

**The values of nature: personal narratives of  
conservation in South Africa.**

By

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the values of nature through the personal narratives of landowners in the Overberg area of Western Cape, South Africa. In the past, scholarly literature has imagined nature as separated from the human world. Historically, mainstream conservation methods have followed ideals of nature in forming environmental management policies and practices, aiming to create and maintain an isolated nature. This ideal of nature has largely ignored the roles of humans within the environment. A range of new fields of studies around identity, business and politics explore new ways of imagining nature, focusing on the human within nature and the nature within the human. Using these alternative imaginings, this research uncovers a variety of ways 'humanness' and nature are deeply embedded within each other. This research challenges the ideal of a pristine otherness whilst both supporting and filling in the gaps of contemporary alternative literature. The personal narratives of 34 landowners were gathered during 10 weeks of fieldwork. These stories offered an alternative portrayal of the relationship between humans, nature and conservation. Landownership was more than business as usual; land embodied deep and meaningful emotions, experiences and discourses of daily human life. Landscapes embodied personal emotions of owners through shaping their identities, spirituality, belonging and family histories. Dynamics of politics manifested in different forms such as fear, mistrust, corruption and exclusion throughout landowner's experiences and attitudes. These political factors, emotions and economic dynamics play a role in shaping landowners' attitudes, resistances and participation both towards conservation as well as nature, in turn influencing the way they organise themselves in relation to conservation bodies such as government run programmes as well as NGOs. It also affects how they organise, negotiate and manage themselves and their land. Conservation management of land should take into account these deeply complex, multidimensional and integrated complexities entrenched within daily narratives of landownership.

(306 words)

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ABI - Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative

ANC - African Nation Congress party

BWI – Biodiversity Wine Initiative

CBC - Community Based Conservation

DEA - Department of Environmental Affairs

DLA - Department of Land Affairs

DRDLR - Department of Rural Development and Land Reform

EPWP - Expanded Public Works Programme

FVCT - Flower Valley Conservation Trust

IDP - Integrated Development Plan

IPBES-The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services

MA- Millenium Ecosystem Assessment

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

SAB – South African Breweries

SANParks – South African National Parks

SDF - Spatial Development Frameworks

SMA - Special Management Area

TEEP- The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity

UCT - University of Cape Town

UN- United Nations

WfW – Working for Water

WWF - World Wide Fund

## **1. Chapter One – Introduction**

The values of nature can make or break conservation efforts by influencing participation levels and the application of appropriate methods of conservation. This study looks at the values of nature held by landowners in the Overberg area and the ways these values affect their land management behaviours and relationships with conservation actors.

Conservation is “the process of locating, configuring, implementing and maintaining areas that are managed to promote the persistence of biodiversity and other natural values” (Pressey et al: 2007: 583). Maintaining and protecting the ideal of ‘naturalness’ is commonly the main aim in conventional environmentalist approaches (Hettinger: 2014). This is done through protecting, preserving and restoring ‘wilderness’ and the ‘pristine’ value of the environment (Hettinger: 2014). Approaches of preserving and restoring ecosystems are based mainly on recreating an “untouched, natural paradise” that replicates a pre-human environment (Hettinger: 2014: 8). Mainstream ecosystem conservation approaches have often implemented physical boundaries between nature and society to ensure this ‘pre-human’ environment (Fall: 2005). The creation of boundaries has allowed conservation to organise nature into pristine bounded areas within human society such as parks or to border human spaces (Fall: 2005).

Some examples of conservation approaches that make use of boundary methods include bio-regional planning, eco-region based conservation, ecosystem approach, integrated conservation, biosphere reserves, watershed management and landscape ecology (Brunckhorst: 2013). Other popular conservation approaches include re-wilding, preserving and protecting the environment (Hettinger: 2014, Grabbatin & Rossi: 2012). A common priority in all of these approaches in conservation has been the protection or separation of the environment from human influence. This priority in conservation methods and approaches has been shaped by dominant understandings of what nature is and what our role as humans in the environment should be.

This may be a good point to ask the question, ‘What is nature?’ The term nature has proven difficult to define. Katherine Soper describes the term in her book titled, ‘What is nature’, as at once “very familiar and extremely elusive” (1995: 15). Castree describes it as “both a concept and all those physical things to which the concept refers”, as it is contested in the way it means different things to different people

(2001: 5). Daniel Botkin offers a good place to start in his book, 'No Man's Garden', by stating that the idea of nature comes from "ancient myths, persistent cultural mores, contemporary political ideologies, and our individual wishes, dreams and desires, but it is recast in our contemporary nature-knowledge which in turn is affected by our technology" (2001: 1). The rise of technology, industrialisation, media and globalisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century encouraged a popular school of thought, modernism (Smith: 1984).

The modernist understanding of nature views it as anything that is external from human society (Smith: 1984). This understanding can be seen in Smith's definition of nature as an entity that is "pristine, God-given, autonomous, it is the raw materials from which society is built" (1984: 2). It is then as Soper puts it, anything that is "distinguished from the world of humanity" (1995: 15). This modernist view of nature has encouraged a human/society dichotomy that views humans and the environment as two separate entities existing in isolation from each other (Fall: 2005). This ideal has also guided principles in the discipline of geography, in turn influencing mainstream conservation approaches as they have borrowed from geography to form aims, goals and agendas (Fall: 2005).

As the human/nature dualism has influenced land management policies and practices, it has also influenced the ways in which humans interact with their environments (Fall: 2005). Conservation planning and policies implement approaches that protect the environment from humans, rather than allow them to interact further encouraging the human/nature divide (Lorimer: 2012). Including humans into conservation processes has thus been difficult as it has been strongly believed that humans cannot and should not be included within nature if one desires to protect and preserve it in its pristine state (Fall: 2005). This idea is encouraged by the thought that we as humans are detached, above and external to the natural, despite being animals ourselves (Lorimer: 2012). In recent years however, many scholars in the discipline of geography have discussed a need for new ways to conceptualise the concept of nature and challenge the human/nature dualism. A number of emerging fields of studies offer alternative ways of imagining nature and 'humanness', focusing specifically on the connections that exist between the two, reshaping the priorities of conservation planning that increasingly includes humans within their practices and policies.

Kara Lamb (1996) discusses the importance of understanding the notion of nature in order to conserve it efficiently. She states in her article (1996), 'The problem of defining nature first: A philosophical critique of environmental ethics', that evaluating

the values individuals place on the environment will allow us to react to the environment. Lamb believes “an accurate and focused perception of nature as a concept is the key” (1996: 475). Until we “understand the methodologies which influence our value placing systems, how we regard nature and how we develop ethics toward nature, methods will not be joined into a common consensus of practice” (Lamb: 1996: 475).

As geography begins to prioritise the relationship between the human and natural world, understanding these connections becomes increasingly important. Conservation is a useful lens through which to explore these connections by exploring the values people participating in conservation projects have placed on the environment. Understanding these values can not only be useful in developing effective conservation methods but also in strengthening the idea that society and nature can no longer be perceived as separate entities. The values and attitudes of farmers and landowners towards nature influence the ways they manage their land and participate in conservation projects (Ahnström et al: 2009, Lamb: 1996). Historically, conservation has imagined nature as value free, apart from the natural value of the environment, and approaches often do not account for other values that may be involved, this is however becoming more important (Ahnström et al: 2009).

Land management, conservation and governance in South Africa is exceptionally complex as it has been shaped by political situations throughout its history (Flack: 2011). In the past, South African conservation methods have followed many of the same trends of mainstream conservation policies and practice (Flack: 2011). Conservation was however somewhat restricted under apartheid, South Africa was unable to take part in some international conservation treaties, organisations and agendas (Glazewski: 2005).

Post apartheid South African conservation methods have shifted with the change of the political, social and economic context of the country (Glazewski: 2005). Newly democratic in 1994, the country began to join some international conservation partnerships that had been previously restricted due to the political situation (Glazewski: 2005). The conservation priorities and methods in South Africa in recent years have mirrored the priorities of the country’s main goals that aim to uphold the new democratic system and rectify the legacies of apartheid (Glazewski: 2005). The UN millennium development goals set out to address the inequalities of apartheid through eight goals (Glazewski: 2005). The first aim is to eradicate poverty and hunger and the seventh focuses on implementing sustainable development to ensure environmental sustainability and improve livelihoods (Glazewski: 2005).

Humans are becoming increasingly encouraged to participate in conservation, on different levels in South Africa (Flack: 2011). On one hand, there are a portion of citizens who own important areas of land in South Africa. The participation of these landowners and users is vital to ensure these areas are protected and preserved. On the other hand, a large portion of South Africa's population live in poverty and job creation has become an increasing priority. Conservation can offer employment opportunities through various projects thus incorporating this into methods have become popular (Flack: 2011). Conservation has proven to be a useful tool for both protecting the country's environment whilst supporting employment opportunities to bridge inequalities (Flack: 2011). A country's historical and political context clearly influences the methods of environmental management.

Understanding the connections and values held by humans about nature can benefit South African conservation methods to ensure effective and efficient practices of environmental protection that include humans. Involving humans in conservation planning and practices is imperative to ensure that nature is preserved. As nature and society become increasingly intertwined, the need to include humans in decision making processes of conservation models becomes vital. This is also vital in a South African context as areas of valuable land are privately owned and employment opportunities through conservation become a more popular approach.

Challenging the mainstream, modernist concept of nature, this study aims to unpack some of the values shaping the conservation practices of a group of landowners in the Overberg area in South Africa. Using an alien clearing project run by the Flower Valley Conservation Trust (FVCT) as a case study, I explore the ways in which 34 landowners in the Overberg imagine their land and their role in conservation. The FVCT is a registered public benefit and non-profit organisation that aims to conserve fynbos and protect those whose livelihoods depend on it. Fynbos is an endemic flora to the Western Cape and an essential part of the landscape.

The Agulhas Plain and Overberg area is home to a variety of valuable fynbos species. FVCT runs a number of projects including the sustainable harvesting programme, an eco-school and encourages ethical trade and responsible tourism. The fynbos floral kingdom is extremely vulnerable to invasive alien vegetation therefore the organisation also focuses largely on alien removal in the Agulhas Plain and Overberg areas. According to the FVCT annual report of 2012-2013, two thirds of Agulhas sand fynbos has already been lost.

