from interactions. Because the researcher herself was not from the physical area or involved in the land claim, it was difficult to gain people's trust. This delayed the timeline of the study as the researcher was unable to conduct field visits without consolidating connections with the Mhlanaganisweni community.

Furthermore, on a more logistical note due to the case study being physically located far away from the researcher's residence traveling and field visits were expensive. The researcher also could not speak Xitsonga, which is the main language spoken in the area, and had some difficulty understanding informal conversations amongst the land claim beneficiaries. Generally, the highly contentious politics of the case study were a major limitation for gaining access to information.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Obtaining information in an ethical manner forms the basis of any credible research produced as concise conclusions can only be drawn if information was obtained ethically and is verified. Before this research commenced, approval to conduct this research was requested from the faculty of science ethics committee. After approval was granted, the researcher followed the ethical guidelines throughout the research process.

The researcher acknowledges their positionality within the study. While they did not have any prior relationship with the participants or the land claim, the researcher was aware that their personal attributes and ideologies may influence the information collected and how it is interpreted. To be reflective on one's positionality is to contextualise one's relationship with the study within broader institutional, social, and political realities (Sultana, 2007). This acknowledgement can improve the quality of the research, as being conscious of one's positionality and the impact it has, can help caution the researcher as they navigate through their research journey. The researcher's positionality was particularly sensitive due to the highly contentious nature of the land claim. In many cases, participants wanted to know the researcher's positionality before agreeing to take part in the study. However, after it was made clear that this is an academic study that is not associated with any of the stakeholders, many saw this as a neutral platform to freely express their views. The researcher had no physical ties to the study, which enabled them to develop fresh perspectives from observations instead of being clouded by preceding judgement.

The researcher aimed at being objective by analysing a wide range of documents and interviewing different stakeholders involved in the land claim settlement, thereby capturing the

different perspectives on the subject matter. In each case the objectives of this research were explained and consent from individuals was requested before the interview commenced. Consent was provided orally for both access and use of documents as well as the interview itself. In most cases the interviews were recorded. The participants were asked whether they are comfortable with the recording devices and in some cases mentioned aspects off the record to which the researcher did abide and switched off the device. Furthermore, the names of the research participants were anonymized in this dissertation. This was done in order to protect the participants from harmful consequences based on their responses (for example, loss of jobs).

The researcher did indicate to the participants that the findings of this research will be shared through an open access platform at the University of Cape Town. The researcher is also willing to share the findings on request by anyone interested in the case study.

3.11 Conclusion

This research made use of a qualitative research methodology in order to fully capture the factual information as well as perceptions and motivations behind the decisions pertaining to land restitution, labour and the commodification of nature in Mala Mala. More specifically, this research relied on both document analysis as well as interviews to better grasp the complexity of the case study within the broad parameters of land reform. The data analysis was a continuous process throughout the research as gaps and areas that needed clarity were identified and then filled during interviews. The researcher was able to draw conclusions by gathering information from a wide range of sources and contextualising the meaning and perceptions of the findings within the broader theories of land reform, nature conservation and

capitalism in South Africa. The Mala Mala land claim sheds light on the fairly recent intersection between land restitution and capitalism in South Africa.

Chapter 4: The Commodification of Nature

4.1 Introduction

The conservation business has emerged through the commodification of nature. It is the platform on which capitalism manifests itself in private nature reserves. Since nature is the material on which capital is built, it is a source of profit in the private game reserve. This chapter analyses the concept of the conservation business and explains how it unfolded in Mala Mala Game Reserve. It starts with a theoretical analysis of the foundations of capitalist production. It then explains how capitalism has been institutionalised through neoliberalism and relates this to the production of nature. Attention is paid to the justification (and contradictions) of capitalism's presence in nature conservation. The chapter then refers to Sabi Sand Game Reserve as empirical evidence of the rise of capitalism in nature conservation. Here, it traces the history of the conglomerate of game reserves by analysing the motivations of the land uses (and changes). Thereafter the focus turns on Mala Mala and how it became a world-renowned tourist destination.

4.2 Theoretical understanding of nature's commodification

Karl Marx gives an important explanation of how materials are commodified to generate capital accumulation. Marx (2013: 17) defines a commodity as "a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another". He further notes that it is a material thing and the usefulness of that 'thing' is what gives it a use-value. It is through this material's use or consumption that its use-value is realised. However, the use-value also holds the "substance

of wealth” of whatever the social construct of wealth may be at that time. Natural resources have been recognised for their use- value since early human-nature interaction.

Marx (2013) notes that within a capitalist society, the use- value is the material reservoirs of exchange value. Here the commodity is represented as a commercial measure of the exchange value and now becomes the embodiment of the commodity. Exchange value measures the value (quantitative relation) of a commodity’s use- value in exchange for another. Exchange value is characterised by its abstraction from use- value (Marx, 2013) and is measured through aspects such as labour or any other ‘input’ in increasing its value. The value of the commodity is expressed in price, which highlights its potential to be exchanged.

It is important to understand the difference between use- value and exchange value as it helps us classify different modes of production and contextualise the relationships that humans have with commodities. Use-value usually characterised pre-capitalist production, while the relation to exchange value became prominent in capitalist production. The move from use-value to exchange value often did not happen naturally. In Africa, colonialism played an important part in the destruction of previous economies (which were smaller and often more subsistent as the use-value was the dominant production) and “supervised the initial and necessary penetration of pre-capitalist formations, to organise the conditions of exploitation of labour and land” (Bernstein, 1977: 61). The exploitation of labour (cf. Chapter 5) and alienation of land and natural resources was the backbone of capitalist imperialism. The colonial state relied on legislation and violence for the structured capitalist production.

Large scale capitalism relies on social and institutional support. This support has largely been formalised through the rise of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism simply put is the organisation of

human affairs in a way that priority is given to the market (Castree, 2010). A Marxist description of neoliberalism outlines it as “a new form of ruling class hegemony tied to deepening financialization ... and in a more general sense as a synonym for the prevailing historical forms of capitalism” (Harvey, 2005a cited in Peck 2017: 4739). It is the historically growing ideology of capitalism that formally took off in the 1970s when states started to re-orientate themselves towards constructing free market ideas. States turned to the market to “manage the economy, society and the environment better” (Perkins, 2017: 4743). Neoliberalism became a kind of “operating framework or ideological software” through which the states restructured national and local dynamics by increasing the influence of markets and embracing competitiveness (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 33). As a result, national industries were privatized, tax reforms, and policies decreasing restrictions of wealthy organisations were implemented while social programmes received less attention.

In the fragile economies of Africa, Asia and Latin America, neoliberalism secured the continued operation of large profit driven businesses through Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Both the structural adjustment and austerity measures were conditions put forward by international loans and played an important role in pushing states to adopt neoliberal policies. Loans handed to states came with the strict conditions that they restructure and cut back public expenditure (austerity) and prioritise the market to repay the loans and become economically developed. It is believed that through this economic development, human welfare will be improved. As a result, the neoliberal state adopts principles based on competition and choice that are generally in line with the market (marketization) while at the same time deregulating its control and responsibilities. Furthermore, the state actively outsources its services and sells its assets to the private sector (privatization). Ultimately

neoliberal policies (marketization, deregulation, privatization) aim to create an ‘optimal business environment’ in the country.

Many critics have pointed out the dangerous contradictions of neoliberalism. In general, neoliberalism is a convenient “mask full of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice and rights to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power” (Harvey, 2005a: 119). Polanyi (1944) points out the contradiction of freedom in a complex society. He notes that on an institutional level there is an imbalance of increased versus diminished freedoms. He further explains that negative freedoms such as exploitation, withholding interventions that could benefit the public, unfairly withholding benefits from those who have helped create them or generating profit from public goods are all examples of how ‘freedom’ can be used to further injustice.

The illusion of freedom is a fundamental contradiction in which neoliberalism is organised. Harvey (2005b) further builds on this contradiction as he explains the harsh realities of neoliberalism through a concept he calls ‘accumulation by dispossession’. He unpacks the consequences of privatization to explain the way in which capital accumulates by dispossessing society from public goods and services. Harvey (2005b: 145) uses Marx’s description of primitive accumulation to demonstrate how “the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state etc.) into exclusive private property rights” are amongst the many forms of dispossession that are inherently caused by capital accumulation. He explains that the neoliberal state legitimises these forms of dispossession through its implementation of capitalist fit laws and violence. Ultimately Harvey explains that privatization is the ‘cutting

edge' of accumulation by dispossessions and that the neoliberal state endorses this by having biased notion of freedom that is market centred.

Furthermore, Fraser (2014) points out another fault of neoliberalism by highlighting capitalism's undervaluing of social reproduction. She highlights the 'hidden abode' of capitalism and explains that "markets depend for their very existence on non-marketized social relations, which supply their background conditions of possibility" (60). She argues that the contradictions of capitalism are fundamentally rooted in the relationship that the economic system has with the background social, ecological and political conditions. The wellbeing of education, healthcare and general exploitation of natural resources are all neglected areas in the capitalist system even though their function is the backbone for capitalism's operation.

Because of the greed for profit, there is biased (narrow minded) investment of capital. The neoliberal state legitimised this by favouring the market. The state has effectively deregulated its responsibilities and handed them over to the private sector; a proof of its biased care towards initiatives which are profit driven, often at the cost of social wellbeing. State responsibilities such as providing equal education, healthcare, housing, protecting natural resources for all its citizens are increasingly handed to the private sector, causing public interests to become privatised. As a result, valuing the collective good has been replaced with individual responsibilities. These structures of individuality favour the rich by not having to share/ input their profits with those that helped build them and again highlights Polanyi's point of imbalanced freedoms due to the centring of the economic system.

Ironically, capitalism is not even sustainable for its own reproduction. The social and environmental degradation that it has caused through years of increased exploitation has not

only caused a crisis for society and nature, but for its own reproduction as well. The degradation caused by its exploitation deteriorates its market and eventually causes a collapse. Harvey (2001) however points out the contradiction of capitalism's incentive to continuously 'fix' itself through the market, the very same system that caused the problem in first place. The neoliberal state helps scale down the reality of these contradictions and often acts in favour of capitalism finding new avenues of 'fixing' socio-environmental problems. In the last few decades, one of the areas in which capitalism has found an additional opportunity is in a new form of commodifying nature as a solution to the environmental crisis we are currently situated in.

There is a distinct paradox in the relationships capitalism has with nature (Castree, 2008a). Capitalism desires to both protect *and* degrade the biophysical environment in order to generate markets. This contradiction is evident in the different relationship humans have with nature. A few scholars have theorised about the production of nature. Hegel and later Marx theorised about the concept of 'first nature' which referred to the natural environment untransformed by humans. This mainly occurred in pre-capitalist societies, where merely the use-value of the material was recognised. Later capitalist values invested itself in nature through human labour and production and the concept of 'second nature' evolved in the era of industrialisation (Smith, 1984 and Whatmore, 1999, cited in Brooks et al., 2011). Currently, according to Hughes (2005) we see the presence of 'third nature' as the re-imagination of landscapes through tourist motivated wilderness. Here we still see capitalism's presence in the production of nature, but through a more 'imaginative' or abstract measure.

The emergence of third nature is in most cases a response to the destruction of nature caused through industrialisation (seconds nature) as it attempts to add a market value to the services

that nature offers. Some authors refer to this as green capitalism (Scales, 2017). Examples of this abstract form of valuing nature includes the international carbon trading market, where states have a cap on their carbon emissions, but can ‘sell’ their emission rights to other states; the valuing of ecosystem services where natural services such as oxygen produced by a forest now get valued and factored into the market; and lastly the growing tourism market through nature conservation. Although this form of commodifying nature is often motivated as a solution to the large degree of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss we are currently facing, its very strong business incentives do not come without consequences (of conditions mentioned above of exploitation, dispossession, and exclusion). The exchange value of nature is increasingly appropriated into new forms of accumulation. Castree (2000a: 281) explains that during the last century we have seen a stronger “uneven development by capitalism as different nature-based industries commodify different aspects of nature and seek to sell their products in competitive markets”. The rise of the tourism market through nature conservation has shown clear evidence of capitalism finding a new niche in accumulating profit by claiming to at the same time ‘fix’ the environmental crisis of species extinction and environmental degradation (Brockington and Duffy, 2010).

Conservation as a land use is supported by the tourism businesses which generates large amounts of income for marketing human desires of wilderness. As a result, nature conservation and exclusive lifestyle projects are becoming a popular land use (Zoomers, 2010). Castree (2000b) critiques ecoMarxism by stating it makes the same contradictory mistake the bourgeois and the green views of nature make in that it separates the social and natural realms from one another. However, based on the earlier explanations of neoliberalism, it then becomes comprehensible that the neoliberal state would endorse the tourism market of nature conservation as it attempts to solve a problem (environmental degradation) through the market

– the integral philosophy on which the neoliberal state bases its pathway towards development. As a result, the role of business in conservation initiatives grew exponentially with the rise of neoliberalism. The rise of private game reserves in South Africa since the second half of the 20th century is evidence of this.

Sabi Sand Complex developed in the second half of the 20th century (Schmidtz and Willott, 2003). The history of Sabi Sand Complex helps us better understand the commodification of nature in South Africa and it is through this history that we can more specifically trace the evolution of Mala Mala. Peluso (2012) argues that the commodification of nature comes in new forms today but is a historical phenomenon as it was visible in the early years of capitalism. The history will help us comprehend the contemporary operations of capitalism in the game reserve that will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.3 The history of Sabi Sand Complex

In Southern Africa one can trace the historic pattern of colonial conquest and dispossession, together with vast uneven development of capital accumulation (O’Laughlin et al, 2013). The Sabi Sand Complex is no different as its history tells us a story of colonial dispossession and strategic land use changes, often backed by financial justification.

For white settlers, land used for agriculture was the main economic resource before the discovery of minerals in second half of the 19th century (Platzky and Walker, 1985). In Sabi Sand Complex, the land was held less for agricultural purposes, but rather for speculative reasons (Carruthers, 1996 in Delius and Hay, 2012). This speculation, Delius and Hay (2012) write, was because properties in the nearby proximity had been discovered for mineral

exploration which the landowners in Sabi Sand hoped could increase their land value. In the 1880s these owners started to collect rent from the Africans living on these farms in order to get some financial benefit in the meantime. Although the Africans living in the area engaged in crop and livestock farming (evidence from oral histories and aerial photographs), not many settlers engaged in agriculture as it was said that the area was not suitable due to diseases and water restrictions (Delius and Hay, 2012). Instead, settlers engaged in excessive hunting of wildlife in the area.

The 19th century was a century of devastating killing of wildlife in Southern Africa (Pringle, 1982). Hunting was of great importance for two reasons, one being status and the other being financial. Wildlife always had an important economic aspect to it. Ivory, animal skins, skulls and horns, game meat, all had a financial value to them for decoration or trade (Pringle, 1982; Rattray, 1986; Beinart, 1989; Carruthers, 1995a). When wild animals were depleting at an exponential rate towards the end of the century, suggestions to create a protective area for wildlife alongside further hunting initiatives arose. As a result, President Paul Kruger announced the concept of a wildlife sanctuary first in 1884 (Pringle, 1982). Here game was to be protected from hunting and on 26 March 1898 Sabi Reserve was proclaimed. Protecting this wildlife was an important step towards protecting the future of hunting and the tourism economy. Wildlife was an asset that carried economic meaning and destroying it completely could mean a financial loss. Thus, by protecting part of it, the potential of a wildlife economy remained.

Initially, the proclamation of this reserve brought conflict between other areas of capital accumulation. Farmers, mine owners, and railway contractors opposed the idea of conservation as it would interfere with their methods of capital accumulation. However, after negotiation,

private land was to be separated from the government owned conservation area. In 1923 the Minister of Lands saw the solution to these land disputes as excising private land from the game reserve. Pringle (1982) notes that the constant difficulty in proclaiming the national park was rooted in the fact that private individuals and land companies such as the Transvaal Consolidation Lands Ltd and some other land companies owned about 450 000 hectares of the demarcated reserve. The Game Reserves Commission (1918: 10) suggested that exchanging properties could also be “satisfactory to both parties”. Figure 4.1 below shows the extent of private (blue), company (green) and government (yellow) owned land in the Sabi Game Reserve.

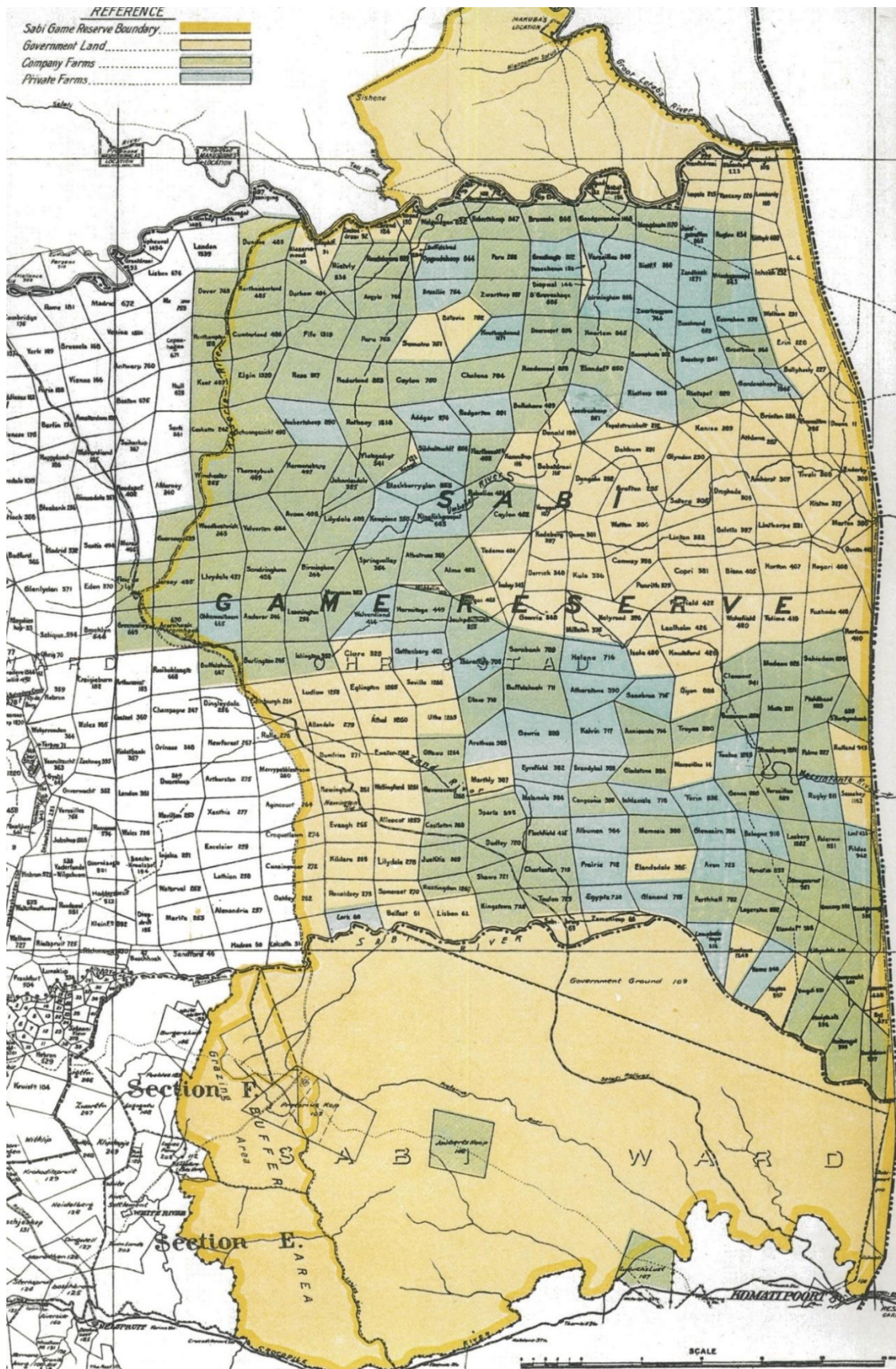


Figure 4.1 Type of farm ownership in Sabi Game Reserve in 1918 (Source: Game Reserves Commission, 1918)

Sabi reserve started seeing visitors in 1923 when the systems manager of the railway allowed a night stop in the reserve at Sabi Bridge when the train commuted to and from Maputo. Many people enjoyed their night spent in the game reserve and this was the start of an emerging visitors market at Sabi Reserve (Pringle, 1982). With a change of government in 1924, and a new Minister of Lands, the negotiations continued and resolutions to create the KNP were formed. In 1925 the National Parks Bill was drafted and through advertising the idea of a game park, and attempting to convince parliament of its necessity, further negotiation finally reached a settlement agreement. The private landowners would accept government's generous offer of 35 000 pounds for the 36 farms and compensatory land in other regions of the lowveld (Pringle, 1982).