The FVCT project offered a useful platform to explore values placed on nature as its conservation method prioritised the inclusion and participation of humans throughout the clearing process. There is a wide range of literature on the experiences and discourses of nature through a conservation organisation's and governmental department's perspective. There is however very little literature on perspectives of the landowners who are involved in conservation, literature around landowner behaviours and values focus mostly on the business and money motives (Ahnström et al: 2009). This project may be useful in allowing a better understanding of landowners' experiences and perceptions in South Africa as landowners continue to have an important role in South African conservation.

The FVCT conservation process involves many different actors including landowners, government departments, local communities and other conservation organisations. In order to ensure a successful process of alien removal their alien clearing project needs to ensure all actors are involved in a productive way. Landowners play a significant role in the clearing process as their land hold the fynbos species that are under growing threat of alien vegetation. FVCT relies heavily on the trust they have formed with landowners to ensure conservation success. It is helpful to understand in depth the experiences and perceptions of landowners in this project to analyse the successes and challenges involved in the discourses of conservation from a landowner's perspective. In order to understand these goals set out by FVCT, a monitoring project has been set up. My project aimed to contribute to achieving some of these objectives as well as my own study objectives.

This thesis is titled 'The value of nature: personal narratives of conservation in South Africa' and asks the research question: 'What are the values that motivate landowners' conservation practices in post apartheid South Africa?'. My objective for the project was to learn perspectives and experiences of the landowner's involved in the FVCT alien clearing programme to understand values that played a role in their participation in conservation. Analysing behaviours behind land management methods would be beneficial in understanding values and attitudes towards their landscapes. Through exploring landowners' personal histories and narratives of landownership I was able to understand these values and the reasoning behind them.

The term value refers to something that deserves to be prioritised, something that is viewed as important and worthy (Adler et al: 2005). In this case, we look at the importance that nature holds, through the use of conservation, to understand these values. When I speak about conservation in this study, I am referring to the efforts

and approaches taken to protect and preserve the lands and environments of landowners. I also refer to the political and other encompassing factors that play out within conservation. Hussain (2002:2) emphasises that “local communities often have wide ranging conservation ethics and institutions that, in addition to economic considerations, are also based on spiritual, aesthetic, religious, moral and other non-economic values”. Economic values are the most obvious values held by landowners, this project does however look at other less spoken about and recognised values such as the ones emphasised by Hussain.

The first value is the economic value of land, and the capacity to earn a livelihood from it. Other values include personal emotions through shaping identities, spirituality, belonging and family histories. Robert Solomon (2017: 1) defines emotion as “a complex experience of consciousness, bodily sensation, and behaviour that reflects the personal significance of a thing, an event, or a state of affairs”. When I speak about emotions in the context of this study, I refer to the emotional and internal attachments, sentiments and feelings that are experienced by landowners in relation to their lands and their environments that work to influence their conservation behaviours. Dynamics of politics manifest in different forms such as fear, mistrust, corruption and exclusion throughout landowners’ experiences and attitudes.

The participants in FVCT’s project have different motivators and experiences of being involved in conservation efforts. These experiences and discourses allow us to explore and understand different identities and values attached to nature that influence the management of the environment. The main values connected to land include identities and personal intrinsic values, business and income values and political values. These values clearly show the ‘human nature’ that exists in the environmental nature. The themes of this study were not limited to these three specific themes, these were however the three main and reoccurring themes that came up throughout the research process. Issues around race also came up throughout interviews, as race within a South African landscape is still a relevant topic. I mention these dynamics briefly in Chapter 5, however as this theme is complex, it requires a research project that can focus mainly on this topic to more adequately understand these dynamics playing out in land ownership.

Exploring and discussing these connections can help to further disrupt the human/nature dichotomy. My research may also allow for further research to take place and add to literature on new debates around the human/nature relationships.

The following chapter provides a critical review of the academic debates on the relationship between nature and humanity, insofar as these impact on mainstream thinking about and practice of conservation. I also explore emerging alternative debates, particularly within geography, that offer new ways to understand and conceptualise the inter-relation between nature and humanity. These emerging debates expose connections that break down the human/nature distinctions and allow us to rethink the question, 'what is nature?', and how we should conserve it. Chapter three describes the geographical and ecological context of my study area in the Overberg, and explains my research methodology. Chapters four, five and six analyse the main themes arising from my data that include economic values, emotions and politics. Chapter four is the first body of the research analysis findings - economics and nature. Chapter five is the next theme of values found in my research - identity, emotions and nature. Chapter six is the final key value under the core research findings of the project - politics and the environment. These values of nature understood through conservation practice allow us to understand the ways humans and nature are intertwined, although on a small scale it opens up further possible discussion of the need for conservation to move away from the human/nature distinction towards more human involved conservation practice methods. Chapter seven offers a conclusion to the dissertation and references can be found in the final section of this dissertation.

## **2. Chapter Two - Literature Review**

*“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.”<sup>1</sup>*

*– Aldos Leopold, 1938 (1887-1948).*

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### **2.1 Conservation methods and the ideal of nature**

#### **2.1.1 Human/Nature dichotomy and conservation**

According to John Beardsley (2013), land design has a significant role in environmental management as it shapes the way animals, humans and nature interact. In designing conservation spaces, the inclusion of humans has been largely discouraged (Fall: 2005). Mainstream conservation practices have aimed to maintain an ideal of ‘naturalness’ that has become increasingly valuable in conventional environmentalist approaches as it works to protect, preserve and restore wilderness and the ‘pristine’ (Hettinger: 2014). Ned Hettinger states in his article, ‘Valuing Naturalness in the Anthropocene: Now More than Ever’, that approaches of preserving and restoring ecosystems are based on recreating an “untouched, natural paradise” that replicates a pre-human environment rather than a human inclusive space (2014: 8).

One method of mainstream conservation to recreate an ‘untouched’ natural space is the implementation of physical boundaries between nature and society (Fall: 2005). Juliet Fall (2005) suggests physical boundaries aim to protect nature from human interference. Other approaches in conservation include re-wilding, preserving and protecting. Re-wilding aims to result in nature’s autonomy through restoring ecological and evolutionary processes before leaving nature to continue independently (Hettinger: 2014). Preserving and protecting aim to prevent further change in pristine areas of nature, mainly changes caused by human activity (Hettinger: 2014).

Conventional ideals of equilibrium have also often been used in conservation methods. The ‘balance of nature’ theory used in equilibrium ecology assumes ecological systems are in states of stable equilibriums, referred to as homeostasis (Grabbatin & Rossi: 2012). Brian Grabbatin and Jairus Rossi suggest in their article, ‘Political ecology: Non-equilibrium science and nature–society research’, that the “balance of nature” ideal has been historically rooted in the physical science discipline (2012: 277). However there has, in recent years, been a shift in conservation methods from an equilibrium science approach to a non equilibrium approach (Grabbatin & Rossi: 2012). Grabbatin and Rossi define a non-equilibrium

landscape as an “open ended, yet historically conditioned site that is produced by multi-scalar interactions between organic and inorganic entities” (2012: 277).

Biodiversity is another popular conservation goal used in the management of nature. Biodiversity is the aims of creating a space whereby a variety of species, flora and natural processes can exist, however this often only includes species and flora indigenous to the area being protected (Hettinger: 2014). In order to achieve biodiversity, methods of preserving, restoring and re-wilding are used. Hettinger describes biodiversity, specifically within an African context, as a way of creating an “African garden” (2014: 3). There are however debates challenging how diverse biodiversity is, as it excludes many other species and flora types from its conservation design, including humans (Pooley: 2010). Simon Pooley suggests that conservation designs themselves are based on the values and desires of specific ideals (2010). Pooley argues that conservationists in particular, hold “value laden conceptions of indigeneity and the ‘natural’ bound up with the social concerns and ecological orthodoxy of their time” (2010: 618).

A common shared goal in these discussed mainstream conservation approaches is the aim of creating a pristine space of nature through mainly the separation of the environment from humans. These aims of conservation have been mainly shaped by the very idea of what nature should be. Nature is one of the most contested terms in the English languages as it has proved difficult to define (Soper: 1995). According to Jamie Lorimer (2012), the ideology of nature in physical geography based on scientific knowledge has played a role in guiding mainstream conservation design by a set of transcendent archetypes such as species, habitats and ecosystems. The modernist imagining of nature has been a hegemonic understanding influencing geographical discipline whilst also being influenced by it, shaping mainstream environmental policies and conservation practices (Descola & Palsson: 1996). These understandings and concepts of the environment have influenced the way in which both humans and nature are perceived, organised and managed, in turn influencing mainstream environmental policies and practices (Fall: 2005). Although nature is contested, there have been certain ideas of nature influenced by modernistic views that have been more dominant in academia.

Modernism is an ideological school of thought influenced by a certain period of time that shaped different ideas and concepts (Hartley: 2002). John Hartley, in his book, ‘Communication cultural and media studies - the key concepts’, defines modernism as an “artistic or literary movement associated with the intellectual and artistic reaction to the developments at the turn of the twentieth century” (2002: 149).

Modernism emerged as technology, industrialisation, media and globalisation began to influence society in more ways (Macdonis & Plummer: 2008). The concept of modernism has become widely used in public discourse influencing ideas around society, nature, art and many other concepts (Hartley: 2002). According to Lorimer, the modernist understanding of nature imagines the environment as a “pure, singular and stable domain removed from and defined in relation to urban, industrial society” (2012: 593). Matthew Gandy defines nature in a similar way as a “singular entity existing in isolation from the human world” (2012: 727). The modernist definition of nature has been influenced by mostly scientific knowledge around the environment (Wesselink et al: 2013).

Anna Wesselink et al (2013) suggest knowledge of nature has been shaped by hegemonic discourses in geography that rely mainly on physical science. Scientific knowledge of the environment has been a main source of academic debate, that in turn influences the construction of policies designed to manage environmental issues (Wesselink et al: 2013). Science is regarded as an objective and apolitical source that offers relevant, reliable and unbiased information for policies (Wesselink et al: 2013). Wesselink et al (2013) believe the relationship between science and policy is not linear but rather a multiple interaction between the two. Policy discourses both shape and are shaped by their environments and can work to repress less dominant discourses.