Beinart (1989: 148) explains that the state carried greater authority in the colonial world than it did in Britain (where private landowners were more powerful). However, in the lowveld the drawn-out negotiations that expanded over decades and the generous incentive offered to the private landowners highlight the state's attempt to peacefully settle and ensure that the private landowners are satisfied. The state had to ensure that the farmers are content with the settlement agreements in order to ensure their continued support of the government and also ensure the continuation of capitalist agricultural productivity. Beinart (1989) shows how it is somewhat ironic that colonial ideas accommodate both the destruction of ecosystems (through farming) on private land while reconstructing and protecting them in state land (through conservation). He states, "colonial ideas, drawn from industrialised and capitalist Europe laid far more stress on rigid spatial division between land set aside for different purposes" (158). However, this irony can be simplified when looking at it from the perspective of economic security. Assets needed to be manipulated and used for their economic benefit at that time (hunting and

agriculture), but they also needed to be protected to ensure potential future economic security (hunting and tourism).

The financial aspect of tourism accounts for changing perceptions of game in the countryside (Beinart, 1989). Beinart (1989) notes that the government's help in financing conservation encouraged it to become more acceptable to farmers. Although private landowners fiercely opposed the idea of conservation at the beginning, once its financial potential was recognised, opinions changed. Many years after the proclamation of the KNP, private landowners situated between the Sabi river and the Sand river got together and formed an association of their own. Sabi Sand Wildtuin (SSW), a conglomerate of privately-owned farms was formed in 1950, and Wac Campbell, owner of Mala Mala at that time, was the first president of this association (Rattray, 1986). A fellow member of the SSW explains that farmers "*got together to protect their own interests, as landowners*" (Interview, 27 November 2018). He explains that this is not to harm anyone else, but just to protect the interests of the people living in the area. A previous member of Mala Mala management stated that the formation of SSW was also motivated by "the economy of scale of a larger community" (Schmidt and Willot, 2003: 206). He mentions aspects such as the fence, entry gates, security, maintenance, administration and having a "common voice with authorities" were all advantages and helped cut costs to a large extent (Schmidt and Willot, 2003: 206). Being well known as a collective, also enables the marketing of the individual reserves to be more effective. As a collective the reserves were able to jointly elevate the standards (i.e. value) of the area.

After the establishment of the association, farms slowly started to convert into game reserves. In 1961 a 72km long fence was established along the western boundary, which they claim was to keep the wildlife within the reserve (SSW, 2017). The formation of the association ensured

a structured system of capital accumulation in the reserve. Landowners are led by a constitution and collectively build a wilderness empire, steadily increasing the value of the property in the area. This strategic move helped them cut costs which inevitably led to increase profits. They were able to turn the area into an exclusive tourist destination that for a long time offered their guests hunting facilities before shifting largely to conservation in the late 20th century.

It is important to note that the conflicting ideas of the conservationists and the farmers always left the Africans out of the equation. The introduction of the Natives Land Act (No. 27 of 1913) facilitated the removal of Africans as it designated some 7% of South Africa to Africans (later increased to 13% with the Natives and Land Trust Act of 1936). Africans were removed to designated areas (bantustans) with the exception to those who had a rent agreement in the form of labour or cash. Carruthers (1995b) studies the development and establishment of the KNP, and shows it was as much a political tool as it was a conservation incentive. She argues that “in South Africa it appears that the considerable black resistance to the game reserves may actually have accelerated the formation of the national park precisely because tighter central administration was considered to be a deterrent to black occupation or usage of the area under consideration. The new park must therefore be regarded as a means of providing more effective control over both neighbouring blacks and the few who still resided within the park” (176).

Beinart (1989: 147) documented the politics of colonial conservation and indicated that “both settler and African systems of resource use and agriculture were shifting in response to the penetration of capital into the interior”. Although he would argue that competition between the settler and the African and the control that the settler had over production is what caused the state’s involvement and made the environment a ‘deeply politicised issue’, other authors argue that competition may be an oversimplification, and that it was rather settlers controlling

Africans (in terms of labour) and stripping Africans off their access and ownership of land and natural resources (Ngcukaitobi, 2018). The use of land in the area (whether it is hunting, farming or conservation) was always motivated by its economic contribution. Though Africans took part in trade, capitalism flourished with colonialism in the Africa. The economic value of land was important for capitalist settlers (see the discovery of minerals, agricultural exports, trade through hunting etc.) and the value of the African was only recognised through its productiveness in assisting the settler to generate wealth. The settler saw the African purely in its economic form. At first, settlers saw no value of the African and therefore started with removing Africans from the land, however once their labour potential was recognised, then only was there a shifting view of the African away from being ‘useless’ to a source through which increased income can be generated (cf. Chapter 5).

In addition to this, conservation initiatives that formally took off in the second half of the 20th century added another layer of African exclusion. The illusionary idea of ‘pure wilderness’ on which conservation nests itself creates an image of nature that is uninhabited by humans. The fact that forced removals continued to take place as these private nature reserves were being created can be attributed to two reasons. One being that African labour was becoming redundant as the land use changed to conservation, which is less labour intensive; and secondly the removals of African can also be seen as in the attempt to create a ‘purified’ natural environment, which only those who can pay are allowed to enjoy (Brooks and Kjelstrup, 2014; Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014). Only the absolute necessary labour was kept, and many families were removed. Harvey’s (2005b) analogy of accumulation by dispossession is clearly evident here as dispossessing Africans from their land, access to resources and even employment occurred concurrently with the rising property value (accumulation of wealth) of Sabi Sand.

4.4 Contextualising the history of Mala Mala Game Reserve in the Sabi

Sabi Complex

The rise of Mala Mala Game Reserve should be understood as part of the history of the Sabi Sabi Complex discussed above. Mala Mala is the Shangaan word for Sable antelope (emblem of Mala Mala) and the farm first came under white ownership in 1869 through a government grant (Rattray, 1986). Thereafter the ownership of these farms went back and forth between individual owners and land companies until the period between 1927-1934, where individual white landowners settled and took more control of their farms (Delius and Hay, 2012). Figure 4.2 below illustrates many farms that form part of contemporary Mala Mala Game Reserve that were part of the government farms swapped for private farms during the establishment of the KNP.

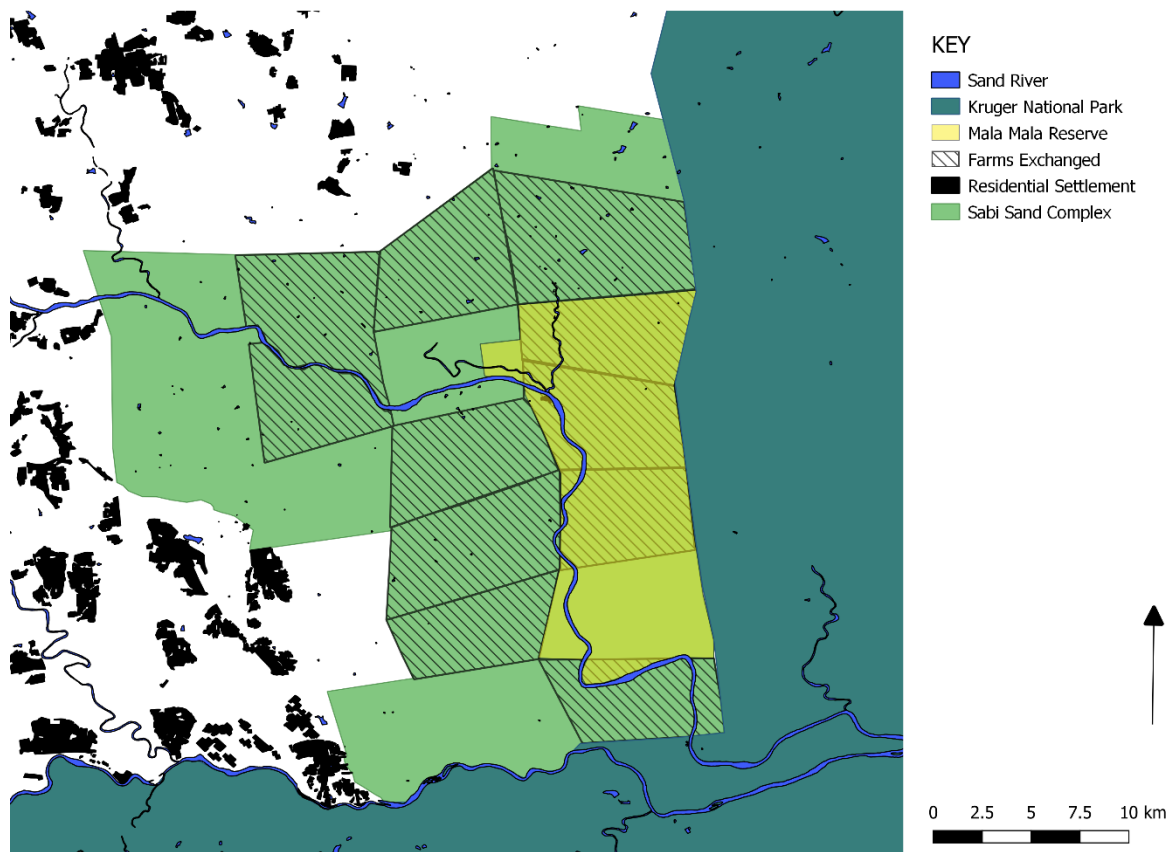


Figure 4.2 Government owned farms in Sabi Sand Complex swapped for private farms in KNP (Source: Author, 2018)

The attraction of guests to Mala Mala started under the ownership of Wac Campbell in 1929 who nurtured the farm into a popular hunting destination providing guests with food and accommodation. Rattray (1986) documents this by showing well known individuals from around the world travelled to Mala Mala to consolidate their hunting experience on the farm. Wac even provided specimens from the hunt to museums both in South Africa and abroad. His son was less centred around hunting and when he took over Mala Mala he sold the farm to Mala Mala Ranch (Pty) Ltd which belonged to Loring Rattray in 1964. The table below indicates when the properties comprising Mala Mala Game Reserve were acquired by Mala Mala Ranch (Pty) Ltd and the price paid for this acquisition.

Table 4.1 Farm acquisition by Mala Mala Ranch (Pty) Ltd (Source: LCC, 2010)

Property	Year of acquisition	Size (ha)	Cost (R)	Cost per hectare
Mala Mala 359KU	1964	3131	125 583	40.11
Eyrefield 343KU	1964 (acquired by Rattray family)	2976.1432	90 280	30.67
Flockfield 361KU Portion 1	1980	1377	200 000	145.24
Toulon Portion 5	1981	1540	850 000	551.95
Flockfield Remainder	1982	1377	650 000	472.04
Eyrefield	1996 (acquired by MalaMala Ranch (Pty) Ltd)	2976.1432	15 028 800	5050.00

Loring renovated the farm to a tourist destination by employing rangers, improving dining services and accommodation for a minimal price (Rattray, 1986). After his death, his son Mike took over. People describe Mike Rattray as a vivid businessman (Community lawyer, senior government official, and adjacent landowner). After his father's death he immediately

increased both the tariff (to double) and accommodation fees on the reserve and in ten years he increased the enterprise five-fold (Rattray, 1986).

Mala Mala had assistance from the Transvaal Department of Nature Conservation and in 1984 Mike Rattray joined the board of Trustees of the National Parks Board (Rattray, 1986). Rattray (1986: 174) indicates that Mike Rattray believed that “it would be better to have less people paying more than more people paying less”. This philosophy is still strongly held not only by Mala Mala, but the entire conglomerate of private game reserves in the Sabi Sand Complex which are all marketed high end exclusive tourist destinations. A landowner of a farm within Sabi Sand explains the different marketing models:

So, you know there are two models. One is to have hundreds of people through like KNP rest camp. Then there is the other model, which is very few people, top end, charge them the earth – and we are in that group. (Interview, 27 November 2018).

This tourism model was well received by government who conducted a study in 1977 (on Mala Mala) and concluded that foreign income from this business far exceeds the potential income that could have been generated from agriculture (Rattray, 1986). Converting to conservation land use therefore became popular as it proved to be more financially viable and motivated land use conversions in other parts of South Africa.

The above demonstrates the tight relationship between capitalism and politics as the government supports the land use that proves to be the most economically viable. Of course, there are other reasons for land use change, which conservationists often argue to be the protection of biodiversity and preventing species extinction, which are all very valid and important reasons. However, the reason behind certain decisions can often be traced back to

their economic value as financial potential is often the underlying motivation for land use change. Private landowners only became more open to the idea of wilderness conservation once its financial potential was recognised. In the late 1970s, neoliberalism globally brought political-economic relationships closer and empowered various forms of capital accumulation (Perkins, 2017).

The formations of these relationships in South Africa can be better understood by paying attention to South Africa's transition to democracy. Marais (1998) writes that South Africa was experiencing economic difficulty in the 1970s and as a result the government took a loan from the IMF in 1982 and again in 1993. Together with IMF prescriptions of fiscal stringency, deregulation and privatisation, and political uprisings (which were partly fuelled by these prescriptions), South Africa spiralled into a political and economic crisis. When political negotiations between the NP government and the ANC took place in the early 1990s, a range of economic policies and scenarios were also developed in which large business organisations played a leading role. The increasingly developing neoliberal ideology aided the dominant voices of business organisations, which aimed at protecting control over capital (Marais, 1998).

Marais (1998) notes that since its unbanning in 1990, the ANC had no coherent economic programme except for a few vague passages in the freedom charter and a few broad statements and slogans. This weakness of the ANC together with the dominant neoliberal agenda therefore resulted in the continuation of capitalism's operations in the country. The conservation business is merely one example that shows capitalism's continuation (and re-infestation) in nature. Igoe, Neves and Brockington (2010: 488) argue that the view that "economic value to nature and its submission to "free market" processes is key to successful conservation" became increasingly dominant and is often argued to be the cure to capitalism's destructions elsewhere. This

opportunity sparked the tourism industry and enabled the growing private nature reserves to commodify nature and gain financial benefits. The South African government endorsed this move by implementing neoliberal policies that helped empower private property rights that simplified capital accumulation.

4.5 Contemporary dynamics of Mala Mala Game Reserve

And if you had land, you could convert into a PGR - the revenue that is able to be generated is quite high because people will pay a lot of money to come into these areas. An international person wants this (Mala Mala). Not all international people are of that standard but those that are used to traveling to 5-star hotels can now come to Africa and they can do Safari 5 star. (Interview, 10 June 2019).

Game reserves use multifaceted marketing strategies to attract visitors. Mala Mala is a world renowned 5-star tourist attraction. The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) defines 5-star as “Exceptional quality and luxurious accommodation (matching best international standards). Highest standard of furnishings, flawless service and meticulous guest care.” (Hern, 2009: 15). In South Africa’s tourism industry, the star-grading system is used as a measure of quality of services offered. Based on the number of stars (one being low quality and five being top quality) consumers can make “a ‘value for money’ assessment on where they want to stay” (Hern, 2009: 14). These stars are awarded by the TGCSA based on a set of criteria on the level of luxury of the hospitality business.

So, with respect to Mala Mala, what characteristics give it its highly valued 5-star reputation? The game reserve has three camps namely Mala Mala Camp, Sable Camp and Rattray’s Camp that offer their visitors a 5-star stay based on their quality of the rooms, food and general

facilities. However, as evident in their advertising initiatives, their 5-star reputation also stems from the quality and services of the game reserve, the physical environment. Below is an excerpt of the Mala Mala website (2019) that outlines to consumers why they should choose this particular game reserve as a tourist destination:

MalaMala Game Reserve was the first privately owned and commercially operated game reserve in South Africa and is the model on which all other private game reserves now operate.

- *A map of the reserve demonstrates the significance of MalaMala's size and location in relation to the Kruger National Park. The unfenced eastern boundary with the Kruger National Park allows wildlife to move freely onto MalaMala and many of the territorial animals such as leopard, lion and rhino will have territories overlapping on both reserves.*
- *MalaMala's river frontage, running north to south, is the lifeblood of the reserve and acts as a natural drawcard for animals, especially in the dry winter months. The wildlife moves from the Kruger National Park, across MalaMala, to the river and back again, resulting in two-way traffic across the reserve where we conduct our safaris*
- *The land to the east of the river has no human habitation, no access roads, no electricity pylons and no telephone poles and this area is left exclusively to the wildlife for upwards of 16 hours a day.*
- *There is no shared traversing on 70% of the MalaMala property allowing guests to enjoy exclusive, uninterrupted game drives. There is no time limit on sightings and no "queue-to-view" on this enormous tract of land.*
- *Due to the superior environmental policies of MalaMala over a long period of time, the land has remained in pristine condition resulting in a prolific abundance of tertiary grasses. This attracts the herbivores which in turn attracts the predators.*

The 19km fence between Mala Mala and KNP was dropped in 1993 and it has since become one of Mala Mala strongest marketing tools (Mala Mala Game Reserve, 2016). Because animals move from the KNP to Mala Mala to drink water from the Sand river, Mala Mala benefits from being able to offer tourist a large quantity and quality of wildlife. The reserve

also markets the fact that communities are situated far away from the reserve as being able to give tourists ‘purified wilderness’. A previous member of management explained that “the vast majority of properties in the Sabi Sand to the west of Mala Mala are impacted on by neighbouring communities whether it be by light pollution, noise pollution, poaching or worse still crime” and proudly stated that because Mala Mala does not have these communities in close proximity, tourists can enjoy nature in its purest form (LCC, 2010). This highlights the quite obscure ways in which nature is commodified. Furthermore, the game reserve also markets the airfield that it has on site. It can operate daily flights from O.R. Tambo International Airport directly to Mala Mala Game Reserve. The airstrip was completed in the 1980s (Rattray, 1986) and is able to offer tourists the luxury of easy transport into and out of the reserve.