David Harvey (2001) suggests hegemonic discourses can also work to shape power relations by placing certain actor's interests in a powerful position within a hierarchal system resulting in top down approaches occurring in environmental management on both local and global scales. Government policies also often follow these hegemonic science based information (Harvey: 2001). Policies set by conservationists therefore are not only shaped by these types of scientific and political discourses but also create these discourses. According to Wesselink et al (2013), scientific knowledge production can fail to recognise political, social and cultural influences involved, specifically within mainstream conservation methods. This ideal has also guided principals in the discipline of geography, in turn shaping the mainstream conservation approaches that have relied on geography to form aims, goals and agendas (Fall: 2005).

Historically, South African conservation has followed many of the same trends of mainstream conservation methods (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009). There has however been a change in South African conservation methods in recent years influenced by the political and historical contexts of the country. As it is important to understand a

country's historical and political context around landownership in order to understand the methods of environmental management processes, I have outlined some important aspects playing out in landownership within South Africa as well as conservation methods widely used in the country.

### **2.1.2 Land and conservation in South Africa**

Land management, organisation and conservation in South Africa is deeply political and complex, both in a historical and present day context. The ways in which conservation is approached by the South African government and conservation organisations are influenced by historical and contemporary political factors (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009). According to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) Annual Report of 2011-2012, the DEA aims to “provide leadership in environmental management, conservation and protection; towards sustainability for the benefit of South Africans and the global community”, influenced by values as the custodians and ambassadors of the environment (2012: 9). The minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Minister Gugile Nkwinti, suggests that “land is a finite resource that sustains our country through the process of food production; it determines our sovereignty as a nation; it is the foundation of our diverse culture, and is at the heart of our being” (DRDLR State Land Audit: 2013: 4). DEA methods are based on “innovative thinking and solutions to environmental management premised on a people-centric approach that recognises the centrality of Batho-Pele” (DEA Annual Report: 2015: 19). The priority of the post apartheid government is first and foremost its citizens, encouraging a human-centred approach to conservation rather than a naturalistic approach (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009). This has however not always been the case in South African conservation approaches.

According to Alexander Paterson and Louis Kotzé (2009) in their book titled, ‘Environmental Compliance and Enforcement in South Africa: Legal Perspectives’, many African countries, including South Africa, have historically pursued policies and practices which alienate conservation from the people. This exclusionary approach was used widely in South Africa's method of protected areas (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009). Paterson and Kotzé (2009) suggest that protected areas were often established on land formerly owned or occupied by local communities resulting in these communities being displaced and denied access to the natural resources which they had previously been dependent on. Conservation in South Africa therefore came to be regarded as an elitist concept to be “preserved for the privileged members of society” (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009: 7). Protected areas were then, according to Paterson and Kotzé, “playgrounds for the privileged elite” (2009:

7). Neglecting local community or indigenous knowledge in conservational policies and practices can be an immense loss as these types of knowledge that can be fundamentally important in preserving the natural area which these groups are so familiar with (Rai & Bawa: 2013).

Other methods used widely in South African conservation include, boundaries, preservation and protection of natural spaces (Flack: 2011). Conservation was however somewhat restricted under apartheid as the country suffered from sanctions restricting the country's involvement in a number of international treaties (Glazewski: 2005). Post apartheid South Africa is now partnered with a number of international environmental treaties (Glazewski: 2005). South African conservation has now focused on developing a more human-centred approach to nature management in South Africa, encouraging all groups in society to participate in the management of protected areas (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009). These conservation methods have shifted with the change in the country's political atmosphere, often shaped by the priorities of the government's main aims. Lungisile Ntsebeza describes the post 1994 South Africa as having committed itself to the "establishment of a democratic, representative and accountable form of governance throughout the country" (2005: 58). Implementing these ideals has however been especially difficult within a South African context due to its historical background.

South African history has been one dominated by authoritarian and despotic practices under colonial rule and the apartheid regime that was in power from 1948 to 1994 (Ntsebeza: 2005). Under colonial rule the country was divided into areas of white commercial farming and rural areas previously defined as Bantustans, it is these areas that have experienced the most challenge in social change and adequate implication of democracy (Ntsebeza: 2005). Under the apartheid regime land was also distributed in favour of the white population in South Africa (Walker & Dubb: 2003).

Jane Carruthers is one of South Africa's first renowned environmental historians, publishing important work on the history of South African environment and conservation. Carruthers (2007), describes a significant shift of land politics with the Lands Act No. 22 of 1994 and the effects it had on conservation. This act outlined legislation on land restitution, land redistribution and land readdress (Carruthers: 2007). Since 1994, older laws around the environment were changed and new laws and legislations introduced (Carruthers: 2007). Land uses in South Africa include game reserves, national parks, formally known as the Apartheid governments

homelands, world heritage sites, forest, marine, biosphere, national and provincial parks as well as recognised reserves and private conservation areas (Carruthers: 2007). These land uses encourage the employment and legislation that works to favour previously disadvantaged black South Africans. Making land and conservation in South Africa deeply politic in nature (Carruthers: 2007). According to Carruther (2007: 295) “there is a cascade of South African governmental and other bodies engaged with environmental and land issues”.

According to Ntsebeza, the new democratic South African government inherited a significantly racially skewed and divided landscape when it came into power in 1994 (2005). It is commonly claimed that land distribution in contemporary South Africa represents a legacy of colonial dispossession (Walker & Dubb: 2003).

South Africa’s total surface area is estimated to be 122 million hectares (Pringle: 2013). Ernest Pringle (2013) states that during the apartheid regime the homelands covered 16 375 435 hectares, this was the total area of land owned by the black population of South Africa. The apartheid government owned the largest amount of land including municipal land, state forests, water catchments, nature reserves, provincial reserves and national parks within South Africa during this period (Pringle: 2013). According to Walker and Dubb “in 1994, as a result of colonial dispossession and apartheid, 87 percent of the land was owned by whites and only 13 percent by blacks” (2013: 2). These figures have however been heavily debated since their release.

The DRDLR State Land Audit (2013) shows that more than 96 million hectares (79%) of land was privately owned and more than 17 million hectares (14%) was state land. It could not be established whether the remaining 8.3 million hectares (7%) belonged to provincial governments or was privately owned (DRDLR State Land Audit: 2013). However, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform stated, that most privately owned land was owned by minority groups, including foreigners (Nkwinti: 2012). According to Nkwinti (2012), the post-apartheid land reform had transferred 7.95 million hectares into black ownership, equivalent to 7.5 percent of formerly white-owned land.

Cherryl Walker and Alex Dubb (2013) state that figures around land distribution can be over simplified creating a misrepresentation of the facts and that there is a common misconception that the post-apartheid state currently owns a quarter of the country. According to Walker and Dubb (2013), when this erroneous state ownership figure is added to the 7.95 million hectares transferred through land

reform, plus the unknown and significant amount of land the black population are buying privately, the discrepancies between white and black ownership are assumed to be drastically reduced and may even be equitable in some provinces. However, they argue that post apartheid state owned land should not be assumed to be a “proxy” for black owned land nor is it a resource for land redistribution (2013: 2). They also suggest that class is increasingly becoming an important determinant in land ownership (Walker and Dubb: 2013: 2).

Whatever the case may be, it is clear that landownership within South Africa is a contested and important topic, specifically for the democratic South African government.

In 2009, the government declared rural development and land reform one of the five priorities on the national agenda (Nkwinti: 2012). The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform was established in May 2009 to focus on these goals (Nkwinti: 2012). Despite the debates surrounding the figures, it is clear that inequalities exist in country’s land distribution. Gugile Nkwinti (2012) suggests that addressing these legacies of unequal land distribution and encouraging movement of productive use of agricultural land to black ownership is a national priority.

These historical and political dimensions of landownership in South Africa have affected the organisation and management of nature, its affects can also be seen in conservation approaches. As one of the contemporary government’s main aims is to address past inequalities and decrease poverty, it is often incorporated into sustainable development and conservation agendas as it offers a platform to address these inequalities by creating employment (DEA Annual Report: 2015). The Environmental Affairs Department has aimed to create jobs through conservational projects using methods that integrate humans and nature for mutual benefits (DEA Annual Report: 2015).

It is however, not only government conservation approaches that encourage human inclusion in conservation, but also mainstream conservation approaches or conservation organisations. Paterson and Kotzé (2009) believe that South African conservation has developed approaches that include both private owners and the public. The growing recognition of the valuable land held by landowners in South Africa has also led to methods of conservation that encourages their participation (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009).

A main focus for contemporary conservation organisations and the South African government’s DEA has been the clearing and controlling of alien species that

threaten indigenous flora and biodiversity (DEA Annual Report: 2015). Job creation projects have been encouraged through the employment of individuals from local communities to facilitate the clearing (DEA Annual Report: 2015). Raymond Dasmann (1988) suggests in his article, 'Towards a biology of consciousness', that the way in which a landscape is designed and managed can help to bridge the gap between humans and nature. In order to establish long lasting successful conservation goals as well as development goals, the roles of humans within the environment cannot be ignored as our development is dependent to an extent on the well being of the natural world (Dasmann: 1988). South Africa has implemented new methods of sustainable development that both conserve nature whilst encouraging the development of the country's society (Paterson & Kotzé: 2009).

These changes in conservation methods are not only evident within South Africa. A number of debates and ideas that challenge the hegemonic modernist view of nature, that have influenced mainstream environmental management policies and practices, have encouraged a focus on human dimensions that play out in nature. In recent years the Anthropocene theory has given rise to a focus on these new debates that explore alternative understandings of the human/nature relationship dichotomy, in turn encouraging alternative conservation methods. Discussing these new debates allow us to unpack the inconsistencies of the human/nature dichotomy and understand both nature and humans in new ways.