Mala Mala capitalised on its location and commodifies all imaginable aspects of it. All aspects of the environment are valued in respect to their financial value. Here it is evident that the game reserve uses aspects such as the unfenced boundary with KNP, the river, quality of wildlife, airstrip and selective absence of human interaction as a marketing tool. It claims that these characteristics make it ‘unique’ and different from other private game reserves. It attempts to be as exclusive as possible and these characteristics are aspects which enable the reserve to drive up its asking price.

The target market for Mala Mala is “*high premium international tourists*” (Interview, 10 June 2019) (mostly from North America and Europe) who can afford the high rates of the reserve. When taking a closer look at these rates it becomes evident that no average South African could afford to visit this luxurious reserve. In 2019 the cheapest single room per night was \$925 (about R13 912) and these prices are scheduled to increase in 2020 (Mala Mala Game Reserve, 2019). The fact that the game reserve trades in the dollar currency again proves that

international consumers are the target market, and as is evident in the above excerpt of an interview response with Mala Mala management, international tourists are the target market because they would pay large amounts of money to enjoy 5-star safari. Thus, it shows that only those who are able to pay can enjoy this purified wilderness environment.

Exclusion takes place on a financial basis which is common in businesses, but the innocent image of conservation often hides this reality. In order to shadow this reality, many private game reserves have actively made it a point to broadcast their ‘contributions’ towards uplifting impoverished communities. Websites of private game reserves often have a ‘community engagement’ sector, where they explain to the potential tourists how they are contributing to the communities. Through this they are able to mitigate criticisms of exploitation, exclusion or dispossession by demonstrating their involvement in protecting the environment *and* uplifting society simultaneously. In an interview with a member of Mala Mala management (10 June 2019) she indicated that tourists love to know where their contributions go and with respect to Mala Mala, unlike the other reserves, it is actually community owned (after the land claim was settled in 2013) which means that revenue is directly shared with the community and “international people love that”. It seems therefore that the act of conservation and donations to communities are both used as a marketing tool to attract tourist to visit these private game reserves. This gives tourists a good feeling that they have contributed positively to society and the environment, and game reserves evidently capitalise on this in their marketing.

The land claim was not always seen in a positive light, quite the contrary. After 1994 many saw the conservation business at Mala Mala as endangered by land claims. With land claims placed on the farms comprising Mala Mala Game Reserve, there was the possibility that the business would be interrupted depending on how land restitution would be implemented.

Fortunately for the landowners and generally business in South Africa, the neoliberal state decided to use the market as a framework to attend to historical injustice while at the same time keeping up with economic development. In the case of Mala Mala, the state settled the land claim, but put forward the condition that the business operations should go unharmed (Interview, 11 April 2019). The Mala Mala business continued as usual (cf. Chapter 6). What was thought to be disrupting capital accumulation (as historic forms of dispossession and exploitation would now be returned to those that were stripped off their rights, ownership and wealth) turned out to be a continuation of the system. Fraser (2014) indicates that there is great difficulty in drawing boundaries (or separations) between the economy and aspects of society, politics and nature. Land reform in South Africa demonstrates this as the neoliberal state has institutionalised capitalism to the extent that the economy is integral to all societal, environmental and political relationships. It has reached the point that contributions back to the communities has become a marketing exercise.

In general, the tourism industry in South Africa is highly regarded as an example of achieving sustainable development and economic growth. The country values its tourists and it often talks negatively of anything that harms the tourism market. For example, protests near game reserves are often explained in reference to the impact they have on the visitors (Granat, 2018). Both the government and the Mala Mala business made an effort to highlight to its visitors that the land claim will have no impact on the day to day operations of the game reserve. As Ramutsindela (2002b: 76) stated; “capitalist penetration into biodiversity is no different from other forms of capitalist operations, despite the tendency to couch the commercialisation of natural capital in the language of environmental protection and sustainability”.

4.6 Conclusion

The incentive of the neoliberal state to use the market as a tool to solve a wide range of social and environmental problems is clearly evident from the emergence and operation of private nature reserves in South Africa. Although nature conservation plays an important role in restoring environmental degradation and protecting species from extinction, its business operation is also prone to various forms of exclusion and dispossession. The history of Sabi Sand and more specifically Mala Mala has shown that the conservation land use is motivated by the high revenue it creates. Historically hunting and in some cases, agriculture was seen as the most viable financial use of the land. However, soon the value of conserving nature through a luxurious tourism market was recognised and landowners got together to protect their interests. The value of nature in Sabi Sand has been strategically structured by the landowners to attract wealthy tourists. The role of the African during this transformation to conservation became redundant and as a result, forced removals from Sabi Sand occurred concurrently with the rise in conservation-related tourism. The commodification of nature through the tourism market resulted in various forms of African dispossession as landowners moved towards accumulating capital.

A closer analysis of Mala Mala reveals that its marketing strategy creates the popular image of a purified, high quality wilderness through its relationship with the KNP through the removal of the fence. Its highly valued 5-star reputation (based on the accommodation and physical environment) targets the international elite who can afford to enjoy this luxurious conservation area. The reputation of the reserve is often balanced between it being a well operated business enterprise and a high-quality conservation area. However, the operations of the reserve are a typical example of advanced capitalism, institutionalised through neoliberalism. Mala Mala is

fundamentally a business enterprise built through conservation. It uses the environment to generate large amounts of profits, and in the process is responsible for various forms of exclusion, dispossession, and exploitation.

The following chapter will help us better understand the relationship capitalism has with the private game reserve by considering conservation labour. Capitalism functions best not only where there is private property, but also structures labour in a way that ensures optimal profit accumulation. In order to understand the nuanced influence of capitalism in private game reserves, it becomes important to understand how it operates through a cheap labour system.

Chapter 5: Conservation Labour and Capitalism

5.1 Introduction

Bernstein (2003: 210) comments that late capitalism creates a “global army (or reserve army) of labour... that is not only growing but pursues its reproduction in conditions of increasing insecure and oppressive wage labour”. Protected areas are often known for their positive output in conservation and sustainability, but little is known about the sources of input that develop these areas. Sodikoff (2009) indicates that conservation areas are imagined in a certain way (pure, untouched, philanthropic, and largely moral socio- environmental spaces), and not as areas of capital production. As a result of this there is generally a lack of conceptualization of important aspects such as conservation labour. Conservation labour refers to all forms of labour inputs in protected areas and plays an important role in the creation and maintenance of these areas. In South Africa, the change in land use to conservation has strongly been motivated by the potential for an increase in capital accumulation that this type of land use offers. Scholars have highlighted the gap in literature when it comes to the analyses of conservation labour and its relationship to capitalist accumulation (Sodikoff, 2009; Neimark, 2012; Ramutsindela, 2015, Neimark et al., 2020).

The aim of this chapter is to use a Marxist lens to understand how labour is organised in private game reserves. Karl Marx helps us understand the process of capital accumulation and highlights the close relationship that capital has with labour. He introduced the concept of surplus labour value which explains how profit is generated by the capitalist at the expense of the worker. His analysis helps us paint a more realistic image of the production of conservation

areas by taking a closer look at the role that surplus labour plays in generating wealth for the capitalist. This chapter focuses on the production, extraction, and control of labour. Firstly, it outlines a theoretical conceptualization of surplus labour according to Marx. This conceptualization is used to understand the foundations of cheap labour in South Africa. The history of cheap labour in South Africa foregrounds the discussion on conservation labour. Conservation labour in South Africa cannot be fully understood outside the broader production of cheap labour in the country. Thereafter the chapter draws specifically on Mala Mala and analyses the ways in which surplus labour is extracted from the workers in the reserve. Comparisons are drawn between the historical structuring of cheap labour and contemporary labour dynamics of Mala Mala. Analysing the dynamics of conservation labour in private nature reserves helps us to grasp the unaccounted ‘cost’ of conservation areas.

5.2 Understanding capitalist labour theory and the foundations of cheap labour in South Africa

Karl Marx explains that capital accumulation is depended on exploitation (Marx, 2013). In a capitalist system, this largely manifests in the relationship that capital has with labour, which ensures the extraction of surplus value from the worker. Surplus value is produced through “the commodity labour power, the capacity to labour, which is purchased by capitalists but at a value that bears no necessary quantitative relation to the amount of labour performed” (Fine, 2001: 43). Simply put, surplus labour refers to the amount of work a worker does that is above what is required for the social reproduction/cost of the worker – i.e. his/her wage – and as a result produces extra value for the capitalist. For example, in a small business with one employee, the employee receives the minimum wage which is R20 per hour (which equals to R160 a day). However, the income generated by the business in a day is R1500. The owner of the business may have some non- labour expenses which equal R600. This means after

subtracting the expenses, there is R740 surplus. The employee may have produced the value of their wage, or survival payment, in the first 4 hours of work already (termed necessary labour), yet (s)he works 8 hours a day, producing surplus value in the remaining hours for the employer. Although this example is very simplified, it highlights the principle in terms of which most capitalist enterprises operate.

Surplus labour is unpaid labour of the worker and is expropriated by the employer. Marx indicates that the “rate of surplus value (surplus labour/necessary labour) is an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labour power by capital, or of the labourer by the capitalist” (Marx, 2013: 151). There are two ways in which the capitalist can exploit the employee for the generation of surplus value. The first is by extending the workday beyond necessary labour time. By increasing the amount of time the employee works, more surplus time is accumulated, hence more surplus value is generated. The second way in which surplus value is increased is by decreasing the wages of the worker. By decreasing the minimum wage, the employer is able to share less of the income with the employee and is able to draw a larger profit from the surplus the employee generated. Both cases will result in a relative decrease in what is deemed necessary labour while increasing the surplus labour, resulting in the overall increase in profit of the business. In a capitalist society, this power usually lies with the owner of capital, while the worker largely remains powerless.

In South Africa, the above conceptualization of surplus labour can be traced back to colonialism and apartheid’s creation of the cheap labour system. Burawoy (1976 in Levy, 1982: 22) explains the notion of ‘cheap’ labour as not only being the mere existence of ‘excessive exploitation’ but also takes into consideration the questions ‘cheap for whom?’ and ‘cheap in respect to what?’. Taking these questions into consideration helps us understand the

foundations of the cheap labour system. The major sectors that played a vital role in structuring and organizing the cheap labour system in South Africa include commercial agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. All these sectors generated (and are still generating) large volumes of capital and depended on a stabilized labour system to sustain their accumulation. This was made possible through strategic labour- recruiting and cost- cutting methods which resulted in an efficient migrant labour system and low wages (Levy, 1982).

The first significant step towards structuring African labour was through commercial agriculture. By 1867 commercial agriculture was well developed; exporting wool, sugar, wine and ostrich feathers as well as the production of maize, wheat, fruit, butter and beef for the internal market (Wilson, 1971). This agricultural economy relied on a large labour force which was made possible through military conquest of African chiefdoms and the implementation of master and servant laws (Trapido, 1971). Farmers often complained about a shortage of labour, especially after the emancipation of slaves in 1834, but various methods were used in order to ensure a continuing supply of labour. Wilson (1971) notes that the most fundamental method was the 'squatters' system. This system allowed Africans to stay on European conquered farms on the condition that they pay rent by supplying their labour for a period of time. The 'Squatters' Law of 1895 allowed only five African families to stay on a farm which forced African labour to become more widely distributed throughout the country. However, because there was still land available for Africans to live independently, farmers also resorted to recruit labour from other colonial states in Africa.

A large proportion of the work on the farms was done by migrant labourers, who worked on a contract that could extent for up to five years. As time passed migrant contracts became increasingly shorter and more seasonally structured to help during the harvesting and planting

season. Generally, white settlers resisted the idea of increasing wages as a method of recruiting labour as they feared that if workers were paid more, they would work less as they could be more independent with the extra money (Wilson, 1971). Needless to say, the little money they received was barely enough to survive on in the first place.

The structuring of African exploitation for agricultural production did not end here. Prison labour was also an important aspect of cheap labour and dates to the 17th and 18th centuries' colonial period of slavery. In 1889 prison labour was expanded to farm labour and became a very important development after the Second World War. In 1947 the proliferation establishment of farm jails created a great increase in farm labour on the white farms as farm labour was a form of punishment for African convicts. Farm owners would help build these prisons, become shareholders and in return be entitled to African prison labour that is in proportion with their share (Wilson, 1971). With the strict apartheid legislation Africans were often sent to prison for breach of contract, missing or expired passes, or any other petty technicality that did not comply with apartheid system. In 1949 about 38,000 people went to work in the Witwatersrand farms due to petty offences, and these numbers continued to increase over time. Wilson (1971: 149) writes "there was no evidence that the courts were misused to fill the jails, but the fact that the large prison outstations were built in direct response to the pressure of farmers suffering from a shortage of labour showed the extent to which South African agriculture dependent upon crime". Agriculture had a strong relationship with South African politics and organizing African labour had both a political as well as an economic motive.

Land was the only major economic resource for white settlers before the discovery of minerals in the second half of the 19th century (Platzky and Walker, 1985). Commercial agriculture laid

the earliest foundations for sourcing cheap African labour and played an important role in the further development of a labour system that is most convenient for capitalist production. However, the discovery of minerals initiated an even higher demand for cheap African labour as both the agricultural and the exponentially growing mining industry required a large labour pool. The mining industry relied on low production costs in order to ensure large profit margins. Between 1890 and 1930 gold mining was central in growing South Africa's economy and was the main source of foreign exchange (Trapido, 1971). In order to maintain such an economy, a stabilized and consistent labour force was required which was largely organized by the Chamber of Mines (Levy, 1982). Here the migrant labour system was advanced to increase profit margins, forcing Africans away from their rural livelihoods into the mines and become increasingly dependent on cash wages. The difference between their old way of life (herding and farming) and their new one (as labourers) is that the former was an economy independent of money, whereas the latter put the workers in the position where they needed to earn money in order to pay the tax. In this way, capitalism organises both a surplus of labour by forcing Africans away from their rural livelihoods, as well as surplus labour (value) by exploiting these workers through low wages.

The compound system was first introduced in 1860 and enabled mine owners to control the labour force, prevent desertions and cut costs (Levy, 1982). Miners would be accommodated in hostels close to the mine for long periods of time and released to go home after their contract expired. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 below provide visual images of these hostels.

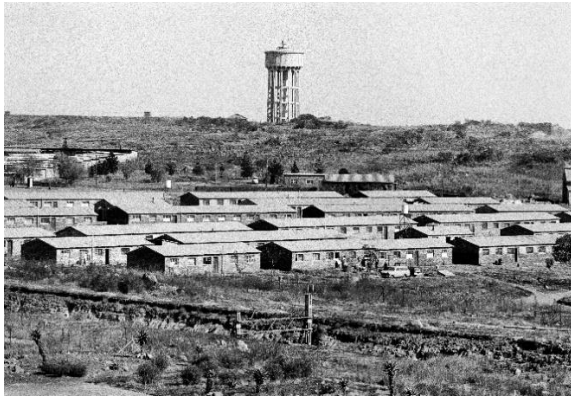


Figure 5.1 Soweto migrant hostels (Source: West, 1975)



Figure 5.2 East London migrant hostels (Source: Wilson, 1932)

Similar to the aforementioned agricultural system, Africans were forced into this form of employment through the implementation of the tax system which held Africans accountable to paying rent, forcing them into other means of earning money (migrant labour) to be able to pay this rent. As noted earlier in Marx's explanation of increasing surplus value by decreasing wage and increasing labour time, mine owners used the migrant labour system to do exactly this, ensuring high profits. Africans were only allowed to access the city if they worked there (to be proved by carrying a pass), other responsibilities such as living costs were outsourced to their families in the rural areas. Thus, Levy (1982) explains that this migrant labour system can be separated into two processes; one being the *maintenance* of labour by the mine owners, and the other being the *renewal* of labour by the families of the migrants in the rural areas. This means

that the rural areas were to carry the costs of the mines by caring for the old and ensuring the continuous reproduction of a new labour force for the mines while the mines themselves were to maintain the migrants by housing, feeding and paying them extremely low wages.

In the hostels, miners were exposed to dire conditions, working 15 hour shifts sometimes without a break, poor food quality and health, and residing in overcrowded hostels. The colonial administration saw the South African gold mines as a way to “safeguard” investments and to structure its exploitation of raw materials for maximum profits (The African Communist, 1965). In the mining sector Africans used to earn one tenth of the white wages, and in 1971 it decreased to one eighteenth (The African Communist, 1972). Like the agricultural sector, mining further organized the cheap African labour for the benefit of white capitalists. This was made possible through the strategic placing of legislation especially since the establishment of the South African Union in 1910. The most impactful of these was the Natives Land Act of 1913 which served as an economic and political tool. As Harvey (2005b: 141) observed, capital can source its labour from colonies (e.g. slavery) or if this fails it can “utilize its powers of technological change and investment to induce unemployment (lay-offs), thus creating an industrial reserve army of unemployed workers directly”. In South Africa, the latter was evident through the creation of bantustans.

The Natives Land Act of 1913 played an important role in securing and administering a stabilised labour supply. Wilson (1971) and Legassick (1972) (in Wolpe, 1972) argue that the Act aimed at addressing the shortage of African labour that many sectors faced. This Act was not merely introduced to enforce racial segregation but had a very important economic aspect to it. Because both the mining and agricultural industries were growing there was a desperate need for labour. Each province had an African reserve system; however, this Act consolidated

these systems and created a nationalized system ensuring a prolonged and better administered labour supply system. Wilson (1971) indicates that farm and mine owners got together and discussed African wages and aimed at eliminating 'squatters' and produce a supply of cheap labour. The Act aimed at isolating Africans from their independent subsistence livelihoods, forcing them into alternative ways of making a living in order to survive (making them dependent on cash wages). Africans were restricted to seven per cent of South African land (bantustans) which were overcrowded and made it impossible for Africans to continue their independent subsistence livelihoods.

Through the Natives Land Act, the state in support of the mine and farm owners aimed at making Africans dependent on employment to sustain their livelihood. Wage labour was to supplement the deprived production in the bantustans and at the same time the bantustans provided 'social security' for reproducing the migrant labour force (by caring for the old and young and grooming the next generation for migrant labour) (Wolpe, 1972). Thus, bantustans subsidized the capitalist sector and the state. The Act had a massive impact on labour geography. The bantustans acted as labour reserves which any economic sector that is needs labour could simply source it there. Labour recruiting districts were located in close proximity to these bantustans, allowing various sectors to effectively administer the labour they required. In the periphery to the bantustans, sourcing labour was easy and cheap and for industries further away, the contract labour system was convenient (Legassick and Wolpe, 1976). The design of the African bantustans was carefully crafted and an important necessity for the growing capitalist production in the country. Figure 5.3 below shows the close proximity of labour recruiting districts to these bantustans.