## **2.2 New debates in geography**

### **2.2.1 The Anthropocene**

As previously discussed, the environment has been conventionally conceptualised by hegemonic discourses in academia as an apolitical and isolated entity. In recent years a growing body of work made popular by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer (2000), argue that Earth has moved out of the Holocene into a new epoch recognising human dimensions in nature. The Anthropocene concept describes an era that is human dominated as mankind's influence and power become central in shaping the environment (Crutzen: 2002). Crutzen suggests that the modern understanding of nature is "out of date" as "humanity now forms nature" (2002: 1). Lorimer describes the Anthropocene as the "public death of the modern understanding of nature removed from society" (2012: 593).

Paul Elrich started making links between humans and nature in his article, Human natures: Genes, cultures and the human prospect. Elrich (2000) suggests that whilst humans have shaped environments, it has equally shaped us. According to Elrich

(2000), environmental science has started to make a move away from ecological and physical science approaches to include approaches from behavioural sciences to look at the links that exist between humans and environment. It is these links that are important in order to encourage inclusive conservation approaches (Elrich: 2000).

Similarly, Donna Meadows published important work that began to draw on these links. Meadows, Donna Meadows published a significant book in 1972, *The Limits to Growth*, that drew on long term studies of global trends occurring in population, the environment and economics and the links between them. Meadows et al (1972) suggest that human population numbers and human behaviour play a significant role in resource and pollutions issues.

A number of phenomena in recent years show the extent to which human activities affect nature, exposing the inconsistencies in the definition of nature as isolated from humanity. Many fauna and flora habitats have come under threat of deforestation, global warming, spreading alien species and human influenced activities (Hettinger: 2014). Energy use has increased drastically in order to sustain the growing human populations, releasing more sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere (Crutzen: 2002). Greenhouse gases have had drastic consequences for Earth's climate, warming, photochemical smog and acid precipitation being among some of the consequences (Crutzen: 2002).

The expansion of the human population on Earth is at all time high with thirty to fifty percent of the planet's land surface now being exploited by humans (Crutzen: 2002). Jan Zasiewicz et al (2011: 1) state that "human activity has indeed changed the Earth on a scale comparable with some of the major events of the ancient past". Contemporary events clearly signal that there is not a fixed boundary between human and the environment (Bonner: 2008). It is evident that humans are playing a central role in geology and ecology on a large scale that has implications on Earth's oceans, biodiversity, landscapes and climate (Zasiewicz et al: 2011). Climate change has become a main priority for conservation efforts in recent years. According to Nicole Bonner (2008), society/nature connections can clearly be seen through processes of climate warming and environmental degradation.

The concept of the Anthropocene has encouraged discussions around the connections that exist between society and the environment through mainly environmental degradation such as climate change (Lorimer: 2012). This has also encouraged geographers to discuss other debates around the society/environment

dualism (Lorimer: 2012). These perspectives recognise nature as being “inexcusably social” as society and nature “intertwine in ways that make their separation impossible” (Castree: 2001: 3). Noel Castree, in his article, ‘Socializing nature: theory, practice, and politics’, refers to this process as the “socialization of the natural” (2001: 1).

The Anthropocene epoch notion not only marks scientific environmental impacts for Earth but also political, social and cultural impacts (Chakrabarty: 2009). There is a growing body of literature on alternative debates that explores aspects of identity and nature that challenge the hegemonic ideologies that have shaped environmental management policies until now. These new debates also recognise the role of culture, business, politics and history in nature.

Some alternative fields of study such as queer ecology, eco-feminism and political ecology, discuss a number of debates around imagining nature. Hettinger (2014) argues that aiming to replicate ‘virginal’ environments shaped by these normative belief systems is unrealistic as the roles of humans become increasingly recognised. New imaginings of nature have thus encouraged new methods of conservation that include humans within natural spaces. Hettinger (2014) believes the breakdown of society/nature dualism emphasises the need for environmentalism to move away from modernist ideals of nature as an independent entity that have until recently played a role in shaping the aims and goals of conservation (2014). These ideas also encourage new understandings around how and why humans value nature and in what way these can encourage conservational efforts (Hettinger: 2014). A somewhat obvious and well recognised human/nature connection is the economic and business value of the environment. This is a good place to start in the upcoming discussion around alternative literature before going on to discussions around politics and identity.

### **2.2.2 Business and nature**

Castree describes capitalism as an “economic system predicted on a class relation that is growth orientated and depends upon inter-firm competition, that searches for new products, markets, production techniques and raw material sources” (2008: 142). The implementation of the capitalist system relies on the use of neo-liberal policies including marketisation, privatisation, deregulation and reregulation (Castree: 2008). These policies can allow natural resources to be commodified to gain economic profit and supply a demand in society for certain services and products (Castree: 2008). Nature therefore has an economic value on both a small

scale to local communities as well as for large corporations (Bermejo & Hanlon: 2014).

According to Robert Bermejo, the commodification of the environment means “an assertion of human control over nature” (2014: 23). Bermejo suggests that the commodification of nature will lead to the “de facto negation of the systemic character of nature” as it will cease to be considered an eco-systemic entity and becomes a series of products, commodities and privatised plots of land (2014: 23). This in turn will open up the path to the destruction of nature as private land becomes a means of production, exploited through a capitalistic approach for profit maximisation (Bermejo: 2014). According to Susan Meeker-Lowry the ‘father of conservation’, Aldo Leopold, believed that the “conservation of nature is an act of harmony between man and the land”, the commodification of nature will then destroy this harmony as well as nature itself as it leads to the abuse of land (1995: 158). This is in part due to the commodification of land that leads humans to the false pretence that nature “belongs to us” (to Meeker-Lowry: 1995: 158). It is a popular opinion by green conservationists that in order to maintain this harmony in conservation efforts, capitalism should be isolated (Meeker-Lowry: 1995).

Over the years, there has also been an increase of the neo-liberalisation of conservation as capitalism finds new ways to make money whilst conservationists engage with capitalism for financial support (Holmes: 2012, Castree: 2008). Politicians and corporations have both become ‘green’, Dan Brockington and Rosaleen Duffy (2008) describe this concept as ‘greenwashing’. Environmental NGOs aim to promote sustainability and protect the natural world, however in order to operate they often need to raise finances through links with capitalist entities (Castree: 2008). In turn corporations rely on the conservation of environments they are commodifying in order for them to continue exploiting those resources by legitimising their actions. (Castree: 2008). Many corporations can be part of the process of environmental damage and in order to gain a ‘cleaner’ image and reputation they partner with conservation NGOs (Brockington et al: 2008).

Castree (2008) suggests, environmental problems are communicated to the public by the media, governments and those in power. Historically the issue of global warming was debated, refuted and sometimes ignored as it was damaging to the reputation of the manufacturing processes of the capitalist system. However, now that it creates a demand for products it is more widely acknowledged by corporations themselves (Castree: 2008). Jim Igoe et al suggest that “capitalism is turning the environmental problems it creates into opportunities for further

commodification and market expansion” (2010: 489). Environmental problems such as global warming can therefore be used by entities to exploit the natural market for economic profit (Castree: 2008). Corporations can take advantage by creating a demand for products and services; for example the development of sustainable technologies or so-called environmentally-friendly products now being offered to an increasingly receptive market (Igoe et al: 2010).

Green advertising, social networking and ethical consumption can benefit both corporations and NGOs as both parties benefit from legitimacy whilst NGOs benefit from much needed funding (Brockington & Duffy: 2010). Corporate social responsibility has become a main focus for many businesses as rising environmental awareness and human responsibility gain popularity (Hanks: 2003, Holmes: 2012). George Holmes (2012) argues that the selling of conservation through ethical consumption can in some cases lead to the exploitation of nature, as the commodification of nature for capital gain can be disguised under a conservation design. In these partnerships there are also often regulations on conservation groups outlining the corporations’ values that need to be adapted to receive the support and funds (Hanks: 2003, Holmes: 2012).

Holmes (2012) suggests that both conservation and nature support the capitalist system in both discursive and practical ways. Conflicts of interest can however arise between corporations, governments and NGOs, as competing agendas of NGOs, conservationists, neo-liberal businesses and locals can lead to conflicts (Wolmer: 2003, Chapin: 2004). Peter Frumkin (2008) suggests that in order to increase effectiveness, legitimacy and accountability in these relationships, the local communities and organisations need to work closely together and with businesses or governmental departments. Capitalism can be seen as both a problem and a solution in the natural world as it can work to create environmental issues, but can also work to promote protection (Frumkin: 2008). Capitalism in literature has not only focused on large scale business relationships with nature but also on economic dynamics in the environment for individuals such as farmers and landowners.

Early studies of conservation behaviour such as Ian Brotherton’s (1991) focus on the economic motivation and value of nature for farmers. These early studies show farmers’ behaviours towards conservation being dominated by their interests of the farm business (Ahnström et al: 2009). According to Johan Ahnström et al, these studies assumed that “farmers behave as profit maximising agents responding in uncomplicated ways to the financial incentives on offer” (2009: 41). There are also more recent studies that show similar narratives, a survey of landowners in Scotland

by Gerard Wynn et al. (2001) found that the main motive for participating in conservation was to increase farm values. Economic values of land often shape and determine the conservation and management of owner's land. Tiina Silvasti's (2003) study, 'The cultural model of 'the good farmer' and the environmental question in Finland', showed that Finnish farmers believed landscapes were not primarily to be conserved or preserved but also needed to be cultivated and shaped. They did however strongly believe the cultivation of the landscape had to be done in harmony with nature without exploiting and abusing the land (Silvasti: 2003).

Geoff Wilson and Kaley Hart (2000) also found that farmers were driven in their conservation participation decisions mainly by financial motivations. Economic considerations were the primary motivating factors for farmers to participate in conservation such as financial reasons and securing a source of income (Wilson & Hart: 2000). According to Ahnström et al (2009), these financial motivations as a main driver for conservation were found in a number of other studies. For example, case studies by Gerard Deffuant (2001) and a number of other comparative studies (Drake et al: 1999) also highlight farmers' economic reasons for participating in environmental conservation programmes. Wilson and Hart noted that economic motivations are "expressed in various terms, such as profit maximisation, security, long-term farm viability and/or risk minimisation, capital investment" (cited in Ingram et al: 2013: 3). According to Jane Mills (2013), lack of conservation efforts are in part due to farmers who hold strong views of maximising production from their land or farmers who are afraid of outside intervention and loss of control of their management. Ahnström et al (2009) claimed that economic reasons for participating in conservation behaviour are however nearly always accompanied by other motivations, I discuss some of these other motivations later in this chapter.