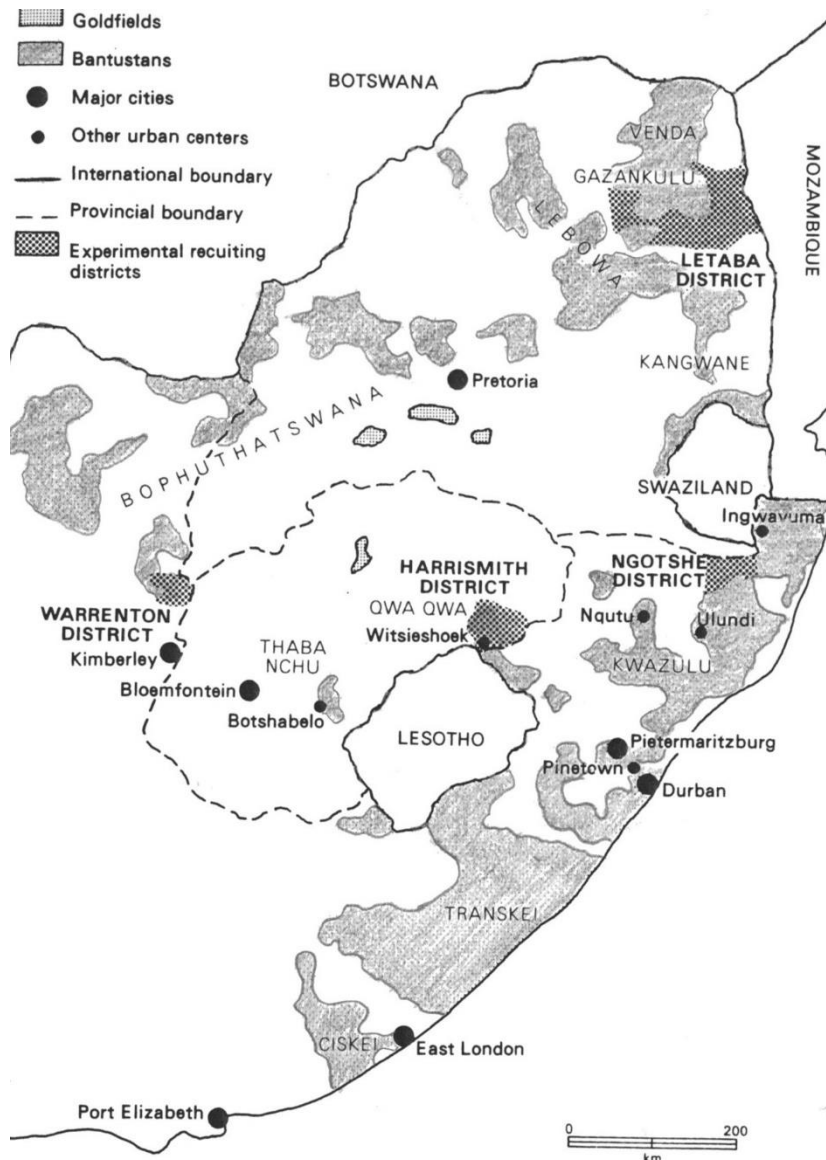


Figure 5.3 Experimental labour recruiting districts in relation to bantustans (Source: Crush, Jeeves and Yudelman, 1991: 137)

Trapido (1971: 316) indicates that “organized labour repression extended beyond the economically dominant mining sector and the politically influential agricultural sector into all other secondary industry and commerce”. Apartheid marked an even more systematic organization of cheap African labour to meet the capitalist expansion of industrial manufacturing (Wolpe, 1972). Apartheid increased the demand on cheap labour as the economy diversified and evolved into more advanced forms of capital accumulation. While

more skilled jobs were reserved for the whites, when the era of industrialization took its turn Africans were able to move slightly up the employment ranks, but their wages remained a marginal fraction of what was received by whites. In 1945 Africans in the manufacturing sector earned only a small fraction (25%) of the wages whites received, and in 1970 this fraction even decreased (to only 17%) (The African Communist, 1972). The migrant labour system remained intact as it still proved to be ideal for cheap labour supply in the growing manufacturing industries.

Cities grew exponentially and Africans continued to work on a contract basis, having residential rights in the cities during their period of employment while still being formal citizens of the bantustans. Contracts extended for long periods of time during which Africans would stay in designated peripheral areas of the cities (townships) and be exposed to dire living conditions with increased expenses (such as bus fares and rent) and low wages. In order to stay in these areas, they would be required to carry a pass, a document which acted as a passport that permitted Africans to stay in the city for the period of their contracts. If found in obstruction to any of the strict apartheid laws, Africans would be imprisoned (where farm labour would often be a form of punishment as noted above).

Wolpe (1972) argues that the most instrumental capitalist laws which aimed at performing the same functions as the Natives Land Act of 1913 are the Industrial Conciliation Act 1924, the Masters and Servants Act 1856, the Natives Labour Act 1953 and the Natives Labour Regulation Act 1953. These Acts show that racial segregation was rooted in economic agendas. The creation of a large surplus population was important for the secondary manufacturing industry (Wolpe and Legassick, 1976). The bantustans were the backbone of capital expansion;

thus, apartheid ensured the continuous destruction of pre-capitalist activities in the bantustans to continue the supply of cheap migrant labour.

Since the capitalist industries of agriculture, mining and manufacturing depended on cheap labour, creating a large labour reserve ensured that Africans could easily be replaced. Workers were not only sourced from South Africa, but various African countries in order to nurture desperation for employment that will enhance exploitation. Braverman (in the African Communist, 1972: 39) highlights that employers wanted “free competition which makes for lower wages, higher productivity and greater profits”. Africans were valued according to their labour potential and colonialism and apartheid marked the organization of these Africans in an economically efficient manner, solidifying the foundations of capitalism in South Africa. This foundation is crucial for understanding labour in nature conservation areas.

5.3 Conservation labour in the historical context

The historical creation of a labour pool outlined above influenced how labour in conservation areas is structured. My argument here is that conservation labour forms part of the cheap labour system in South Africa. Many scholars have given an in-depth analysis of how South African conservation areas came into being in the form of national parks and private nature areas (Carruthers, 1995a; Beinart, 2003; Ramutsindela, 2004; Connor, 2014). In the 21st century, many private nature reserves use their history in conservation as a marketing strategy to illustrate the positive contributions they have made to the environment. However, these histories rarely tell the stories of labour in the respective reserves. Visual representation and archival records shed light on the history of labour in the Sabi Sand area.

Environmental historian Jane Carruthers (1995a) indicates that early encounters between the African and white settlers were through hunting. Settlers saw hunting as an economic benefit (and a sport) and justified it as being part of clearing the land for agricultural purposes. Africans played an important role in assisting settlers with hunting as Africans had higher endurance, were more resistant to disease and knew the landscape well. For this assistance, Africans usually did not receive payment. White settlers hunted abundantly and drove many species to the point of extinction. As a result, towards the end of the 19th century plans for creating a game sanctuary in present-day Kruger National Park were discussed. This was the earliest conservation area and its relationship with the Africans that resided in and around the area is described by the game warden of the reserve: James Stevenson- Hamilton, who also documented the early dynamics of conservation labour in the Sabi Sand area.

During the early years of Stevenson-Hamilton's occupation in the Sabi Sand and KNP region, he indicated that Africans were seen as a destruction to wildlife and in 1902 he wrote that they should be removed from the area that was to become the reserve (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1937). Subsequently, 2,500 Africans were removed from the reserve (Pollard, Shackleton and Carruthers, 2003). He later backtracked on this decision when he realized their potential as cheap labourers and the rent income he would receive from them as tenants and in 1905, all Africans (around 3,000) in the game reserve were held accountable for payment of squatters rent (Carruthers, 1995a). As labourers, Africans built roads, huts, and patrolled the area against poaching. In the national park domestic staff and game rangers were dependant on for the maintenance and building of the reserve while on the adjacent private farms in the Sabi Sand, hunting was still widely practiced and African duties included assisting with tracking and killing wildlife.

Since many Africans were evicted and forced to live outside the game reserves and were also “denied access to game as a means of subsistence” (Carruthers, 1995a: 138), many were forced to search for employment in order to survive. Carruthers (1995b: 91) comments that “wildlife conservation played a role in creating a proletariat as the industrialization of the Transvaal commenced”. She notes that early legislation (as discussed above) was “designed to prevent Africans from being able to subsist on wildlife, by forcing them into wage labour either in urban areas or in white owned farms”.

With the implementation of the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Natives Land and Trust Act of 1936, Africans in the Sabi Sand area were restricted to mainly the bantustans of Gazankulu, Lebowa and KaNgwane. If they were to live in the game reserve, they would have to be labour tenants in order to comply with the rent payments. While in some cases labour tenants would perform labour for long periods in exchange for grazing land, in other cases rent was in the form of migrant labour on farms, mines or plantations owned by their landlords (Delius and Hay, 2012). Traditional conservation and farming practices were thus abandoned by Africans (Pollard, Shackleton and Carruthers, 2003) and they became forced to sell their labour as a means of survival.

Carruthers (1995b) writes that the national park played an important role in structuring law and order in the lowveld as it actively secured thousands of African prisoners. As explained earlier, prison labour formed an important part in securing cheap labour for agriculture, and conservation in the lowveld area also engaged in arresting Africans for the benefit of producing labour. Africans were frequently arrested not specifically for hunting game, but more for various other petty offences. In 1915, 27 arrests were related to game while 493 arrests were other offences such as trespassing. In 1916 this number increased to 91 game related arrests

and 763 other offences. Carruthers (1995b) argues that the reason for this high number of arrests lies in South Africa's need for labour. She notes that arrests included illegal immigrants from Mozambique and instead of being incarcerated they were often used as labour in the mines or rural areas – to build roads for example. This arrangement was decreased in 1926 when South Africa and Mozambique reached an agreement about the illegal immigrants to which Stevenson-Hamilton expressed his anger as Mozambican trespassers saved the reserve 2000 pounds in salaries each year (Carruthers, 1995b).

A book by Gillian Rattray (1986) reveals the history of Mala Mala Game Reserve using illustrations and photographs. She documents the lives of white settlers that historically owned and influenced the development of Mala Mala Game Reserve. Here it is evident that during the earlier years hunting was practiced to a large extent, initially to clear land for agriculture, and later evolved into an effective tourist hunting sport. Although the photos included in her book clearly show evidence of African labourers, she only documents the lives of the white settlers and credits them for 'building' Mala Mala Game Reserve. Labour that was sourced from the surrounding bantustans or from the Africans who resided on the farm, contributed to the building of the reserve we know today. The photographs included in her book show evidence of African labour in the form of assisting in hunting excursions, building accommodation and roads, and generally serving the guests who came to hunt in the reserve. The historical contributions of African labour are often left out and not included in the current image and marketing of nature reserves. This observation aligns with Dlamini's (2020) argument that blacks contributed to conservation in the Kruger National Park.

As noted above, the labour tenancy system allowed white farmers to have a pool of cheap labour and Africans could be fired or hired at any time (Ditlhake, 1997). The input of African

labour was essential for colonial imperialism in Africa and conservation areas are no exception to this. During first half of the 20th century Mala Mala largely provided hunting facilities for guests, where the assistance of Africans played an important role. However, at the turn of the second half of the century the land use shifted from hunting to conservation, initiating changes for African labour. Oral history recorded by Deluis and Hay (2012) for the Regional Land Claims Commission highlights that many families living on farms in Sabi Sand were stripped of their labour tenant rights during the removals that escalated from the 1950s onwards. Landowners were very strict with the number and type of labour tenants they were willing to keep and therefore forcefully removed anyone who did not fit their framework – usually without compensation. Labour tenants relied strongly on a specific type of land use. As the farms in Sabi Sand exchanged hands among individuals and land companies, Africans were routinely exposed to changing restrictions and conditions to their settlement. This made Africans extremely vulnerable as their labour contracts could constantly change and/or be terminated – harshly impacting on the entire family’s livelihood.

Furthermore, the 1980s saw attempts to remove the labour tenant contract system altogether by making labourers solely dependent on cash wages rather than access to land (Ditlhake, 1997). Widespread evictions took place in the attempt to break historical ties to the land. White farmers tried to replace tenants who had lived on the land for generations with wage labourers. Generally, labour in this area was very unstable. Studies have illustrated the insecurity of this form of employment. Sodikoff (2009) highlights the dependence of cheap labour in conservation areas of Madagascar and how it is a fundamental part of the capitalist agenda. There, conservation labour entailed low wages and various forms of exploitation. Spierenburg and Brooks (2014) similarly highlight the social consequences of conservation in South Africa. They observed that private conservation areas are less labour intensive and therefore removals

have remained common practice. Both these studies draw attention to the manner in which conservation labour *actually* unfolds and how this should be of concern to researchers. They offer a critique of attempts to romanticise conservation in the public sphere and call for a deeper exploration of the forms of exploitation that are intrinsic to the industry.

Beinart (1989: 159) explains that in many cases “conservation initiatives were inseparable from broader state land and labour policies”. The history of conservation labour must therefore be traced in relation to broader political and economic trends during the colonial and apartheid periods. The reduction of Africans to cheap labour power – during both the hunting and conversation periods – was instrumental in the consolidation of the settler colonial project in South Africa. The history of conservation labour provides clear evidence of early exploitation that is aligned with capitalist accumulation. The effects of national legislation in structuring labour is mirrored in conservation areas. While the landowners (capitalists) were able to elevate their property value (with the assistance of state legislation), Africans had to carry the cost of exploitation.

5.4 Labour geography: contemporary extraction of labour in Mala Mala

And the people who work there (PGR) stay there (impoverished areas), every day they walk into wealth and walk out into poverty.

(Interview, 11 April 2019)

Tracing the history of conservation labour enables us to understand how cheap labour was organized in game reserves and the contribution it made towards building these exclusive

tourist destinations. In 2020 we see the continuation of the historic cheap labour system in the form of labour at Mala Mala Game Reserve.

Intentionally or unintentionally, the spatial dynamics of game farms are often structured in a way that restrict possibilities for farm dwellers to lodge claims or secure access to land (Spierenburg, 2020). Some scholars have highlighted the importance of understanding spatiality when it comes to private conservation areas by analysing features such as game fences, and the location of farm worker dwellings (Brant and Spierenburg, 2014; Mkhize, 2014; Spierenburg, 2020). Josefsson (2014: 259) outlines that “in the South African context, the colonial present reveals itself not only in terms of access and control over resources, but also as socio-spatial relationships on and around game farms”. As mentioned in the earlier sections of this chapter, the function of the bantustans (through the Natives Land Act of 1913) was largely to create a labour reserve. In the Sabi Sand area this caused severe spatial inequality between the African designated areas of Gazankulu, Lebowa and KaNgwane, and the conservation area. Extreme spatial inequality between Sabi Sand game reserve and the adjacent communities (former bantustans) still persists in 2020. The fence divides some of the most highly valued properties in South Africa with some of the most impoverished areas of the country. The conglomerate of game reserves in the Sabi Sand source their labour from these impoverished adjacent communities.

The unemployment rate in the Bushbuckridge municipal area – where Sabi Sand is located – is very high (52.1%), with youth unemployment amounting to an alarming 64.6% (StatsSA, 2011). It is therefore no surprise that this area is exposed to high poverty rates and desperation for employment. Households in this area struggle to get access to basic needs, water being the main concern. Of the 134,197 households in this municipality, one in five households (21%) do not have access to running water. For most of these households, there is much similarity

between the contemporary socioeconomic conditions and the conditions experienced during apartheid. Exclusion may not be explicitly racialised but is nevertheless enforced along economic lines. In many cases, these impoverished areas carry the social burden of the capital accumulation that takes place on the other side of the fence. As a result, the fence not only has a physical function to keep the wild animals enclosed but can also be seen as a symbolic separation of the rich from the poor.

While some of the game reserves (especially those that are in close proximity of the communities) source their labour on a daily basis, other reserves such as Londolozi and Mala Mala reside their workers inside of the reserve. Mkhizi (2014) indicates that workers who reside further away from conservation areas receive more independence from the employer/landowner, while workers residing inside the reserve have limited freedom as they are constantly under the watch of their employer. In Mala Mala, some 100 workers are employed for a period of +/- 28 days (during which they reside in the reserve) and then get 6 days off (during which they can travel to their home which is usually in the adjacent communities). This work cycle operates on a 28-day work shift, and not a monthly basis. During this work shift, workers reside within the reserve and free transport is offered on the first and last of their 6 free days. If workers would like to travel outside the reserve to their home community during their 28-day work shift, they will be charged R140 transport fee for one way. Employees did express their discomfort with this isolating employment method to which one employee even responded, *“this 6 days off only is killing us”* (Interview, 10 June 2019). Another employee responded, *“This is not a perfect life; it is a perfect life for them. They never ask us how we can manage our shifts. They never ask us. They want us to stay here for 28 days - they do not want us to go out”* (Interview, 10 June 2019).

Employees complained about these long working periods of complete disconnection from their families. There is great resemblance between this form of employment and the migrant labour system discussed earlier in this chapter. The structure of the hostels and long mining contracts in the early 20th century continues (or in some cases is re- adopted) in conservation areas, where maximising profits whilst minimising input costs remain the primary objectives. The long working periods, little time off and minimum wage payments are employment conditions that were historically structured and are still economically efficient for business owners in the 21st century, to which Mala Mala is no exception.

Figure 5.4 and 5.5 below depict the layout of the staff accommodation that Mala Mala provides. Each worker has their own compartment in a house that accommodates between 2-6 workers. The accommodation is separated based on the type of employment (director, manager, ranger, and other staff). There are three camps on the game reserve (Rattrays camp, Main Camp and Sable camp) and each camp has its own staff village. The accommodation is strictly for employees only, family or visitors are not allowed here. Currently Mala Mala is in the process of building more staff accommodation in order to facilitate more workers residing in the reserve.



Figure 5.4 Entrance to the ‘staff village’ at Main Camp, Mala Mala (Source: Author, 2019)



Figure 5.5 Staff accommodation at Main Camp, Mala Mala (Source: Author, 2019)

The Mala Mala manager indicates that the reason for this is that the distance between communities and the reserve is too extensive for workers to commute on a daily basis. She states that “*The transfer time between the camps and the villages is not conducive to staff living away from the camp*” (Interview, 19 June 2019). Although time constraint is understandably a reason for hosting staff inside the reserve, we can also assume that this is financially expedient. Housing the workers inside the reserve not only helps cut transport costs, but also ensures availability of labour (Ramutsindela, 2015). We can therefore see that this system structures labour in a way that ensures optimal conditions for the efficient extraction of surplus value. Londolozi private game reserve also houses its employees inside the reserve which Ramutsindela (2015: 2267) explains as the “emergence of a migrant labour system”. Workers reside inside the reserve for long periods of time, and under strict conditions and are later

‘released’ to go back home to the impoverished surrounding communities for short periods of time. This is not very different from the historical migrant labour system discussed earlier in this chapter.

The employer has a large degree of control over the employees and has the convenience of being able to call the employee whenever the need arises. Some employees have mentioned that this form of employment is isolating, but due to desperation, many are grateful to just have a job which secures a stable income. With high levels of unemployment and poverty in the neighbouring communities, having a job is almost seen as a privilege. This desperation is dangerous as it can become a platform for exploitation from the employer. Employees are being made to believe they have a job because of the tourist, and that it is therefore their responsibility to ensure that the tourist is happy and satisfied. This is captured in interview responses where one of the workers clearly stated *“My responsibility is to take care of the guest and to make sure that I respond to them in time and give them what they want in time and to make them happy, that is all. Because I am here because of them, so I have to make them happy. So that when they go back home they remember that Mala Mala was nice to them and they can come back next time”* (Interview 10 June 2019). For example, a bartender or waitress would be told that their duty ends when the last guest leaves the restaurant. The hours spent overtime are considered to have been compensated when that employee is permitted to come in late the next day but, again, this is subject to the conditions the business experiences the next day.

Although it is said that all employees have employment contracts which stipulate employment conditions and working hours that are in line with the South African labour regulations, there is still much ambiguity involved when they are made to believe that their duties are dependent on the satisfaction of the tourists. This ambiguity leaves a great deal of space for surplus labour

to be generated in the private game reserve. A representative of the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) in the Sabi Sand area (he is not a representative of Mala Mala workers) mentioned that contracts are written in a broad manner which enable the exploitation of workers. He states that contracts often have a clause that states that the employee might at times be tasked with doing other jobs. He mentions an example for this when a waiter is often asked to sweep the floor or attend to the garden when there are no guests. The union mostly receives complaints from waiters and housekeepers and common complaints mainly pertain to annual leave, off days and overtime work. All these aspects strongly suggest that there is unpaid, surplus labour in the game reserves. Workers are expected to give a greater input than what is deemed 'necessary labour'. When it comes to remuneration, workers did not want to speak very openly about this. One employee did express his frustration with strategic deductions in the salaries and delayed implementation of the minimum wage.

When it comes more broadly to employment conditions, Mala Mala employees had mixed feelings. *"Some people would say Mala Mala is good to all staff, but those who will say this are those who work on a high level, i.e.3,4,5 (higher level refers to greater income as the job is of a higher class). The rest of the staff that has no level will not tell you anything"* (Interview, 10 June 2019). This was personally observed when interviewing the employees as some would only speak well of Mala Mala, meanwhile others (usually the lower level jobs) would highlight the discomforts with their jobs. Their complaints are rooted in the different modes of exploitation that they are experiencing. Accommodation, long working period, little time off, employment conditions and remuneration are all areas where the capitalist extraction of surplus value from a cheap, 'unskilled' labour force are clearly illustrated.

To fully understand labour at Mala Mala in contemporary times, we also have to contextualize labour and land restitution. As the next chapter will demonstrate (cf. Chapter 6), Mala Mala land claim settlement has undergone a complicated and, in some cases, controversial valuation process. We can blame the land claims commission for not adequately taking into consideration the contribution of African labour in building the well-established reserve that it is today. The provision of cheap African labour was enabled by the discriminatory laws of the country (discriminatory land ownership, and the required rent payments). Capitalism's bias is evident: the landowner can add all the value to the property, but the land claimant is unable to do the very same in the restitution process. The reason for this bias is that the complexity of capitalism does not allow for surplus labour that went into the reserves for decades to be reclaimed. Once it has been appropriated by the owners of the land, there is no recognition that the value of the property was generated by those who laboured in its construction. If Africans were to bring the point of labour to the negotiation table in the land restitution process, the intricacies of capitalism would not enable the value of surplus labour to be claimed back as this surplus value already went into the pockets of the capitalist for many decades. Knowing that the capitalist will be the one favoured in a capitalist system, it is impossible for the worker's request to be met with any acknowledgement.

Ditlhake (1997) states that labour tenants believe that their historic contribution, providing labour for so many years, should be seen as payment for the land that was stolen from them. This is an interesting point of valuation that highlights the bias of capitalism, namely the refusal to equally value the input of those that were exploited. Even after the settlement of the Mala Mala land claim, the settlement agreement did not significantly cater for unemployment in the area. Beside stating that the people who work in the reserve will not be retrenched, and the promise of employing more members of the community when the opportunity arises, not much

attention is given to labour. Hall (2015) states that a common issue in land reform cases is that the “offer of employment is often held out as a big benefit potentially to the claimants but the reality is that very few people are actually employed and so the only benefit people can get is in the form of some kind of rental payment, but often this is actually re-invested into the enterprise”.

Due to the high unemployment rate in the surrounding communities, there is a general aspiration for employment in the reserve. An interview with the CPA revealed that land claim beneficiaries would like increased employment opportunities as this would uplift the socio-economic standing of the communities. Members of the CPA stated that *“the issue of employment is still a problem. We were supposed to build a lodge on Charleston, but until now nothing happened. So, I think if we manage to build that lodge, maybe our people will have jobs there. As for the other side on Mala Mala they already had people there so we cannot remove them because they were working there”* (Interview, 10 June 2019). The land claim settlement has ensured that the jobs of those already working at Mala Mala will remain secure irrespective of change in land ownership. This has caused some division amongst beneficiaries and workers, as beneficiaries aspire to work in the reserve but must wait until a job opportunity becomes available. Thus, the views on labour from local individuals residing outside the reserve are often in reference to availability of jobs, and do not speak much to how labour is organised and structured within the reserve. Here, a job opportunity is seen as an opportunity to escape from the harsh conditions of poverty in the area.

There are 84 community members (which include but are not limited to land beneficiaries) that are said to be employed at Mala Mala. The management of Mala Mala puts this number closer to 100. Mala Mala has stated that they move their employees up the ranks in the enterprise by

employing new lower line staff; a process they refer to as ‘upskilling’. In an interview with a senior government official, she indicates that they do not merely negotiate for superficial jobs as cleaners, etc. when settling land claims, but rather negotiate for the community to own shares in the business and further skills development through bursaries. However, as the next chapter will demonstrate, the question to be answered is: to what extent does this put power in the hands of the individual beneficiary? The answer is that beneficiaries become passive recipients of income from the shares and rental (Hall, 2015), and the majority may not be actively involved in shaping and implementing their own ideas.

In the context of labour the state is biased towards capitalism. Harvey (2005a: 70) reminds us that “in an altercation, the state tends to side with the creation of the ‘good business environment’ instead of siding with the collective rights of the masses”. Although it is the state’s responsibility to control and prevent exploitation, it also takes its economic growth seriously and as a result the wellbeing of those exploited becomes a secondary concern. The state has introduced a minimum wage of R20 per hour in the beginning of 2019 and claims that this is “a great achievement for the working people of South Africa, who have had to endure generations of exploitation” and that it shows commitment from employers to create ‘fairer wages’ (Ramaphosa, 2018). However, this minimum wage is only the bare minimum an employer should pay the worker to survive, but in no way is a fair reflection on the value of their work. Harvey (2005a) indicates that the neoliberal state reduces social safety to the bare minimum in order to create a ‘good business environment’. As a result, the minimum wage is aligned with the country’s commitment to growing the economy. It might be seen as an incentive for the state to show support to the working class when it really only justifies and enables further exploitation to take place by legitimizing businesses to extract labour power without fair compensation. Capitalism relies on these types of policies to ensure its growth. In

private game reserves, which are spaces of wealth accumulation, cheap labour is necessary for the maintenance of continued capital accumulation.

5.5 Conclusion

By using a historical materialist lens to understand the concept of conservation labour in private nature reserves we can see how aspirations for capital accumulation are met through labour. The theoretical understanding of surplus labour is reflected in the practical manner in which labour is organized in Mala Mala Game Reserve. The brief history of cheap African labour captured in this chapter shows that such labour was essential for capitalist production and was fundamentally organised through legislation, especially the Natives Land Act of 1913. Once Africans were recognized as potential cheap labour, they were exploited through the extraction of surplus value.

The national structures of cheap labour are reflected in conservation areas which rely on African labour to build the economic success they are today. South Africa's transition to democracy adopted neoliberal economic policies which ensured the continuation of capitalism. As a result, the cheap labour system, to a large extent, still remained intact. This is evident in Mala Mala Game Reserve's (re)application of the migrant labour system to secure various efficient avenues for the extraction of surplus value from its workers. Evidence of this includes accommodation of workers inside the reserve for long periods of time, where the reserve not only cuts transport costs but also secures the availability of its workforce. Furthermore, working hours, remuneration and job responsibilities highlight that employees work beyond 'necessary' labour and supply a great deal of surplus labour to the reserve.

These findings of exploitation are not surprising given the stark spatial differences between the communities and the game reserves. The juxtaposition of Sabi Sand property being amongst the most highly valued areas on the one hand, while the deeply impoverished surrounding areas live in squalor on the other hand, shows capitalism's uneven geographical development. Evidence of this unevenness is that development on the one side is systematically produced by the underdevelopment on the other side. The exploitation of conservation labour is necessary for capitalism's success in private nature reserves.

The previous chapters have analysed the relationship between capitalism and nature in the private nature reserve through the lens of the commodification of nature (cf. Chapter 4). While this chapter has analysed the creation of cheap labour in Mala Mala, the next chapter investigates what happens when this well-structured capitalist operation gets confronted with opposing interests (such as a land claim), and how these are dealt with accordingly to fit capitalist ideals.

Chapter 6: The Mhlanganisweni Land Claim: a new Business Model for Restitution

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have shown how Mala Mala's conservation-based business developed over time. They also discussed how the political economic history of the land shaped the reserve into its current position of optimal profit accumulation. This chapter, however, focuses on the challenges posed by land restitution to this legacy and responses thereto. Land restitution is often seen as a threat to capital interests as its ideals of 'restitution' theoretically go against the ideals of capitalism. Issues of land run deep in South African history and are central to the analyses of the country's politics and economics. European states were deemed owners of African land if they could prove effective occupation of the territory (Ngcukaitobi, 2018). Since 1994, South Africans were able to claim back land that was forcibly taken from them, but this process is met with various degrees of resistance and controversies. In 2013 a land claim on Mala Mala Game Reserve was settled in a bitter-sweet manner, highlighting how restitution is conditioned by capital interest. By documenting the dispossession of the Mhlanganisweni community and analysing their journey towards a successful land claim, we are able to better understand the business aspect of restitution.

This chapter analyses the business model of land restitution in Mala Mala Game Reserve, taking into consideration the negotiations between the state, business owners, previous landowners, and the community. The chapter begins by outlining the history of African land dispossession in the Sabi Sand region. Then the Mhlanganisweni land claim and the settlement agreement is documented. It then analyses the post-settlement conditions and their implications

for land restitution. The chapter ends by reassessing the state's justification for protecting private sector interests and its adoption of the Mala Mala settlement as a new model for solving land claims in South Africa.

6.2 Documenting the dispossession of Africans in the Sabi Sand Area

Early African settlement in the Transvaal region include Xitsonga speaking hunters and traders that migrated from Southeast Africa (now Mozambique) around the 1830s till the early 20th century. Delius and Hay (2012) explain that the reason for this migration was often related to fleeing the Portuguese territory in South East Africa due to political disputes, better hunting opportunities, and employment opportunities in the mining and construction sectors. The Sabi Reserve (including properties from the Sabi Sand Complex) was first proclaimed by the government in 1898 (Stevenson- Hamilton, 1937). However, before its proclamation the area had already sparsely distributed African settlements especially along the rivers that acted as trade routes during their migration. As Africans settled on unoccupied land in the lowveld (stretching from the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains) and practiced a subsistent way of living, their lives were soon disrupted by white settlers. In 1902 the first game warden of Sabi Reserve, Stevenson- Hamilton (1937: 29, 30) wrote in his journal;

I decided to have all natives from the eastern and southern areas removed back whence they had come from. To be once more directly under their own tribal chiefs. I would then divide the reserve into districts each under a white official, who would have under him a small force of native police distributed in small posts, where they would be allowed to keep their wives and families and raise crops, but not to have any relations of friends as guests... If approved by higher authority, the natives whom we had to move would be absolved from paying taxes for a year.

It appears that Stevenson- Hamilton saw Africans as being a possible destruction to the reserve (though he had little evidence of this) and only wanted a few Africans as labourers. As he progressed to put this area under protection, he noted that a large portion of farms were under private ownership, but “none of the farms were occupied by settlers” (1937: 52). From 1845, the South African Republic granted land rights to white settlers and took ownership of the remaining land. More specifically, with reference to Sabi Sand Complex, Carruthers (1996 in Delius and Hay, 2012) indicates that during the late 1860s and 1870s these farms were allocated to settlers. As outlined by Stevenson- Hamilton much of the land (especially in the northern and eastern districts of South Africa) was unoccupied and its title deeds were held by speculators from British or European colonies. Carruthers (1995a) indicates that much of this land was held by speculators in the hope that its value would increase significantly in the future and that pre-existing rights and occupation of African settlement on the land was ignored. Africans had little knowledge of the land being under white ownership and only became aware later in the 1880s through local officials or rent collectors as some whites started securing their investment in the Sabi Sand region.

The history of African settlements became a source of debate during the land claim. The report by Delius and Hay (2012) indicates that African refugees from Southeast Africa did not request permission from the South African government when they settled on the foothills of the Drakensburg Mountains. They argue that because no land in the Pilgrims Rest District has been bought by Africans (at their time of settlement), the validity of their land claim on the Sabi Sand Complex is questionable. However, it is important to take into consideration that African systems of land ownership were not necessary in the same form as European systems. Colonialism enforced a European method of ownership and as a result, African systems were ignored and forcefully adapted to suit the European agenda. It would therefore be an

oversimplification if African ownership of land is looked at through a European lens. Moyo (2018) highlights the important arguments made by Archie Mafeje, a key scholar on land in Africa, who warned against the misrepresentation of economic and political organisations of African land and labour relations pre-, during- and after colonialism. In the Sabi Sand, European settlers disregarded African forms of ownership and the colonial administration gave land to these settlers through a government grant, often in absentia, purely for speculation. These European settlers were generally not interested in settling on these farms but maintained their ownership for speculative financial gains (Carruthers 1995).

In the early 20th century, only 3 of the 21 farms in Sabi Sand were individually owned by whites, majority of the farms were under the ownership of land companies (such as the Transvaal Land and Expropriation Company, the Transvaal Estate and Development Company, De Harmony Company, New Scotland Land Company and Lydenburg Estates Ltd) (Deluis and Hay, 2012). Later (1902/3), landowners (individuals and companies) went into an agreement with Stevenson- Hamilton to 'lend' their farms to the Sabi Sand reserve (Carruthers, 1996 in Deluis and Hay, 2012). This arrangement was convenient for the landowners as the government's maintenance of the land would relieve them off their responsibilities, including the control of Africans residing on these farms. This changed a few years later when government owned farms were separated from private farms through the development of KNP. During this entire process of forming a public game reserve, Africans were removed as they were not seen as carrying a function to the reserve. This was done with the assistance of the Natives Land Act of 1913. The figure 6.1 below shows the extent of these bantustans.

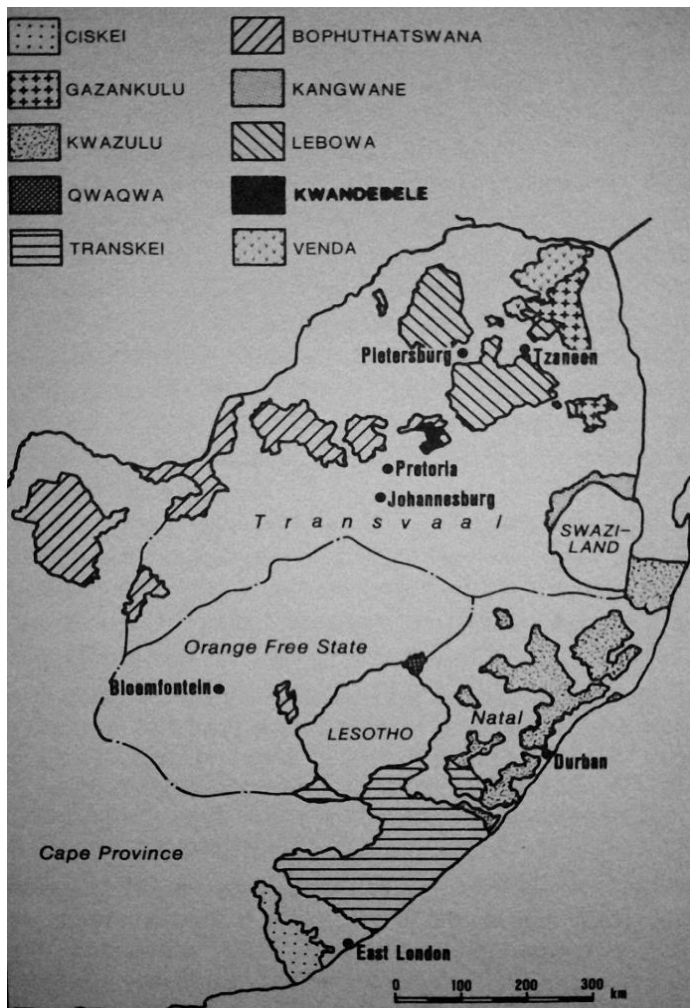


Figure 6.1 Location of South African bantustans (Source: Letsoalo, 1987: 45)

These bantustans were created based on ethnicity and were severely overcrowded. This Natives Land Act legalized colonial land patterns and consolidated the African dispossession that has been going on for over 200 years and was seen as the final conquest of the colonizer (Platzky and Walker, 1985; Letsoalo, 1987). The Act broke down the dependence of Africans on land and forced them to sell their labour to survive.

The introduction of the Act exposed Africans in the Transvaal to dire conditions. Inequitable access to quality land and resources and request to pay rent paved the way to poverty for Africans. The SPP reports (1983: 68) have indicated that “evictions of labour tenants,

‘squatters’ and ‘non- productive Bantu’ from farms in the former Eastern Transvaal, due partly to the consolidation of capitalist relations of production on these farms, has been an ongoing process throughout the twentieth century”. In the Sabi Sand region, capitalist production of agriculture, mining and construction were the main forms in which Africans could find employment after being dispossessed from their land, livestock, and possessions. Africans were seen merely as sources of labour (which were difficult to find in the eastern Transvaal) and were expected to maintain their livelihoods whilst being placed in overcrowded reserves.

In 1936 the government introduced the Natives Trust and Land Act (No. 18 of 1936). This Act did slightly increase the areas to be occupied by Africans to 13%, but also cemented legislation that restricted Africans to these limited areas only. A Trust Fund (called the Natives Trust) was set up by the government to purchase land for African settlement (though this trust was severely underfunded). A large tract of land from Acornhoek to White River formed part of the released area. Under this Act, some of the farms in or adjacent to the Sabi Sand Complex formed part of the ‘Released Areas 33’, which meant that they would be available to be purchased by the South African Natives Trust for the settlement of Africans. These farms include Alicecot, Castleton, Exeter, Lisbon, Othawa, Ravenscout, Uthla and Wallinford (LCC, 2010). Figure 6.2 below illustrates the extend of the released areas.