On one hand, conservationists and scholars suggest the separation of capitalism from both the environment and conservation efforts to ensure the protection of nature (Meeker-Lowry: 1995). This stand point believes that nature cannot be valued as a capitalistic asset as this will lead to the exploitation and abuse of nature as a commodity (Meeker-Lowry: 1995). On the other hand, some argue that placing economic value on nature can in fact help protect and preserve it. Pavan Sukhdev (2011), an environmental economist, argues in a TED talk, that placing economic value on natural processes and resources can increase job creation, wealth and encourage the protection and sustainability of nature. Pavan Sukdev became the study leader for The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) which was commissioned by the G85 and hosted by the UNEP. TEEB focuses on the roles that

economic and human welfare play in issues of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation (Sukhdev: 2008). TEEB aims to propose new solutions at policy makers, administrators, citizens as well as businesses. Often these solutions are around the 'greening' of the economy (Sukhdev: 2008).

Green economy has become a popular discussion around including nature in the economic system, referring to an economy that aims for sustainable development without negative impacts on the environment (Brand: 2012). There has however been a movement of conservation that is inclusive of alternative values to economic values of nature. The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services (IPBES) was established in 2012 and consists of over 126 governments, including South Africa (Pascual et al: 2017). IPBES aims to encourage the inclusion of the valuation of nature's contributions to people in the decision making processes of conservation, calling for a pluralistic approach to recognising the diversity of values of nature that exist (Pascual et al: 2017). Pascual et al (2017) emphasise the importance of intrinsic values of nature, often linked to people's identities and the achievement of a fulfilled human life. Good quality of life from some perspectives may derive from "living in harmony with nature" (Pascual et al: 2017: p.14).

Similarly, Kofi Annan, the United Nations secretary General. Called for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) in his report to the UN General Assembly (Carpenter et al: 2006). The objective of the MA, carried out from 2001 to 2005, was to look at the consequences ecosystem changes have on human well-being (Carpenter et al: 2006). Through establishing scientific basis for actions to enhance conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and the contributions to human well being (Carpenter et al: 2006). According to the MA, human well being has "multiple constituents" such as "basic material for a good life, feeling well and having a healthy physical environment, such; good social relations,; security and freedom of choice and action, including the opportunity to achieve what an individual values doing and being" (Carpenter et al: 2006: 9). Conservation should not only recognise economic aspects of nature but also aspects of identity and belonging.

### **2.2.3 Identity and nature**

Barbara Bender suggests that landscapes are deeply political, cultural and social spaces as "people create a sense of place and belonging, loss or negation" (in Bender & Winer: 2001: 1). Landscapes can therefore be spaces for a network of personal experiences that hold values to individuals as well as groups (Foss: 2009). According to Grabbatin and Rossi (2012), nature can then hold intrinsic value to

humans as it embodies local social relationships and personal identities as well as extrinsic values. As Bender puts it, spaces can hold the “complexity of peoples’ lives, historical contingency, contestation, motion and change” that shape an individual’s personal identity and experiences (in Bender & Winer: 2001: 2). Humans thus often modify their landscapes to fulfil these certain desires and values they identify with (Brunckhorst: 2002). Culture allows humans to express themselves in relation to these spaces of nature through the way they design and manage them (Morphy & Flint: 2000). Human relationships with a place then shape their identities, culture and value systems, which in turn work to shape their environments (Caftanzoglou in Bender & Winer: 2001).

Identities of humanity and the conceptualisation of ‘place’ are both socially constructed notions based on human agency and activity (Caftanzoglou in Bender & Winer: 2001). Culture and identities in relation to spaces and places can shape representations of both nature and humanity alike (Caftanzoglou in Bender & Winer: 2001). The ideas of ‘being human’ have been constructed by factors such as biological and social constructions, unlike in the past, the definition of ‘humanness’ today is rarely spoken about without the conception of nature (Peterson: 2001). Historically, the identity of ‘being human’, influenced by hegemonic ideologies, placed humans separate and above all other living beings, creating an identity of humanity as superior and external from nature (Peterson: 2001). Anna Peterson argues that being human can no longer be understood “except in relationship to other beings and forms of being” (2001: 4). What it means to be human is being redefined through the use of various different perspectives and discussions in geography such as queer ecology and eco feminism, in turn influencing land management behaviours and values and challenging the exclusion of humans in conservation design.

The meaning of queer originally refers to something that is different, strange, odd, unusual and out of the norm (Grace: 2008). Queer has been used to describe homosexuality which goes against what is considered the ‘norm’ in society, offering an identity for this group of people who do not belong within the heteronormative society (Grace: 2008). Heterosexual identities are considered as the ‘norm’ and more powerful within society, the queer challenges these ideals of the normative belief systems, such as heteronormativity (Mortimer-Sandilans & Erickson: 2010, Grace: 2008).

Feminist perspectives are also useful in challenging normative power structures. Women, similar to the non-heterosexual population, have often been considered the

'other' in comparison to the superior human identity, which was during colonial time, the white European male (Bonner: 2008). Similar to the queer movement, the feminist movement allowed for women to rethink their identities that had been constructed by hegemonic ideals of women's roles in society (Bonner: 2008). Both queer and feminist perspectives allow the deconstruction of a concept beyond its normative and hegemonic definition (Grace: 2008). Eco-feminism and queer ecology makes use of these alternative perspectives to challenge the normative and hegemonic ideal of the natural (Gaard: 1993).

Greta Gaard explains in her book, 'Eco-feminism : women, animals, nature', that eco feminism draws on the "insights of ecology, feminism, and socialism" and its "basic premise is that the ideology that authorises oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature" (1993: 338). Queer and feminism are deconstructive and denaturalising perspectives as they unpack ideas and resists that a concept is fixed in its normative hegemonic definition, deconstructing ideas beyond its fixed definition (Grace: 2008). According to Andre Grace (2008), thinking about the notions and concepts of 'man made', 'artificial' and 'natural', make these perspectives useful in challenging dominant discourse to deconstruct hegemonic knowledge systems. These theories offer useful and new ways to conceptualise ideas in geography, particularly when it comes to understanding the relationship between the human and the natural world (Grace: 2008).

Feminist and queer perspectives provide new ways of understanding the roles within society that challenge 'otherness' (Grace: 2008). Therefore these perspectives also allow for analysis of identities and roles shaped by dominant ideals (Mortimer-Sandilans & Erickson: 2010). For example, certain sectors have been placed as less 'superior' to men and heterosexuals in society, similar to the way in which nature has been placed as less and external to humans (Grace: 2008). Eco-feminism and queer ecology challenge these hierarchal power structures that marginalise nature in modern societies and questions aspects around the evolution of human and nature identities (Castree & Braun: 2001).

Hettinger (2014) argues that the Anthropocene can falsely place humanity in a dominating position in relation to nature by ignoring the autonomy of the environment, and in a way ignoring the roles of humans within nature that are non-exploitative. Humans are invasive, exploitative and objectifying according to the Anthropocene notion (Bonner: 2008). Crutzen and Stoermer suggest that humans are in a dominant position as they "form nature" whilst nature is represented as a

passive entity with humans in a central role (2000: 1). The queer perspective highlights that there are however various interrelationships that occur between humans and nature (Bonner: 2008). Bonner argues that we are in fact within “the web of life” although the category of human is thought to be above and detached from nature (2008: 17). Queer and feminist perspectives can disrupt the idea that humans have complete control over our environment, emphasising the interdependent relationship that exists between humans and their environments (Morton: 2010). These views also emphasise the way in which space is liquid as it changes over time, re-shifting identities, relationships and power dynamics (Morton: 2010).

As queer and feminism notions emphasise that identities are unstable and ever evolving, it is useful in thinking about the identity of being human and the way in which it is rather always in a “state of becoming”, reshaping relationships (Bonner: 2008: 14). Rethinking the identities of humanity is useful in destabilising the notion that man is central to everything (Castree & Nash: 2004). As Morton (2010) states, humans and the environment are interlinked rather than where one begins, the other ends as the identities of nature and humanity do not exist in isolation from each other. These relationships show the ways in which humans are not necessarily exploitative and abusive towards nature, but that we hold values of nature that hold significant importance to our personal identities as humans and individuals (Burton: 2004). As humans design their landscapes based on specific ideological beliefs, interests and values they hold, landscapes are cultural spaces that are organised partly based on cultural and personal identities (Morton: 2010). Space and identity are then entangled (Morton: 2010).

Queer ecology and eco-feminism are thus useful in exposing false boundaries between humans and their environment as neither are fixed or stable in their identities and existence (Morton: 2010). As queer and feminism theories are useful in challenging both human and nature’s identity, alternative ways to imagine both identities and interactions reveal the inconsistencies that exist within the human/nature dualism (Bonner: 2008). As we begin to view nature differently, it is also necessary to view conservation differently as it aims to protect and preserve the environment (Fall: 2005). Soper emphasises in her book, ‘What is Nature? Culture, politics and the non-human’, that the hegemonic modernist conceptualisation of nature is a way of ‘othering’ humanness from the environment, imagining the environment as a “pristine otherness to human culture” (1995: 16).

Through the use of these alternative perspectives, conservation can begin to challenge the view of separation and method of 'othering' nature from humans as we begin to recognise the significant relationship between humans and nature (Soper: 1995). Understanding landowners' identities and values has become increasingly important in conservation as efforts recognise the need for privately owned land to be preserved and protected (Carr and Tait: 1991).

Susan Carr and Joyce Tait (1991) argue that farmers and conservationists view 'conservation problems' differently; thus have different objectives and motivations. According to Jason Beedell and Tahir Rehman (1999), landowners' attitudes and values around nature and its protection are significantly different to those held within government, its agencies and in environmental NGOs. A good place to start in finding alternative conservation methods that are inclusive of humans in nature is then to understand the roles of personal identity and intrinsic values in environment/human relationships.