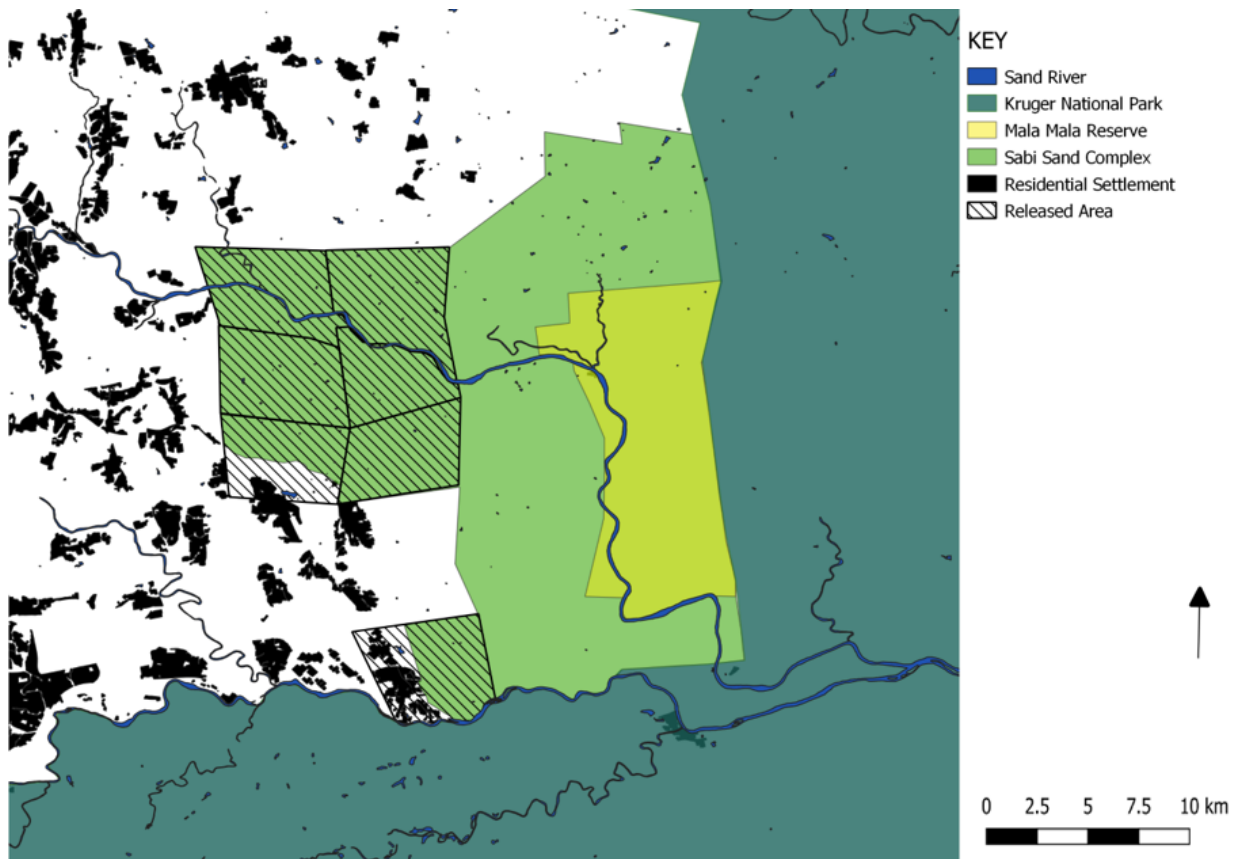


Figure 6.2 Sabi Sand farms forming part of the Released Areas 33 (Source: Author, 2018)

However, buying land that falls within the “Released Area 33” was not easy. Not only was the SA Native Trust disadvantaged due to insufficient funds and resources, landowners of the released areas also used economic measures to push back on the sales of their farms. For example, between 1956-1960 the SA Native Trust attempted to buy Ravenscourt because it was concerned that it was being subdivided by the owner in order to increase its property price (LCC, 2010). In 1961 the Trust made an offer on Ravenscourt, but the owner refused to sell. Later in 1964, 1965 and 1969 farms or farm portions were even excised from the Released Area 33 (LCC, 2010). In 1964 the owner of Lisbon 497KU was able to convince the Minister of Bantu Affairs that the farm is productive for commercial use and therefore suited for white settlement, the Minister then approved, and the property was excised (LCC, 2010). Even the

little land that was allocated for African settlement was decreased by whites who could justify it being worthy for white ownership.

Desmond (1969: 26) indicated that “most of the resettlement of Africans in the Eastern Transvaal is concentrated in the Bushbuckridge-Pilgrim’s Rest area, an area noted for its superb climate and great scenic beauty” and further described that the “Transvaal Provincial Authorities have recognised its appeal and are developing facilities for White tourists”. The Africans who resettled in the Bushbuckridge region had widespread complaints about the shortage of space, employment, and land (Desmond, 1969). Deluis and Hay (2012) indicate that evictions of Africans from the Sabi Sand farms mainly started to escalate from the 1950s when landowners intended to convert their land into game reserves. Their study indicates that white landowners told their African tenants that they have bought the land and the animals, but not the people on it and therefore requested Africans to move off their land. Africans were limited in the amount of possessions they were able to take with them and suffered great economic losses from what they had to leave behind or sell at a low price to landowners (land, livestock, crops, houses, farming equipment and other resources).

Figure 6.3 below illustrates an aerial photograph depicting evidence of African settlement next to the Sabi river. Here a number of cultivated fields and huts are visible. The aerial photograph suggests that a small community was resident here. This is evident in the depiction of a number of human settlements in close range, with cultivated fields surrounding the settlement. The settlement was on property that forms part of Mala Mala reserve (Charleston farm).



Figure 6.3 1944 Aerial photograph depicting settlement near the Sabi river, Charleston Farm (Source: National Geo-Spatial Information, 2020)

Evictions escalated as white settlers took more ownership and control of their property. Africans living on the farms were seen as redundant to the mode of production imagined by the white settlers. As a result, most families were removed as they were seen as illegally occupying the land. Some were allowed to stay on the farms but were held liable for paying rents in the forms of cash or labour. While being evicted Africans not only lost their homes, but their livestock, crops, and farming equipment (Interview, 10 June 2019). Their possessions were burned or sold at low price to white farmers (Interview, 10 June 2019). In many cases no transport was offered, and Africans had to resettle in their designated bantustans which were overcrowded and poorly suited to continue with their farming activities.

6.3 The Mhlanganisweni Community claiming back ancestral land

After the apartheid regime came to an end, the democratically elected ANC took over and introduced a land reform programme that aimed at restoring the dignity to those who suffered under the discriminatory laws of the apartheid regime. This programme was threefold as it included land restitution, redistribution, and tenure reform. With respect to land restitution, South Africans could submit their land claims up until 31 December 1998. Land claims were placed on the 21 properties comprising Sabi Sand Complex (including Mala Mala) before the cut-off date in 1998, accumulating to roughly 65 000 hectares being claimed. Phase one of the restitution process was restoring the nine farms comprising Mala Mala Game Reserve. Different portions of the Sabi Sand were claimed by different constituencies (individuals, families, Jongilanga Traditional Authority, Tribe under Chief Khoza, and Mhlanganisweni) which were grouped together into a common claim called the Mhlanganisweni community claim. This grouping of the claimants was meant to resolve overlapping land claims, and to simplify the administration process (Portfolio Committee on DRDLR, 2019).

The land claim was accepted by the Mpumalanga Regional Land Claims Commission as it met the necessary requirements of the Restitution Act. As a result, the land claim was gazetted on 11 October 2002, with amendments made to the land claim in the gazette on 8 November 2002 and 6 August 2010¹. After the claim was gazetted, the Commission did not receive objections from the landowners disputing the credibility of the land claim. This is different from the remainder of Sabi Sand landowners who opposed the land claims. In an interview with one of

¹Notice 1848 of 2002, Government Gazette, no. 23900, 11 October 2002.

Notice 2778 of 2002, Government Gazette no. 24002, 8 November 2002.

Notice 762 of 2010, Government Gazette no. 33426, 6 August 2010.

these landowners, he states that “*we as an association (SSW) opposed them (land claims) and didn't think that they were valid*” (Interview, 27 November 2018). Mala Mala game reserve took a different approach to these land claims.

In May 2008, the Regional Land Claims Commissioner (RLCC) made an offer of R751,737,492 to the owner, pending the approval of the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs. This offer was calculated at the price of R52,000 per hectare for the 13,184 hectare reserve and R66,169,492 for improvements. The landowner accepted this offer; however, the Minister rejected this offer on the basis that this large amount of money would exhaust state resources. The Minister outlined the following:

The value of the property as recommended by the valuers is exorbitant and the State will not afford to acquire those farms in the amount as recommended by the valuers and there is also a question whether the profitability [of the] businesses which have been conducted in those farms are or will be economically sustainable if restoration would have to take place. The Minister is therefore submitting that it will not be feasible to restore the properties mentioned above to the claimants. The claimants should be provided with equitable redress in the form as defined in Section 1 of the Restitution Act. (Land Claims Court, 2012: 4).

The RLCC went back to re- negotiate with the landowners and the community. However, negotiations collapsed as the landowners were not interested in lowering the price and were also no longer satisfied with initial price suggested in 2008. The landowners wanted compensation that was not less than R989,057,000 (R70,000 per hectare plus R66,169,492 for improvements). The land claim was then referred to the LCC on 9 August 2009 which was to determine the feasibility of restoration based on the Section 33 (cA) of the Restitution of Land Rights Act, No. 22 of 1994. This section of the Act outlines the factors that should be taken into consideration by the court when deciding on a particular matter. The factors are as follows:

- (a) The desirability of providing for restitution of rights in land to any person or community dispossessed as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices;*
- (b) the desirability of remedying past violations of human rights;*
- (c) the requirements of equity and justice;*
- (cA) if restoration of a right in land is claimed, the feasibility of such restoration;*
- (d) the desirability of avoiding major social disruption;*
- (e) any provision which already exists, in respect of the land in question in any matter, for that land to be dealt with in a manner which is designed to protect and advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination in order to promote the achievement of equality and redress the results of past racial discrimination;*
- (eA) the amount of compensation or any other consideration received in respect of the dispossession, and the circumstances prevailing at the time of the dispossession;*
- (eB) the history of the dispossession, the hardship caused, the current use of the land and the history of the acquisition and use of the land;*
- (eC) in the case of an order for equitable redress in the form of financial compensation, changes over time in the value of money;*
- (f) any other factor which the Court may consider relevant and consistent with the spirit and objects of the Constitution and in particular the provisions of section 9 of the Constitution.*

Although all these factors are important to take into consideration, the focus of this particular land claim was on cA, the feasibility of restoration. The matter was between the Mhlanganisweni Community and The Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform & Others (landowners). The state was willing to offer R460 million and should the court find the value to be in excess of this, restoration would be unfeasible.

The landowners on the other hand were very strategic about maximizing their profits as they wanted the court to determine both the value of the property and the conditions of the settlement. This was done by posing questions to the state prior to the claim going to the court. Namely, whether the Minister will consent to an expropriation order, or alternatively are the

respective parties willing to use the court to determine the a) the price of the property to be acquired and b) the conditions under which restoration may take place (LCC, 2010).

The landowners put forward these questions to be answered by the court. This was a strategic way of disciplining the discourse that the court case would take by ordering it to narrowly focus on the price of compensation and the commercial viability of the community. This conveniently steered the focus away from the landowners' historical economic privilege and placed the focus on the community having to prove their worthiness of restoration.

The state answered to these conditions by submitting a Supplementary Referral to the court outlining that should the Court find that the state might be required to pay compensation to the landowners of more than R30,000,00 per hectare, it will not be feasible to restore the Mala Mala land. In such event the claimants be awarded alternative redress in the form of monetary compensation” (LCC, 2012: 3). This condition was put forward by the Minister who also added that the community should “satisfy the Commission or the Court that, in the event of the land being restored, it would be in a position to utilize the land sustainably” (LCC,2012: 6). Here ‘sustainably’ refers to the use of the land in a way that remains economically viable by not damaging the business operations (Interview, 11 April 2019).

As a result, the court questioned whether the community will be able to sustain the current land use if restoration takes place. The community had to prove itself as being economically worthy of the land as the court found it difficult to trust the community to continue the business in a sustainable way. For this reason, the community presented a proposal that indicated how the land could be utilized when in partnership with another game reserve. The proposal included a partnership agreement with Londolozi Game Reserve, where the business of Mala Mala would

be continued by a company ('LodgeCo') which would be run by Londolozi (LCC, 2012). The Mhlanganisweni community would therefore lease Mala Mala Game Reserve to this company and receive a rental income which would be divided amongst community members. It is also important to note here the strategic move of Londolozi Game Reserve. Londolozi neighbours Mala Mala to the west and has been a rival competitor since its early years of establishment. It is ironic that over last decade Londolozi has been opposing the validity of the land claims made on its own reserve yet is willing to join the community in getting ownership of Mala Mala. In an interview with both the Mhlanganisweni community lawyer and a senior government official, they suggest that the reason for this was based on Londolozi's greed in further developing Mala Mala which has the opportunity to expand the number of tourists visiting the game reserve (interview 25 February 2019 and 11 April 2019). In addition to this the senior government official also highlighted that this move by Londolozi may have been done to get ahead of its competitor Mala Mala not only bringing it down, but also to shield itself from land claims on its own property.

Nonetheless, the Judge was not "satisfied that the Co-operation agreement provides sufficient comfort that the conservation of the Mala Mala land and the ecotourism business therefore will continue if the land is restored to the claimants" (LCC, 2012: 28). The Judge was concerned about the low income the claimants will receive as well as the general vagueness of the proposal. As a result, the judgement outlined that they have little belief that the community will effectively continue to run the business.

The valuation of the land formed an important point of discussion during the court proceedings as the Judge indicated that the "feasibility of restoration hinges on what compensation the landowners are likely to receive" (LCC, 2012: 5). Table 6.2 indicates the valuations conducted

by the Commission, however, they have classified that some of the valuations errored and were therefore disregarded in the court:

Table 6.2 Property valuations conducted by the Commission (Source: LCC, 2010)

Farm	Valuer	Land value per hectare (R/ha)	Value of improvements (R)	Total (R)
Eyrefield 343KU (remaining extent and portion 1)	Dijalo Property Valuations	65, 000		194, 000, 000
Toulon 383KU (portion 7)	Dijalo Property Valuations	65, 000		27, 000, 000
Mala Mala 341KU	Dijalo Property Valuations	65, 000	33, 528, 850	153, 000, 000
Mala Mala 359KU	Dijalo Property Valuations	65, 000	9, 354, 642	92, 000, 000
Charleston 378KU (remaining extent) and 375KU (portion 1)	Bristow, Phenyane & Associates	66, 627	1, 253, 000	241, 253, 000
Flockfield 414KU and 361KU	Fincon (J A van Rensburg)	30, 000	22, 033, 000	105, 000, 000
			66, 169, 492	812, 253, 000

Three valuations were discussed during the court case. The first was a valuation conducted for the state in 2007 and concluded that the Mala Mala land is worth R30,000 per hectare. The Judge however rejected this valuation as it “erred in respect of the size of the portions” (LCC, 2012: 17). The next valuation was called by the claimants and valued Mala Mala land to be at a low of R55,000 per hectare and a high of R65,000 per hectare. However, the correctness of this valuation was also questioned because the valuer used his ‘experience’ to analyse the comparable sales and price escalation between 2005-2011 and the Judge indicated that his ‘experience’ is not accurately quantifiable and therefore is not a reliable valuation (LCC, 2012). The last valuation was called by the landowners and valued Mala Mala land at a low of R72,000 per hectare and a high of R87,000 per hectare. Ironically, the Judge indicated that this was done through extensive comparable sale analysis, and that “it is not necessary for the purpose of this judgement to assess the basis of his findings” (LCC, 2012: 18). This shows the biased approach of the court which questions lower valuations, but not extremely high valuations (by considering the history through which capital accumulation of the land was made possible). The validity of the valuers that were called by the state and the claimants were intensely questioned but the valuer called by the landowner was not questioned.

The claimants questioned the market value and the fairness in it being kept the absolute point of departure for the land claims settlement. They proposed to the court that a ‘historical cost of acquisition’ model should be applied to determine equitable compensation for the property. The representation for the claimants used the research conducted by an investment analyst to show that the historical investment on the land is the “proper basis for compensation” (LCC, 2012: 9). The research report declared that the “investment returns that would have been available to a South African investor exposed to the major asset classes over the period 1970-2010... [he] applied these returns to the amounts of what he was told the initial investments of

the landowners were in assembling the Mala Mala properties over the period 1964-1996” (LCC, 2012: 20, 21). Based on his calculations the state’s suggested offer would be just and equitable. This calculation would give landowners back the money they have invested in the land, taking into consideration inflation of investments over time. This would fairly compensate the landowners, whilst taking into consideration the history of advantage they had. Furthermore, they also outlined factors which have advantaged the landowners to receive a high valuation for their land unfairly. For example, aspects such as the removal of the fence between Mala Mala and KNP increases the property value (due to quality and access to wildlife) to a great extent, advantaging landowners. This is something they did not necessarily pay for, yet they are benefiting from it. More generally, the stance of the claimants was that the economic advantage that apartheid had for these landowners cannot be ignored and should be taken into consideration when determining compensation.

Unfortunately, however, the Judge stood firm in equating equitable compensation with contemporary market value and did not give much attention to these factors that may have unfairly advantaged the landowners. He dismissed the above argument based on details such as the asset classes calculated were not strictly for private game reserves and the initial values used in calculations were not completely accurate.

The judge’s ruling, delivered on 19 April 2012, was largely in favour of the landowners. He indicated that the state will be required to pay a compensation of at least R791 289 492 for the land and the improvements. Furthermore, he noted that “an award of the Mala Mala land to the claimants would constitute an immense overcompensation of the claimants” (LCC, 2012: 30) and concluded that the restoration of Mala Mala land to the claimants will not be feasible. This judgement proves that the law caters for those who may potentially ‘suffer’ from economic

disruptions (the landowners) but does not equally consider those who have been deprived from participating in economic activities for generations (the claimants). The fact that there is great concern for ‘overcompensation’ of claimants, but no concern for overcompensation of landowners shows how the wellbeing of landowners and their business is valued much higher than historic injustices and economic deprivation of the claimants. Both the Minister and the landowners supported the judgement of the LCC. The Minister argued that the historical cost of acquisition model would go against the constitution and discriminate landowners (Mbikiwa, 2014). Furthermore, the Minister also agreed with the LCC that the community is not fit to run the eco-tourism industry effectively and that the restoration of the land would result in significant overcompensation (Mbikiwa, 2014). In this context overcompensation refers to the concern that claimants will be compensated for more than what they lost.

After hearing this disappointing news from the LCC, the community attempted to appeal the judgement, but it was declined. The appeal also failed at the Supreme Court of Appeal. The community then approached the Constitutional Court in order to appeal the judgement, aiming to determine what just and equitable compensation would be. The hearing for the case was supposed to take place on 13 August 2013, however, shortly before the hearing was to take place the Minister of DRDLR (Mr. Nkwinti) submitted an affidavit outlining that the department will no longer oppose the claim and are willing to purchase the land for the claimants. The case was removed from the court and the department was instructed to submit a report indicating its progress in settling the land claim by November 2013.

The sudden decision of the Minister to remove the case from the Constitutional Court and his determination to settle the case out of court came as a big shock to the public. This announcement came just a few weeks before the case was to be heard by the Constitutional

Court. The community lawyer states that: *“I think the constitutional court would at least have given us a good direction on what is just and equitable compensation. Unfortunately, there is no precedent for that and you know. So, it was a good opportunity for everyone”* (Interview, 25 February 2019). Nonetheless, when the Minister gave the go-ahead for the settlement, negotiations began immediately and the final settlement amounted to R939,360, 000 for acquisition of land, calculated at R71,250 per hectare to acquire 13,184 hectares. Acquisition of the improvements was settled at R73,168,492 and R7 million for movable assets. The total payment came to R1, 019, 528, 492, making it the single most expensive land claim in the history of restitution since 1998 (Portfolio Committee of DRDLR, 2019). Delius and Hay (2017: 126) write: *“the fact that approximately R300 million more was paid for Mala Mala than the highest valuation previously made, which was already deemed too high by the Minister, fuelled speculation that major corruption was involved”*. Unconfirmed sources suggest that this decision was made considering the 2014 national elections and that some palms were greased with the money paid to settle this land claim. As a result of many allegations and confusions regarding this land claim, the portfolio committee on DRDLR ordered a forensic investigation to look into the Mala Mala land claim settlement in 2018. This investigation focuses on where the money went, and why decisions were made this way. The table below shows the statistical information of the settlement according to the Land Claims Commission of South Africa.