According to Rob Burton (2004), identity and 'self concept' correlate with both one's habitat and moral obligation, together these all work to shape an individual's attitude and behaviour to certain aspects. Ben Schoon and Rita Te Grotenhuis (2000) argue that farmers have social identities, shaped by social norms, as well as their own individual personal value systems and views shaped by their personal experiences and moral values. This then suggests that landowners hold their own views on what makes a 'good landowner', their own set of opinions that work as a kind of 'internal frame of reference' determining perceptions of external factors and preferences (Schoon and Te Grotenhuis, 2000). McHenry (1998) suggests a need to analyse the ways in which individuals conceptualise and interpret their worlds, specifically views of conservation and sustainable farming. This is necessary as farmers "negotiate the notion of conservation to fit their constructions of farming that suggest that local constructions of nature and environment amongst farmers are most likely to be important determinants of the propensity to engage with agri-environmental policies" (McHenry cited in Mills et al: 2013: 6).

Joanne Vinning et al (1992) believe that intrinsic motivations are those which are motivated by the personal values, beliefs and environmental sympathies of an individual. These are then reflected by a personal sense of environmental responsibility and accountability that result in conservation efforts of farmers and landowners (Vinning et al: 1992). Commitment and interest in the environment can be a clear indicator of these types of intrinsic motives (Vinning et al: 1992). Paul Berentsen et al's (2007) survey study of farmers in the Netherlands, found that

farmers' commitment to their environments strongly motivated owners to participate in nature conservation.

In a similar study by Irina Herzon and Merit Mikk (2006), interests in wildlife, positively correlates with the willingness to adapt environmentally friendly methods. In an evaluation of the 'whole farm scheme' run in Wales, it was found that owners were motivated by both financial reasons as well as desires to improve their natural environments (Ingram et al: 2009). This study also found a desire for owners to return to traditional farming methods used by previous generations such as hedge laying, showing the importance of knowledge in land management (Ingram et al: 2009). Queer and feminist perspectives show the ways in which landownership can be "an embedded index of processes of exchange and negotiation of identity" (Myers in Flint & Morphy: 2000: 87). Grabbatin and Rossi believe that conservation needs to understand the value of the landscapes to "livelihoods, regional identities and people's environmental imaginaries" in order to implement effective and inclusive methods (2012: 276). Another dynamic playing out in the human/nature relationship is politics.

#### **2.2.4 Politics and nature**

As previously discussed, the modernist view of nature has understood the environment as a non political entity (Castree: 2001). Imagining nature and associated practices such as conservation as isolated from politics has supported the human/nature boundary that in turn has shaped mainstream management methods of nature that exclude political and neo-liberal values (Castree: 2001). The recognition of politics in nature has gained popularity relatively recently in the geographical discipline. As Harvey puts it in his book, 'Justice, nature and the geography of difference', "politics and environment are thoroughly interconnected" (1996: 23). Gerard Toal et al (1998) argue that sustainable development and conservation projects are not apolitical discourses but are rather shaped and practised by hegemonic discourses set out in the political world. Sustainable development and conservation policies are thus created by certain actors within society who hold power (Chapin: 2004). Raymond Byrant and Sinead Bailey (1997) refer to this as a 'politicized environment' as the acknowledgment of human political roles in nature have led to a widespread public geopolitical discussion around political factors that play out in the environment.

New discussions within the field of political ecology have exposed dynamics of politics and power that play out in nature. Debates such as those within political

ecology emphasise the international and micro scale implications both global and local politics have on the environment. Byrant and Bailey (1997) refer to political ecology as a means of looking at the environment as a platform through which different levels of social actors with unbalanced political power compete for access to and control of natural resources. Political ecology is therefore an interdisciplinary space whereby the “physical and social sciences are utilized to understand nature-society relationships” (Grabbatin & Rossi: 2012: 275). This perspective poses a challenge to ecological knowledge production and expert managements that follow ideals of the normative assumptions of a pristine nature. Alternative knowledge of nature as a product through its relations between political, social, economic and scientific processes emphasises a need to consider landscapes in their natural, cultural and political dimensions (Grabbatin & Rossi: 2012). Political ecology also offers a space that uses non-equilibrium science to explore political dimensions of ecology and nature in order to “bridge the physical-human divide in geography” (Grabbatin & Rossi: 2012: 275).

Conservation organisations have historically aimed to be mainly non-political entities (Brockington & Duffy: 2010), however as Harvey points out, “all ecological projects (and arguments) are simultaneously political economic projects (and arguments) and vice versa” (1996: 25). Ecological projects and arguments are rather never socially neutral as socio-political arguments are also never ecologically neutral (Harvey: 1996). Ismael Vaccaro et al believe that the “act of declaring and implementing a conservation policy is a paradigmatic example of competition for environmental control” (2013: 255). This can be seen in conservation methods such as protected areas “by definition, establish jurisdictions and borders that define exclusionary rights” (Vaccaro et al: 2013: 255). Entities involved in conservational policies and practices can include governments, stake holders, local conservation councils and local communities making wildlife protection efforts deeply political and complex (Hanks: 2013). The very concepts of conservation and nature can differ between these entities, as do the practices of land management (Hanks: 2013).

In recent years there has been a rise of environmental conflict as people are being displaced for resource development such as dams, mines, forests (Rai & Bawa: 2013). Conservationists are often reluctant to get involved in situations that are considered too political such as supporting indigenous groups against logging or mining business that threaten their livelihoods and homes, especially if such corporations are sponsors (Brockington & Duffy: 2010). This creates conflict and puts the control over territories in the hands of the state (Mackelworth et al: 2013).

Local views and knowledge are also often overlooked, neglected and excluded contributing to further conflict (Hanks: 2013). State control over resources can ensure that the states interest are being prioritised over other group's interests, often this is a state's interest in growing their market position in the global market (Harvey: 2006). Conflicts and wars over resource can come out of the struggle over control of land and resources, exposing nature and its management as deeply political (Mackelworth et al: 2013).

Politicised environments and geopolitical discourses open up discussions around the ways in which ecological practices can be profoundly political and economic projects at their core on global and local scales, as conservation and nature can be platforms for political visions and mobilisation to occur (Toal et al: 1998). Conservation can then be used in some cases as a way to gain control and power over land and territories (Toal et al: 1998). Securing power and control over space under the name of conservation and development are becoming common occurrences worldwide (Lunstrum: 2013). Sovereignty is then practised through these projects and result in unequal interactions as non-state actors are excluded (Lunstrum: 2013).

In order to avoid conflicts arising from conservation efforts, the co-operation of all actors at different levels is important as it can facilitate negotiations with the state (Mackelworth et al: 2013). Trust can be built through collective management for a common environmental interest that acts as a bridge for future political co-operation, it is then important to ensure support and communication between local communities and conservation organisations (Mackelworth et al: 2013). Although conflicts can arise from conservation, it can also be used as a solution for conflicts by bringing together people with different ideologies under a shared goal (Mackelworth et al: 2013, Rai & Bawa: 2013).

According to Hanks (2013), counter debates to hegemonic discourses of geography and science need to be recognised so as to have a more equitable approach towards both knowledge discourses and policy making discussions and decisions. Although conservation still faces many challenges, alternative debates and discussions around the dynamics of identity, values, politics and capitalism in nature are encouraging new conservation methods. Conservation has increasingly recognised the relationship that exists between humanity and nature with the growing popularity of different discussions taking place around the environment. The acknowledgement of human connection to the environment, has encouraged environmental protection methods to include humans rather than isolate them.

These new methods of conservation not only encourage humans within their design but also recognise the challenges that exist in mainstream conservation approaches.

### **2.3 The human/nature breakdown and new conservation methods**

Mac Chapin (2004) emphasises some main challenges facing conservation in his article, 'A challenge to conservationists', including the fact that only certain actors are able to participate in policy decision making and implementation which can lead to a top down approach. As conservationists tend to focus mainly on biodiversity, this can result in the exclusion of the local co-operation, knowledge and participation in projects, thus inclusion of humans in conservation efforts need to become a focal point (Chapin: 2004). Conservation organisations often claim they are apolitical and reluctant to get involved in any issues around local or indigenous people which in many cases lead to a disconnect between organisations and the local communities (Chapin: 2004).

Exclusion has also been intensified by the lack of recognising human identity and values within nature (Rai & Bawa: 2013). Conflicts of interests and values as well as the lack of communication can create differing views of how, what and where should be conserved, further intensifying conflicts in conservation efforts (Chapin: 2004). The interests of those who hold the power to shape policies and practice of land management are often the ideals that are implemented in the design and management of nature, these one sided and top down strategies often follow hegemonic discourse such as science based policies that ignore social realities (Chapin: 2004).

Discussions such as those in political ecology, then expose the ways in which contemporary land management needs to incorporate "power dynamics within and between communities" (Grabatin & Rossi: 2012: 276). Mark Dowie (2009) suggests that in order to promote successful economic development as well as environmental protection, governments and conservationists need to do extensive geographical and historical research. Recognising that space, time, place and nature are constituted in social practices and act out in relation to one another, can allow for more efficient methods (Harvey: 2006).

Nitin Rai and Kamaljit Bawa (2013) suggest that a rights based approach needs to be taken in conservation as efforts of conservation should be based on local knowledge. Institutions and practices would then empower local communities to better manage biological diversity and nature (Rai & Bawa: 2013).The

decentralisation of these institutions need to occur to avoid exploitation, giving authority to different level actors ensuring that conservation can then be lead by the local communities, which in turn would encourage community participation that is lacking in many projects (Rai & Bawa: 2013).

According to the Grabbatin and Rossi conservation needs to understand the value of the landscapes to “livelihoods, regional identities and people’s environmental imaginaries” (2012: 276). Understanding social values and practices is imperative in implementing successful development and conservational projects (Dowie: 2009). Harvey (2006) states that there are different understandings and valuations of nature often shaped by societal needs and certain needs are valued more highly than others which leads to exclusion. The study of the human relationship with nature that looks at aspects of history, science, policy, and human behaviour” are useful in developing inclusive practices (Kahn: 1997: 1). As human roles become increasingly recognised, conservational management policies and practices have began to shift towards a more human inclusive method such as the rights based approach. This has also given rise to what is referred to as a community based conservation (CBC) method (Hussain: 2002).

CBC methods aim to achieve the goals of conserving nature and improving livelihoods (Hussain: 2002). It also aims to avoid top-down experiences by involving local communities as active partners in conservation practices and to make use of traditional knowledge and local values in the management methods of resources (Hussain: 2002). These CBC projects focus mainly on excluded and marginalised communities following a sustainable development goal (Hussain: 2002). The major emphasis in CBC programmes is conserving nature, based on its utilitarian value, often utilitarian value is based on economic value resulting in economic incentives being the focus of many projects (Hussain: 2002).

Debates around the success of CBC methods for the environment itself vary as some arguments state that whilst it can bring economic benefits to local communities, it often does not benefit nature (Hussain: 2002). Some conservationists have claimed that traditional protectionist approaches need to be used more widely again rather than including humans (Hussain: 2002). Hussain (2002) argues that it is crucial for the shortcomings of human inclusive approaches in conservation to be addressed as it holds potential to work with the needs, aspirations and interests of the community whilst protecting the environment. Hussain suggests that “conservation ethics of local communities are complex and deeply embedded in their local cultural and historical cosmologies, and are therefore

often indiscernible to, or misunderstood by, outsiders, such as staff of community based conservation programmes” (2002: 67). It is therefore vital that local communities are included and encouraged to participate in conservation efforts in their areas.

Local individuals' views, values and ideas on nature management should play a prominent role in these projects (Bawa et al: 2011). Governments can also find it difficult to understand indigenous ways and approaches of doing things (Harvey: 2006). Conservational practices can also result in the displacement and dispossession of local people (Bawa et al: 2011). Strict state control over management of the environment can lead to exclusion, dispossession and alienation of local people, decentralising is then important (Bawa et al: 2011). Centralised state control over nature in the forms of national parks and protected areas has been a leading conservation paradigm shaped by neo-liberal approaches in international conservation (Brockington et al: 2008). Bawa et al propose that the “process of conservation be re-envisioned to include political empowerment to people, restitution of rights and human dignity, and building of local institutions” (2011: 69).

Using local knowledge, institutions and practices in conservation can empower the communities to better manage protected areas, allowing people to govern themselves and manage their own natural resources would encourage participation and success in protecting areas (Rai et al: 2013). Hussain emphasises that “local communities often have wide ranging conservation ethics and institutions that, in addition to economic considerations, are also based on spiritual, aesthetic, religious, moral and other non-economic values” (2002: 67). These different values are important to distinguish how conservation can be encouraged and practiced through the use of other motivators that are not only dependent on economic and natural values (Hussain: 2002). Differing values and groups of people involved in conservation efforts emphasise the ways in which both conservation and nature are social, emotional and political in its practice and policy development. Conservation models have in recent years developed alternative approaches such as the CBC and rights based approaches to encourage the inclusion of humans within the design of nature as the connections are being more widely recognised in literature as well as in conservation.

### **3. Chapter Three - Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Methodology and contextual background**

Challenging the mainstream, modernist concept of nature, this study aims to unpack some of the values shaping the conservation practices of a group of landowners in the Overberg area in South Africa. In order to unpack these values, my objectives included understanding perspectives and experiences of landowners who participated in conservation, specifically those participating in the FVCT alien clearing programme. The attitudes and narratives of landowners were important to understand the ways in which owners' land management behaviours influence conservation and the relationships that are established with nature. The Overberg area and FVCT alien clearing project offered a platform to explore attitudes towards nature and the different levels of values placed on landownership playing out in conservation efforts.

The project was funded by the Agulhas Biodiversity small grants programme to contribute to a larger monitoring programme that hopes to benefit conservation projects in the area and foster efficient conservation methods to encourage inclusive participation of landowners in the area. The Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI) is an initiative that partners with a variety of organisation across the Overberg to secure a healthy natural environment for the area. My research project was also conducted in partnership with the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Knowledge Co-op that aims to link organisations with students on projects that benefit the university, communities, organisations and students. Regular meetings with both FVCT and the UCT Knowledge Co-op benefitted the research process through allowing access to relevant information and details around the research topic.

The FVCT alien clearing project started in 2012 with an initial three year grant from the DEA. Although the majority of funds come from the grant, they also receive funds from other organisations and individuals including ABI, Drakenstein Trust and the World Wide Fund (WWF). FVCT worked with nine conservancy organisations run by landowners at the time of the research in the area. There are currently plans to add four more conservancies in the following three year course to make it 13 conservancies in total stretching beyond its initial allocated area in the first course. FVCT would like to extend their clearing project to a 20 year project to ensure that clearing is effective and follow ups are made on these clearings.

At present, the project runs in three year intervals based on the grant being given. The Alien clearing co-ordinate project is guided by the FVCT conservation manager,

Roger Bailey. Regular meetings are held with landowners and conservancies to access alien clearing activities, priority areas and alien clearing needs. These meetings serve as a useful platform for land users, conservation organisations and government to meet and collectively work towards alien eradication. I attended a number of these meetings which benefited my research immensely as it allowed access to local knowledge as well as access to landowners who were involved in the clearing. It was through these meeting that I was able to meet landowners and set up interviews. Landowners were thereby recruited through means of snowballing. Browne (2005: 47) refers to snowballing as the recruitment method that “employs research into participants social networks to access specific populations. Snowball sampling is then a method of recruiting with the use of participants social networks (Browne: 2005). FVCT was able to recommend participants and gave e direct access to recruiting suitable candidates through their meetings for this study. Landowners were also helpful in recommending other participants and giving me contact details for other farmers and landowners in the area and within their conservancies. I also made use of the cold calling method, I phoned all participants who were recommended by either FVCT or landowners to discuss my research topic and ask for meeting. I found this method to be very effective in recruiting participants. Most landowners were respondent via phone, the only issues I encountered was a language barrier over phone with Afrikaans speakers and lack of signal for some respondents. These challenges did however not pose a significant limitation in my recruitment efforts.

FVCT also works with landowner/user groups to assist in collecting important data on alien infestations and helps to access funding to clear vital areas of alien plants. Alien clearing programmes also offer opportunities for job creation and income generation. The alien clearing project has a team who are organised to clear from the land of the landowners who participate in any of their partnered conservancies. The Overberg area is home to fynbos that is at risk of extinction and endemic to the area making it an important area to protect and preserve through conservation.

The Overberg area covers the area from the south of the Sonderend Mountains to the west Hottentots-Holland Mountains and the east estuary of the Breede River, incorporating the Agulhas Plain area (Conradie: 2010). The Agulhas Plain area is positioned at the southern tip of Africa under the Overberg area (Conradie: 2010). The Agulhas Plain falls under this region covering the Gansbaai, Stanford, Napier, Bredasdorp and Struisbaai areas (Conradie: 2010). The western part of the plain such as Stanford and Hermanus fall under the Overstrand local municipality whilst

the eastern area including Bredasdorp and Elim fall under the Cape Agulhas local municipality (Conradie: 2010). The FVCT works with landowners from all around the Agulhas Plain and Overberg areas. A big concern for me was road access in these areas as they are predominantly dirt roads. The dirt roads were difficult to drive on at times due to rains and on one occasion an interview had to be rescheduled due to flooding.

Access was however not a frequent problem in conducting interviews on farmlands as owners would often re-schedule before the meeting if roads were inaccessible or arrange alternative interview places. I preferred to conduct interviews on the owners' land as I felt they would be most at ease there. The farmers would often take me on tours around the land allowing me to observe their behaviours and values with respect to their land. It is similarly important to understand the history of the Overberg area as this also played a role in the experiences of landownership in the area.

The Overberg area was settled by European settlers not long after the Dutch East India Company set up a refreshment station at the Cape Of Good Hope in 1652 (Conradie: 2010). The search for pasture and an increase of freeholder farmer population lead to the expansion of people into other areas east of the Cape of Good Hope (Conradie: 2010). Development occurred in 1743 along the Kaapse wagenweg (Cape wagon way) with the establishment of Swellendam, Caledon followed in 1813 (Conradie: 2010). The majority of development of towns in the Agulhas plain area occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Bredasdorp in 1857, Hermanus in 1854 and Stanford in 1857 (Conradie: 2010). As the area has a rich history, I made sure to include questions around the history of landowners in the area, often these histories played an important role in their land management practices.

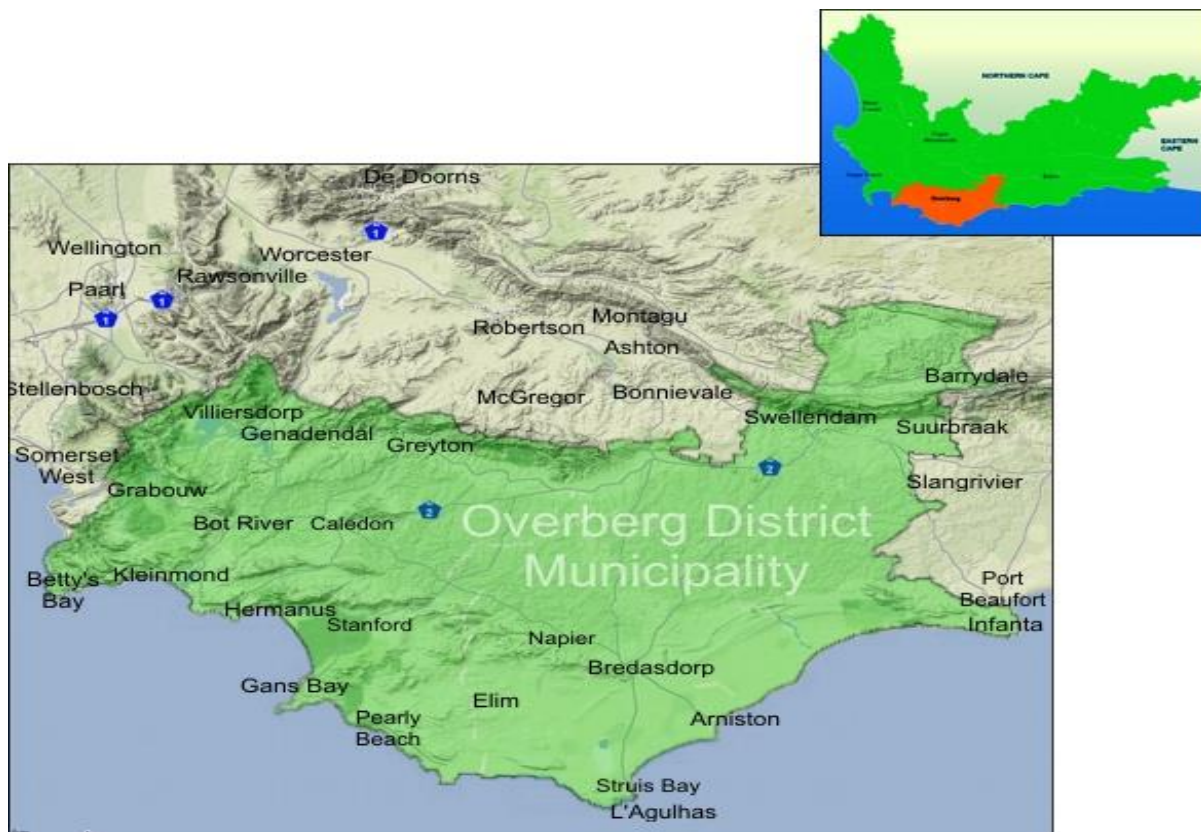


Figure 3.1 - Map of the Overberg area

Source: [www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za)