Table 6.3 Statistical information of the Mhlanganisweni land claim (Source: Ntloko-Gobodo, 2019: 8)

Name of claim	Mhlanganisweni Community
Location	Bushbuckridge local municipality
Number of claims	21 on Sabi Sand, including 2 duplicates (63 portions), of which 9 properties refer to this settlement
Land use	Ecotourism and conservation
Claims lodged by	Z.L. Mhlongo and 20 others
Total number of hectares claimed	65 000
Total number of hectares restored	13 184
Number of households	960
Number of beneficiaries	5760
Extent of land compensated at the time of dispossession	3919.6874
Rights lost when dispossessed	Informal and/ or unregistered
Value of land according to the valuation	R939 360 000.00
Landowner asking price	R939 360 000.00
Value of improvements (excluding movable assets)	R73 169 492.00
Decision reached by Land Claims Commission	Restoration of ancestral land
Legal entity established	N'wandlamharhi Communal Property Association
Total compensated to landowner	R1 019 528 492.00

6.4 The settlement agreement

The settlement agreement is complex as it separates the land from the business. The agreement took place in two phases. Firstly, the land and the improvements were transferred to the ownership of the community (which formed the N'wandlamharhi Communal Property

Association (NCPA)) who rented it back to Mala Mala Ranch (Pty) Ltd. During the second phase the business itself would be restructured to form a co-management partnership between the community and the previous management. The previous landowners requested a transition period to give them time to sort out the logistics of the second phase. This transition period lasted from 30 October 2013 up until 28 February 2015 where the land was leased back to Mala Mala Ranch (Pty) Ltd for R700 000 per month until the joint venture started and the rental fee was reduced to R560 000 per month (Ntloko- Gobodo, 2018).

A senior government official highlighted in an interview that they purposefully separated the business from the land to secure a continuous income from the property (through rentals) that is independent of business performance (Interview, 11 April 2019). The rental was structured in order to ensure a steady income for the community. Further negotiation and dilution of the business resulted in the addition of two different streams of income to the agreement, namely annual dividends from the business and a Community Equity Trust. Annual dividends from the operating company (Mala Mala Game Reserve (Pty) Ltd) are paid to Mondzo (Pty) Ltd which is 100% owned by the NCPA. Mala Mala Game Reserve (Pty) Ltd is owned by both the community through Mondzo (Pty) Ltd and Ratters (Pty) Ltd the previous management at different percentages of shareholding. Thus, the annual dividends received by the community are in proportion to their shareholding (currently 30/70 Table 6.4).

The annual dividends paid to Mondzo (Pty) Ltd by the management company amount to no less than 50% of the operating profit after tax reductions. Furthermore, another stream of income is through the Mintirho Community Development Trust. The trust was established in 2017 to among other things, collect tourism levies paid by every tourist visiting Mala Mala, and was R125 per night that year. This money is to be used for community projects, education

and training young community members to become part of the hospitality industry and later join Mala Mala. It funded 14 students in 2018 and this number grew to 20 in 2019. The trust consists of five trustees one of which is appointed by Mala Mala (NCPA, 2019). In the first five years Mondzo had two board members represented on the Mala Mala board, and from year six onwards, there will be 3 board members of Mondzo present (NCPA, 2019). Figure 6.4 below illustrates the management structure of the game reserve after the settlement.

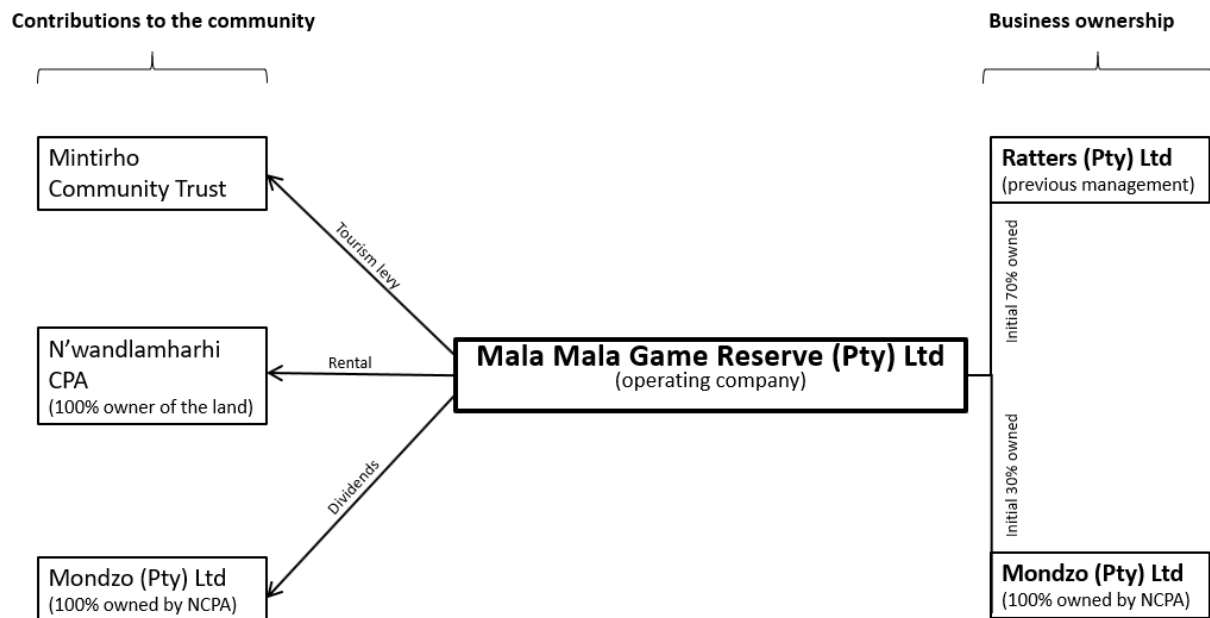


Figure 6.4 Corporate structure of Mala Mala Game Reserve (Adapted from Ntloko-Gobodo, 2019: 10)

It is said that the contribution of Ratters (Pty) Ltd in the operation of the game reserve is to offer the Mala Mala trademark, trade relationships, working capital, listed movables, business undertakings, experience and management skills (Ntoloko- Gobodo, 2019). The shareholding percentage of the operating company between Ratters (Pty) Ltd and Mondzo (Pty) Ltd will change over time. The community's shareholding percentage will slowly increase as the

shareholding of the previous management will decrease. According to a senior government official this dilution of the business will take place over a period of 20 years until the shareholding reaches a 50/50 partnership. What will happen after this period is not confirmed.

Table 6.4 Shareholding agreement in Mala Mala Game Reserve (Pty) Ltd (Source: Portfolio Committee on DRDLR, 2019)

Years (starting from 2015)	Ratters (Pty) Ltd	Mondzo (Pty) Ltd
0-5	70%	30%
5-10	60%	40%
11-20	50%	50%

Newspaper reports show there is a great deal of frustration with the Mala Mala land claim settlement. Opposition parties, lawyers, academics, activists are all concerned about the excessive R1.1 billion paid for the settlement of the claim. Other concerns are that equal representation of the previous management (Ratters (Pty) Ltd) and the community running the business will ideally be achieved only after 20 years. It is also not clear whether the shareholding between Ratters (Pty) Ltd and Mondzo (Pty) Ltd will remain 50/50 ownership *forever!* Will the community ever get to the point of fully owning the land *and* the business? The community lawyer is concerned that this open-ended settlement could create major problems in the future when the contract expires. The previous management may still have a great deal of power and control over business on the reserve. However, a senior government official is of the view that there is space for amendment when the contract of Mala Mala Ranch (Pty) Ltd is renewed and that there could perhaps be a shift to a 60/40 arrangements for shares with the community. Either way, there is a concern that the previous management will still have power and influence over Mala Mala for a period to come. The state often justifies these

close relationships between the previous management and the community as a method for the community to learn how to run the business effectively (Interview, 11 April 2019). However, this advantages the private sector's capitalist interests more than the community itself.

The senior government official explained the settlement of Mala Mala land claim is vital for transforming the white dominated space of private game reserves in the Sabi Sand region. Hence, the government worked hard to include black communities into the business. However, a closer inspection of the corporate structure of the settlement agreement reveals that the community has not been given full power over the reserve for fear that 'effective' business continuation may not occur. As a result, the previous owners, Mike and Norma Rattray have not only benefited from receiving a large pay-out for their land, but also continue to receive an income from the business revenue.

Interestingly, in July 2016 Mike and Norma Rattray sold their remaining shares in the Mala Mala business to Stephen Saad, owner of Kirkman's Kamp south of Mala Mala Game Reserve. Saad is a South African billionaire businessman, founder and CEO of Aspen Pharmacare. Since 2016, he, together with the community and Mala Mala management will "oversee the continued success of this jewel in South Africa's safari crown" (Mala Mala Game Reserve, 2016: 3). This again highlights how land restitution is structured to keep opportunities for capital accumulation (through the private sector) open. The power of community in the business is minimal (Table 6.4), yet the power of previous management structure (whether is Mike Rattray or Stephen Saad) remains protected through the business.

While the senior government official explains that the separation of the business and the land in the settlement agreement is in favour of the land claimants which have a secured income

through the property rentals, it is clear that this separation is also in favour of the private sector. It is here where the irony of capitalism and the neoliberal state is highlighted. Because the state put forward the condition that business may not be compromised in the settlement, the community cannot make use of the land outside of the business operation (which they have very little control in). However, on the other side, the previous landowners may not own the land anymore as it was returned to the community, but they still have some control over the business. This is because majority shares remain in the hands of previous management structures (Table 6.4), which enables their hold over the business and therefore inevitably the land as well. Therefore, the separation of the land and the business turns out to be in favour of capitalism, because either way, the continued accumulation of profit is secured.

The concern here is who benefits and who suffers from this agreement. On paper, this settlement might look progressive as an African community now owns this prestigious tourism destination, yet in reality they are merely passive recipients of payments while the power and control of the business remains in the hands of those with majority shares. The protection of the business remains at the forefront of interventions from the state. Even in light of recent conflicts between community members in the area, the recommendations of the parliamentary portfolio committee of DRDLR indicate that solutions “should be managed in a manner that does not put the business in danger” (Portfolio Committee on DRDLR, 2019: 27). Both pre- and post-deliberation regarding land restitution at Mala Mala always put the condition of business at the forefront. This is carried out not only because of the overwhelming power of the private sector, which the state seems to fear, but also the contradictory systems within the state itself which attempt to achieve social justice through capitalist methods.

6.5 The State: Questionable Justifications for Questionable Decisions

The state has received a great deal of criticism from opposition parties, lawyers, academics, activists, and general members of civil society for the large sum of money paid to settle this land claim. Almost one third of the national budget for land restitution that year (2013) went to settle only this claim. An informant commented that this land claim settlement shows “*we are moving further away from effective restitution*” (Interview, 25 February 2019). Seven years after the settlement, the Mala Mala deal is still widely discussed in parliament and the media at large. The then Minister of DRDLR, Hon. Mr. Nkwinti often avoided addressing these criticisms as the following excerpt from parliamentary debates shows:

Hon Chairperson, firstly, in regard to MalaMala, there is a great obsession around MalaMala. People think that because those are black people, they do not deserve to get farms or their land back because it is too expensive. Ngenxa yokuba ingabantu abantsundu ingakumbi umntu ontsundu ozithiyileyo ucinga ukuba umntu ontsundu akafanelekanga ukuba athengelwe into enxabiso eliphezulu. Kaloku aba bantu bakholelwa ekubeni umntu ontsundu makahlale ebumnyameni nasebumdakeni kuba ingamfanelanga imali eninzi. IMalaMala iyabahlupha ngoba oko sithenge laa mhlaba laa nkampani ihlawula aba bantu ama-R700 000 ngenyanga imali yerenti. Zange yenzeka loo nto eMzantsi Afrika loo nto. (Nkwinti, 2015).

Translation from isiXhosa excerpt:

He is accusing other black people of thinking that it is not appropriate to buy something of high value for black people who they think are of a lower class. Why is it that we question black people of receiving something of higher value? Because these people believe that a black person must stay in the dark and in the dirt (poverty), because they do not deserve a lot of money. And that is why this MalaMala issue vexes (irritates) them, because ever since we have bought that land, that company has to pay people R700 000 for rent. This has never happened in SA.

In an interview with a senior government official, she shares similar sentiments where she argues that we need to look at the bigger picture of transformation. She explains that this land claim has opened up a space that was previously reserved for wealthy whites and has allowed black people to own land and business in the area. She argues that black people should also be able to infiltrate white spaces and make it their own. However, if we listen closely to the arguments of those who criticise the settlement (opposition parties, lawyers, academics, activists etc.), it is not that Africans are seen as not worthy of having this land. Rather, the critique is based on the way in which the land claim is settled. Why are landowners in favourable positions where they can dictate high values for the land and still have control over the business structures, and more importantly, why does the state support this? Fair arguments were presented by the community so that the value of compensation remains in the R450 million price range, yet the state chose not to act on this. The portfolio committee of DRDLR (2019: 9) reports that according to the commission “the Minister did not want the court to set a precedence on the matter of compensation and that he was also concerned because of the failures at the Land Claims Court and the Supreme Court of Appeal”. Had the state allowed the case to go the Constitutional Court we may have finally understood what just and equitable compensation means. However, the state was evidently more concerned with protecting private sector interests.

An interview response of a senior government official confirms that the government wanted to be respected by the private sector by playing the game of business. Her explanation of the impact of the Mala Mala settlement on the attitude of the private sector towards land restitution is as follows:

Yes. when we bought Mala Mala, the private sector was willing to negotiate on other things they were not willing to negotiate on before. Because they thought we do not have the muscle power- that we will never buy it. Everyone thought we would never buy it...So immediately when we bought Mala Mala then suddenly people started to take us seriously when we went to the table and said, look we want to buy the land back and we want a share in the business. Since they realized oh these people (government) can buy Mala Mala, maybe they are serious about what it is that they want. So, it started opening up that...

And although they are not going to say it- it is working. Mala Mala hasn't collapsed. So, all of a sudden, they (private sector) are thinking – 'maybe we can do business with them (government)'. And remember, where does the money go – it goes to the powerful white person. 1 billion rand went to the Rattrays. Why? Because the system is created to say he owns the land and you are going to pay him his dues. So, on this side you have the Rattrays... Do you know what I mean? And no one is complaining about that. They are complaining about us, where that is what the law says we should do! So, we did what the law said we should do. Do you know what I mean?

This illustrates that the government aims at getting respect from the private sector by abiding by *their* conditions, which is centred around the market. Harvey (2005a) writes that the neoliberal state often takes the private sector's side when conflict arises within the greater public. The laws are interpreted so that they are in line with private sector interests as evident in this case where Rattray has secured a large sum of compensation and maintained a continuing hand in the business. By joining them and meeting their conditions through money, as the senior government official interviewed highlighted, does not take their power away but only empowers the private sector more. The Mala Mala land claim has given landowners the re-affirmation that they have the upper hand as the senior government official has admitted that many landowners have now become more open to selling their land to the government, because they have realised their advantage.

Landowners even prefer selling their land to government as they have realized that they will receive a higher value (sometimes even above market value) for their farms. A landowner of adjacent Chitwa Chitwa lodge said that “the Mala Mala settlement pushes up his land value”, even though he is not interested in selling his land (Nel, 2015). Most landowners in Sabi Sand refute the validity of the land claims set on their property, however Mala Mala set a precedent for high compensation which works to their advantage. However, recently landowners have become anxious of the recent motives for changing the constitution to allow for expropriation without compensation. The reason for this is that some see this change in the constitution as a threat to their power and authority when it comes to negotiating land claim settlements. Whether the government will become stricter with a changed constitution is doubtful, as it did not bother to act on its power for the last 25 years, where the constitution already allows for expropriation without compensation to take place. The DRDLR remains underfunded, under resourced and often unaccounted for. How changing the constitution will enable the government to act any differently remains to be seen. Even the proposals for expropriating without compensation have kept the protection of the private sector interests close (Yeni, 2019). Yeni (2019) notes that the presidential advisory panel on land reform engages with “market- centred and private sector-driven options” which accommodate a few Africans and the politically connected, but not those most impacted by the injustices of the past (and present). She argues that solving land reform through the market will perpetuate the problem, not solve it. It therefore seems somewhat contradictory if expropriation still protects the productivity of the market (capitalism).

This private sector orientated land restitution in Mala Mala has caused conflicts between the beneficiary community and the state. The state has been accused of inflating the number of beneficiaries of this claim in order to justify the R1.1 billion. They have grouped the Mavhuraka claimants together with the Mhlanganisweni beneficiaries even though the

Mavhuraka group was not strictly removed from the farms comprising Mala Mala Game Reserve (Interview, 25 February, and 10 June 2019). The community lawyer explains that because this is a restitution case, not redistribution only those who have been removed from Mala Mala should benefit from the land claim (the Mhlanganisweni). Equally so, she argues that those who have land claims pending on other Sabi Sand properties should also benefit by having their claims settled (the Mavhuraka). It is unfair for the community to pay the price for government's questionable politics, which favours the private sector. While the Mala Mala business maintained its smooth operation since the land claim settlement, the state and community have carried the brunt. It appears that not everything 'fits' into this private sector orientated model for solving land restitution.

6.6 Mala Mala Settlement: a new model for settling land claims in private nature reserves

When asking the senior government official if she thinks that the Mala Mala settlement is a good settlement and whether she would consider using the same model to settle other land claims in private game reserves, her response was:

Yes, so the Mala Mala model is called the Rural Economic Transformation Model. So, in phase one you acquire land. Phase two we look at development. And development must involve you buying an opportunity in the business so that it will enforce transformation. So, we want more than just renting the land, we also want a share in the business. The Rural Economic Transformation Model is the one we want to further. Buying the land. Getting shares in the business, and then putting in a development plan for transformation thereby forcing them (previous landowners) that the following years should look like this...

The senior government official thinks that the settlement of Mala Mala was a success, and as evident from her response above, it is clear that government is interested in using this model to

settle other similar land claims. Despite public criticism of the settlement, the government thinks that this public private partnership model is a good model for both economic development and the restoration of justice. The senior government official explains that transformation is important to her and the department, and that transformation through land restitution can occur by purchasing the land and purchasing shares in the business, thereby allowing Africans to be part of a greater economic network. For the department transformation means incorporating historically disadvantaged Africans into the existing corporate structure that was historically organised to exclusively benefit whites. And in some sense rightfully so – with the high levels of poverty and inequality in South Africa it is evident that restitution should address these concerns. The Mala Mala model focuses on simultaneously continuing business operations as usual while adding historically disadvantaged Africans to the corporate structure. In this context transformation means changing the historical structure in which whites owned both the land and the business to placing the land in African ownership and sharing the business between the Africans and whites. This model narrowly looks at transformation through an economic lens which in itself is somewhat contradictory. This is because the history outlined earlier in this chapter has shown that the economic structure was integral to the foundation of historic injustice and therefore at times is in conflict with restitution.

The discussion above raises fundamental questions about whether this consideration for business, is a healthy ideology for a dignified land restitution. The win – win analogy is more in reference to the business structure as capital accumulation continues but does not necessarily reflect on the unequal power relations on the ground. While on paper it may seem to be transformative when strictly looking at the change in land ownership, a closer look (especially at the shares in the business) only makes us realize that previous management structures still have a strong hand in the business, and therefore the land as well. The adoption of this model

highlights that South Africa's neoliberal state approaches land restitution through a capitalist lens.

6.7 Conclusion

The history of African land dispossession in Sabi Sand, and more specifically Mala Mala Game Reserve was part of the political economy of the land in South Africa. Examples from this chapter demonstrate this by a) highlighting the speculative nature of early land ownership where whites were absent owners of the land until its financial incentive was recognised, b) Africans were dispossessed from the land until their cheap labour potential was recognised and c) the removal of Africans from the land escalated in the 1950s, around a similar time in which land was converted to fit the tourist economy. These actions were economically motivated and politically supported. Evidence shows that the gradual increase of land value to its current luxurious reputation occurred simultaneously with the dispossession and exploitation of Africans. It is because of this, that one would assume that in some aspects land restitution and capitalism would be in conflict with one another.

However, the Mala Mala land claim was dealt with accordingly to ensure that it does not threaten the legacy of the reserve. The Mala Mala land claim settlement shows that capitalist interests of the private sector remain protected through the South African government, even when it comes to land restitution. The neoliberal state has proven to firmly stand with the private sector by organizing the Mhlanganisweni community to effectively join the existing market structures in such a way that there is no damage to capital accumulation. It is questionable whether the settlement will provide prospects for a better future when it hardly addresses the roots of economic injustice. The settlement focusses more on the wellbeing of previous landowners and their business than on the impact and advantage that the historic land

dispossession of Africans had on the creation of this enterprise. As a result, the settlement still poses various questions, especially in terms of the unfair distribution of shares in the corporate structure.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation was to unpack the role of capitalism in private nature reserves under a land claim using Mala Mala Game Reserve as a case study. It has done so by firstly tracing how capitalism disciplines land use over time to evolve into its current conservation business success. Secondly, it further illustrates how the success of this business was reliant on a structured cheap labour system that is itself a product of national political arrangements. Lastly it highlights how this legacy is challenged by a land claim and how business bounced back to influence the settlement of the claim in a manner that does not disrupt capitalism. Rather the settlement protects the historical privilege of the business.

The findings have highlighted the different, often abstract ways in which capitalism nurtures forms of inclusion and exclusion along financial lines. This study contributes to the rather small wave of literature that exposes capitalism's overwhelming power in organizing society so that it is convenient for its operation. This contribution is in line with the call made by other scholars (Neimark et al, 2020, Gutto, 2014; Castree, 2011; and Ramutsindela 2002a) to investigate the commodification, privatization, commercialization and marketization of nature and its implications for society.

Capitalism has a historic legacy of creating wealth for a small group of people by excluding a larger group from accessing wealth (Harvey, 2005b). In conservation areas the image of pure wilderness is the source on which the business is based and as a result, anyone or anything that does not fit into this image is excluded. The operation of capitalism in conservation impacts on the relationship that people have with one another, land, and resources. Historically,

conservation formed part of European colonization that resulted in the appropriation of African land and labour (Beinart, 1984) but this practice continues in the twenty-first century. Generally, conservation areas act as a solution to the destruction of nature by capitalism (Fletcher and Neves, 2012). However, it is evident that not only is there a conflict of interest in the solutions that capitalism has put forward, but capitalism was also integral to historic injustices in the first place. As a result, it is important to closely analyse the way capitalism unfolds in private nature reserves to better grasp how these reserves operate and what opportunities and limitations they offer with regard to land reform.

7.2 Conservation business: an innocent enterprise?

Capitalism manifests itself in private nature conservation through the conservation business. McAfee (1999: 134) notes that “by promoting commoditization as the key both to conservation and to the 'equitable sharing' of the benefits of nature, the global environmental-economic paradigm enlists environmentalism in the service of the worldwide expansion of capitalism.”. While this is evident in both national parks and private nature reserves, private nature reserves offer conditions (such as private property) that promote business operations while presenting themselves as innocent through environmentalism. Here, nature is commodified by adding value to the quality of wildlife viewing. This business is largely based on the manufacturing of human desires for wilderness which has given rise to the tourism industry. This industry is seen as progression towards creating a green economy that ‘fixes’ the destructions of capitalist productions. However, as Marx explains, capitalism’s success relies on the exploitation of labour and nature. Therefore, incorporating it into sustainable development seems contradictory.

A closer analysis of the conservation business unmask the image of business as innocent to reveal its inherent contradictions and hidden consequences. The characteristics of the conservation business are not very different from other businesses, especially if we look at the neglected undervaluing of social reproduction (Fraser, 2014) and the form in which accumulation by dispossession occurs (Harvey, 2005b). These are typical characteristics of capital production and therefore seem contradictory to the ideals of sustainable development, which supposedly contribute towards the economy as well as social wellbeing in a manner that is not destructive. South Africa's adoption of neoliberal policies embraced this form of development as it gave capitalism the freedom to continue its growth in various areas (Harvey, 2005a). The development of nature reserves saw opportunity in this and commodified nature in an abstract manner to create an economic income (Büscher, 2012). More specifically, Büscher (2010) argues that in the case of the eco-tourism industry, nature itself acts as the underlying asset and that the source of the actual value is created through the representation of the images of wilderness and primitiveness, something he calls 'derivative nature'. Examples of this abstract form of valuing nature is evident when unpacking the Mala Mala business. This business is structured by offering luxury accommodation and food as well as quality safari wildlife viewing. Its incorporation of the Sabi river and an unfenced boundary with KNP increases its property value as wildlife moves from afar towards the river, increasing the probability of wildlife viewing at Mala Mala. The game reserve actively benefits financially from the 'quality' of wildlife and as a result it organises itself in such a way that it capitalises on its location.

Since conservation is an economically efficient land use, the private sector has found it to be a lucrative site of investment. Because of the vast extent of capital accumulation in private nature reserves (which some argue contributes to sustainable development), business plays an

important role in determining the contours of land restitution. This strong influence of the private sector in land reform makes it difficult to settle land claims (Lahiff, 2007; Kleinbooi, 2009; Greenberg, 2010). The deep consideration for the continuation of the conservation business in private game reserves has only empowered the private sector more by increasingly giving them control over the outcomes of restitution. This power of the private sector is a typical characteristic of neoliberalism which places economic development at the heart of freedom and transformation (environmentally, socially, and politically).

The state has embraced ecotourism as an economically advantageous land use because of its supposed contribution towards sustainable development both socially and environmentally. Although the adoption of neoliberal policies turned out to be favourable for both the private sector and the state, its advantages are not clearly understood by the larger public. Spatially we can see this unfold in the Sabi Sand Complex by looking at the impoverished rural communities adjacent to the highly valued private game reserves. Through the complex's erection of high fences, local communities are separated from private nature reserves and have limited access to resources. Those who carry the cost of conservation (by being dispossessed and exploited) are usually individuals who do not fit the wilderness image because of their financial standing (Brooks and Kjelstrup, 2014; Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014). Communities surrounding Sabi Sand Complex supply the labour that facilitates the conservation business in the nature reserves.

Conservation labour forms an important part of the conservation business as it forms part of cheap labour necessary for capital accumulation. The function of these communities today is not very different from their historical function as labour reserves during apartheid. As a result,

the conservation business is not only built on an unjust history but continues to use this system whilst projecting it differently as conservation, development and transformation.

7.3 The toxic relationship between capitalism and labour

Karl Marx has given a very detailed account of how capitalism structures labour in order to ensure that accumulation of profit can take place. The relationship between labour and capitalism is a deeply exploitative one that is essentially the cause of degrading the majority of society. This is because the system structures labour in such a way that high rates of surplus value are created for the capitalist, and only the bare minimum is often given to the worker. Colonialism and later apartheid laid and consolidated a well-structured cheap labour system (Wolpe, 1972; Legassic and Wolpe, 1976; Levy, 1982). Colonial states enforced capitalist values of “diligence, industriousness, obedience, and frugality” in Africans to stimulate economic growth (Sodikoff, 2009: 445).

In South Africa, Africans were subjected to assist in the production of agriculture, mining and manufacturing required for the growth of metropolitan states. In order to force Africans into these forms of cheap labour, colonial states used legislation to enforce land dispossession and a rent payment system. Africans were restricted to live in overcrowded bantustans, which conveniently acted as a labour reserve for the country’s capitalist production. This gave rise to a migrant labour system in which minimal costs would be covered by the employer during the period of employment, and those remaining in the impoverished bantustans had to bear the majority costs of social reproduction (Wolpe, 1972). Hence, the apartheid system was economically grounded on the severe exploitation of workers on a racial basis. The large degree of surplus labour enriched white business and left Africans to carry the burdening cost of capitalism.

In 2020, we can see a continuation of this labour system. Perhaps not visible in the obvious format of apartheid (racial segregation), but since capitalism still dominates the country's mode of production, its toxic relationship to labour remains. This is largely due to South Africa's endorsement of neoliberalism when it transitioned into democracy, in which it has been difficult to simultaneously address both labour conditions and economic development goals. There have been some attempts to improve the relationship between employers and labour such as the minimum wage and negotiations at National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). However, there is still a great deal of labour injustice on a local, national and international scale. The freedom that neoliberalism offers is only limited to individuals aligned with capitalist interests, and not to those who carry the burdening costs of this system (Harvey, 2005b). As a result, the adoption of neoliberalism allowed the private sector to continue its exploitative relationship with labour instead of acknowledging the conflicting interests of addressing historic injustice whilst continuing capitalism's growth. Evidence of this is in the labour structure of private game reserves.

Labour conditions in conservation areas are often unaccounted for due to the positive image of sustainability that this business upholds (Sodikoff, 2009; Neimark, 2020). However, a closer inspection of the way labour is structured in these reserves shows the re-emergence of the migrant labour system. In Mala Mala Game Reserve, employees work on a contract basis, spending long periods working inside the reserve and then receive a few days off in which they can travel back to their home village. Some workers have complained about their low wages which again highlights that the capitalist orientation of the reserve does not transcend into fair and equitable compensation. This migrant labour system not only cuts costs (transport) but also ensures that surplus labour can be effectively managed in the reserve (Ramutsindela, 2015).

Therefore, the historically built cheap labour system is evident in conservation areas, where the capitalist ideals of low-cost production and large-scale profit accumulation for the business are reinforced.

The labour structure at Mala Mala helps us better understand the labour structure in private nature reserves by highlighting the strong link they have to the historically structured cheap labour system. The adoption of the migrant labour system is evidence of this and shows how private nature reserves have strategically organized labour by taking advantage of historical national arrangements that are economically efficient. By framing themselves as having the interests of community upliftment and development at heart, conservation areas act as if they are different from the exploitation taking place in other capitalist industries. However, in reality their business success relies on conservation labour which is part and parcel of the cheap labour system. Spierenburg (2020: 292) argues that “conservation agencies also need to justify their operations in a context of high levels of poverty and inequality”. If it were true that the conservation business values community development, the living conditions of the surrounding communities from which labour is sourced would have been better. Although there has been some improvement in employment in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in which the game reserve is located – from 62.9% unemployment rate in 2001 to 52.1% in 2011 (StatsSA, 2011), members of these communities have expressed their frustration that tangible changes are not evident in their everyday lives.

With high unemployment rates in South Africa (30.1% in the first quarter of 2020 (StatsSA, 2020)), the focus is still on job creation rather than decent jobs and an improved structure of labour. Unemployment forms part of capitalism’s framework of exploitation as desperation enables enhanced forms of exploitation. The state’s obsession with economic development

gives very limited space to confront capitalist exploitation. The state supports capital accumulation, i.e. conservation business' large profit margins, hence, it shows greater interest in this industry than the exploited workers. One of capitalism's biggest contradictions is that it is destructive to the very same things it relies on. Although environmentally this has been realized to some extent, and as a response less environmentally destructive businesses (such as conservation) have been created, the same attention has not been given to capitalism's social destruction. The exploitation of labour is an important measure in which we can see the vast social destruction of capitalism, and its consequences are far reaching. In order to limit the extent of damage this will do; it is important to attend to the relationship between capitalism and labour in conservation areas.

7.4 Land restitution exposes the complexities and limitations of capitalism

Capitalism and land reform have conflicting objectives. While capitalism creates forms of exclusion, exploitation and dispossession, land reform in South Africa aims to fix these forms of injustice through redistribution, restitution, and tenure reform. Therefore, one would imagine that the land reform process in South Africa would create some form of disruption to capitalism in order to more fairly spread wealth in society. However, instead we witness the state's endorsement of capitalist objectives by creating a superficial form of transformation that does not necessarily tackle deeper roots of injustice nurtured by capitalism. Capitalist ideals have been interwoven into South Africa's land reform solutions, generally through aspects such as land valuations, compensations, and prescriptions for land use. In these cases, the greater public often has little tangible control over capitalism's infiltration because it occurs in 'invisible' backdoors of society. South Africa's land restitution process has shown clear evidence of this.

Much of the controversies (which include business ownership ambiguity, community – state conflicts, corruption scandals) around the Mala Mala land claim settlement occurred precisely because of capitalism’s dominance in the negotiations. Mala Mala has not only reiterated, but also confirmed the capitalist centred mode of land reform in South Africa. It has highlighted the fierce power of the private sector (capitalism), and the state’ failure to discipline this power. The state is expected to push the private sector towards land reform outcomes envisaged in policy and the constitution (Lorenzen, 2015). In the Mala Mala land claim settlement, the corporate structure was placed at the centre of negotiations and everything else was organized to fit into this structure. While the community may own the land, they do not possess majority shares in the business, and therefore have limited power. This was carefully crafted in the separation of the Mala Mala business from the land during the restitution process. It is what the state envisioned from the beginning, enabling it to claim to move forward with land restitution and transform the tourism industry whilst at the same time satisfy the private sector and ensure a continuation of capital accumulation.

The history of South Africa shows that capitalism was largely responsible for dispossessing Africans of their land and other natural resources (Bernstein, 1977; O’Laughlin et al., 2013; Ngcukaitobi, 2018). It was expected that land restoration would be the desirable outcome of land restitution to address this injustice. Continuing capitalist operations as usual and merely adding a few historically disadvantaged individuals to the business structure does not adequately restore justice, especially if the system (capitalism) that is largely responsible for causing the injustice, continues to cause forms of exclusion, exploitation and dispossession remains untouched. Deep rooted systematic reforms are necessary so that all toxic relationships of capitalism such as labour exploitation and lack of access to resources are also thoroughly addressed in restitution cases. However, currently this is not the case. The state’s neoliberal

thinking has actively allowed capitalism to re-invest itself in the solutions of land restitution. When discussions on land reform take place there is a protection of private sector interests (Yeni, 2019). The state often takes the private sector's side as it focusses on the sustainability of the business and as a result does not put enough emphasis on negative impact of the capitalist system on ordinary people. The Mala Mala land claim settlement has more clearly revealed the complexity of capitalism in the restitution process. This restitution model acts more like a pure business transaction rather than a *restitution* process.

When it comes to land restitution, the actions of the state have been watched like a hawk by both the international and national capitalist forces (represented by the private sector). The state has upheld the interests of the private sector by justifying that it plays a vital role in the country's development goals. The Mala Mala settlement has convinced the private sector that the state can be a convenient trading partner, as it protects their profit. Their voices are overwhelmingly strong on the negotiation table which secures their prolonged influence in the business even after the settlement. The business ownership of Mala Mala Game Reserve (Pty) Ltd reflects this finding as the settlement ensured that at least 50% of the ownership will remain in the hands of the private sector (Rattrays sold their shares to billionaire Stephen Saad). All stakeholders considered, Mala Mala might seem as the perfect business model in conservation as it brings the social and environmental together in a business conscious manner. The community owns the land, but their ownership agreement is structured so that 'business can continue as usual'.

The landowners actively play a game of chess with the state and seem to be winning at it. Landowners capitalize on restitution by driving up their property values to the extent that they go above market value (Lahiff 2007). In the case of Mala Mala the state gave landowners

compensation that is well above what the landowners would have received from a private transaction. In addition to this, the state also allows the private sector to continue to benefit from the business by receiving annual dividends from the business. Although it may appear that restitution is an act of restoring land to previously dispossessed Africans, capitalist interests, and therefore the private sector's interests are being prioritized. On paper the Mala Mala settlement appears as a great act of transformation as the Mhlanganisweni community is now the owner of the land on which this internationally branded tourism business is built, but in reality, they are passive recipients of income from the business and have little control and power over the corporate structure of the game reserve. This is due to their minority shares and inexperience in the conservation business. This limited control is often justified by the community's inability to run the tourism business successfully. While this is a valid point, it is often used as an excuse for this narrow-focused form of restitution that protects the interests of the private sector and alternative proposals that challenge the power of the private sector are not attended to.

These advantages that the private sector has experienced from land restitution are hidden from public scrutiny. Generally, the focus of the media and literature has been on the conflicts between the community and the state (as seen in media reports), but the role and dominance of private sector interests are not called into question. Today these controversies around the Mala Mala settlement are reflected in the local community, Mpumalanga province and national parliament. Riddled with corruption scandals, it has reflected negatively on the state's chosen method of land restitution. This land claim has landmarked an extreme form of land restitution, not only because of the extremely high amount of compensations, but also because of the restitution model. Therefore, reflecting back on the research question, the success of the land claim is merely a success of capitalism. The findings have shown that 'success' in the

settlement of the land claim does not necessarily lead to tangible outcomes for the community. Instead, it is to the advantage of the private sector. These findings give us insight into the intricacies of land policy in South Africa by confirming that the practical outcome of land restitution prioritizes capitalist interests. Policies have allowed the private sector to influence land reform through partnership agreements, and the Mala Mala case study has consolidated the hegemonic position of the private sector throughout this process. If this is not treated with caution, the Mala Mala case study may pave the way for business centred land restitution that will not effectively improve the lives of those it claims to assist, the dispossessed and exploited.

7.5 Conclusion

This dissertation has made clear the connections between the historic foundations of capitalism in South Africa, and how these underpin operations in private nature reserves. Capitalism thrives in the private game reserve through the conservation business, which strategically organises the land use and labour in a way that ensures optimal capital accumulation. It is successful because it is able to discipline labour. While bantustans historically acted as labour reserves, the current production of cheap conservation labour is facilitated by the creation of conservation estates in private property.

The Mala Mala land claim called into question the historic legacy of the reserve, i.e. capitalism, and instead of disrupting its operation it was dealt with accordingly in order to conform to a capitalist friendly settlement. Land restitution is in contradiction with the aspirations of capitalism, as the foundations of capitalism were inherently the cause of many forms of injustices that now form part of restitution. The role of the state is to acknowledge this contradiction and commit to rational decision making that is not controlled and led by market interests. The Mala Mala land claim settlement has shown the overwhelming power of

capitalist interests in land restitution. If the state chooses to replicate the Mala Mala model as a solution to land restitution, it needs to acknowledge that transformation will be on a superficial level. The failure to attend to deep rooted structural changes through land reform limits possibilities for restoring the dignity of victims of forced removals. The environmental sustainability underlying the business model of private nature reserves should be matched by social and economic justice.

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