The Overberg area is a vital area for the growth of coastal fynbos and renosterveld. Fynbos and renosterveld are rare and endangered vegetation types of the Cape Floristic Region endemic to South Africa (Winter et al: 2004). They are grassy plants known for their diversity that occurs predominantly in the Western Cape. The coastal renosterveld that grows in the area is one of the most threatened vegetation types and has reduced to between five percent and six percent of its original extent (Winter et al: 2004). Less than one percent is formally conserved in legal reserves within the Western Cape (von Hase et al: 2003).

Amrei Von Hase et al (2003) emphasise that the only feasible prospect for conserving the remaining coastal renosterveld and fynbos plants that are often scattered around agricultural landscapes is through voluntary conservation by private landowners. Encouraging participation is then one of FVCT main priorities. Winter et al (2004) outline the importance of conservation agencies in understanding landowner attitudes as they own important and threatened habitats. Winter et al suggest that “attitudes are constructs central to understanding why people make decisions and behave the way they do” (2004: 383). As my aim is to understand the values that influence land management behaviours a study of attitudes and

perspectives were an important part of exploring these dimensions. Understanding perspectives and narratives of landownership is also beneficial in the important discussion around humans' place within nature, specifically within conservation designs. These narratives were helpful in exposing the inconsistencies within the human/ nature dichotomy through various relationships that exist between land and owners.

I used research methods that would benefit my research and address these objectives. Qualitative methods allowed me to understand and analyse personal perceptions of landowners. Keith Punch describes qualitative research as the "empirical information about the world, not in the form of numbers but rather words" (Punch: 2005: 15). Qualitative methods include interviews, notes, documents and personal experience materials (Punch: 2005). These methods offered access to a deeper understanding of the perspectives and narratives of landownership within the Overberg as it allowed access to the personal experiences of owners as told themselves.

My main research method was semi-structured interviews. According to Punch, semi-structured interviews access "valid and reliable data" that is both authentic and trustworthy (2005: 26). My interviews were semi-structured as they asked open ended questions that allowed for the participants "perspectives and experiences" to be an empirical focus of the conversations (Neumen: 1994: 358). This method was effective as it allowed owners to share detailed perspectives and experiences that would not be obtainable through the use of a survey. Extensive in-depth understanding and analysis of experiences and perceptions allowed me to recognise relationships landowners had established with their landscapes and the ways in which it shaped the management of the land. The unstructured nature of my interviews allowed for unrestricted answers that went beyond my prepared open ended questions. These conversations provided valuable data as many owners discussed new and unrecognised aspects of landownership. I was able to understand the social, cultural and political dynamics that exist in conservation activities and organisations through the use of these narratives. Interviews allowed me to gain detailed information due to the interaction between myself and the respondent being on an intimate and trusting level, the interviews often took form of a laid back conversation.

The use of open-ended questions created a friendly interview that lead to a deeper understanding of personal experiences. In order to create a more open and friendly atmosphere it was important to build rapport and trust between myself as an

interviewer and the participant (Neuman: 1994). Trust and rapport allowed for trustworthy and more intimate in depth information and experiences to be shared that gave me an insight into the participant's perceptions. According to Beatrice Conradie's (2010) study of the area the three main threats to landownership include financial pressures, alien vegetation and government. All of these factors were discussed in my interviews.

I made use of a recorder during the interviews with permission from the respondents. I found this resulted in participants speaking freely, openly and in depth. On one occasion I was asked not to record due to the participant feeling unsure about my intentions. This uncertainty was as a result of political factors both in a South African and Zimbabwean context. The participant was anxious about who the information would go to and felt very untrusting of the South African government. This made it very important to explain my project in detail to ensure the protection of all participant's personal information. Due to political tensions and fears of landowners, gaining trust and rapport was a vital part of gaining deep data. Interviewees were often comfortable to discuss their experiences once they had assured the information would not be used as political means for expropriating land. There was only one instance when a landowner refused recording due to these fears. His main fear was that information about his land would be used by the government in such a way to gain control of his land.

The political history of South Africa has played an immense role in the relationships established with landscapes as well as the entities that work to manage land, including landowners, governments and conservation organisations. Landscapes are thus extremely political and deeply connected to dynamics of power and control. Interviews were therefore the most useful method of research so as to unearth some of these connections.

I probed at certain statements said by my respondents that made relevant situations clearer, such as the context, who was involved and other important factors. Interviews usually lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. This was ample time to discuss experiences and perceptions in full detail. In depth interviews resulted in information that was detailed, extensive and thorough to be collected. I also kept a research journal throughout my research process that includes notes on challenges, highlights and other factors that occurred during my research. I spent almost three months in a nearby town which provided me better access and sufficient time to conduct my research.

This study was also informed by existing research in the area such as Conradie's research (2010). This study offered both historical and contemporary context for the area, this was useful to determine which aspects to focus on during interviews. The study was also useful to understand more around landownership in the area. There was however limited access to relevant literature around specifically South African landownership. My study also made use of literature around the human/nature dichotomy and debates that expose the inconsistencies in this ideal. These literature discussions both supported and challenged in-depth analysis of the data collected. These alternative discussions around human/nature were useful to unpack the values and dimensions playing out through narratives of landownership. It is however important to keep in mind the unique historical and political South African context as these influenced the experiences and perspectives of my sample group in crucial ways.

I interviewed 34 individuals in the Overberg area in my fieldwork. Six were land and conservation managers, two of which had land of their own. 28 were landowners. The lands varied from small plots of 35 hectares to large grounds of 1500 hectares. My main focus group were the landowners that participated in the conservancies that worked with the FVCT on alien clearing activities. This was a useful focus group to understand the dimensions existing in the human/nature relationship as these individuals live closely with nature.

The Overberg area is home to both valuable land and landowners who are readily involved in conservation making the area a rich and interesting area to explore my research question. I had wanted to interview a few landowners from each of the nine conservancies working with FVCT so as to get a better idea of the whole area however due to car troubles I was unable to get interviews from one conservancy.

Conradie (2010) describes landowners in the area as falling into three clusters of landowners including commercial farmers, land barons and lifestyle/conservation farmers. I came across all these types of landowners in my interview process. The Agulhas Plain area is made up of predominantly white, Afrikaans males (Conradie: 2010). Being a non-Afrikaans speaker I was initially worried about a language barrier hindering the interviews however I found that all of the landowners although they would have preferred to speak Afrikaans were happy and capable of expressing their views in English. The little Afrikaans I do know did however come in handy on occasions when they described some things with the use of Afrikaans words or for organising interview times and dates.

Once I had conducted and transcribed my interviews I began with the analysis process which generated valuable and in-depth understanding of the research topic. The Miles and Huberman framework describes analysis as the “tracing out lawful and stable relationships among social phenomena based on the regularities and sequences that link these phenomena” (Punch: 2005: 197). This is done through three main components including data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions (Punch: 2005). Data reduction refers to the process of summarising and editing the data. This is done through processes such as coding and ‘memoing’ the data. Coding and memoing are important processes in finding themes that are generated through the data collection process. Coding can be defined as the “process of putting tags, names or labels against pieces of the data” (Punch: 2005: 199). Memoing refers to the write-ups of the codes found in the data, it allows for deeper understandings of the codings and themes found. Data display is to “organise, compress and assemble information” (Punch: 2005: 198).

These analysis methods allowed me to identify themes within the data that are relevant in answering my research question. Themes became clearer as data was collected and transcribed. Once all interviews were transcribed, I read through each interview, careful to highlight statements that were interesting to my research topic. It is through these highlighted phrases, that themes began to emerge throughout the interview transcriptions. Once I had themes in mind, I reread each interview a number of times to highlight and further analyse the themes emerging. The three themes analysed in this paper, were the strongest themes that emerged in a number of the interviews. I narrowed themes down to themes that were most influential, frequent and spoke to my research questions to offer clearer conclusions. Other themes, such as the dynamics around race, also emerged on a smaller scale. I believe issues around race, are better suited to a project that sets out from the beginning to focus mainly on this issue, especially as it is such an important and contentious topic within a South African context.

### **3.2 Ethical considerations of research**

The main responsibility of a researcher when doing his or her work is to avoid harm or risk to any participants who may be involved in the research process. Neuman states that researchers should “strive to avoid the use of practices or methods that may harm, humiliate or seriously mislead survey respondents” (1994: 462). There is an importance of building trust and rapport between the researcher and members who participate in order to achieve more insightful information as well as to avoid any harm for any parties involved throughout the research process (Neuman: 2004).

Predicting possible negative or even positive impacts my research could have on the participants helped me as a researcher to avoid any unnecessary conflict or harm. According to Neuman, ethical dilemmas could include issues of “deception, confidentiality, involvement with deviants, and the publishing of the report” (1994: 363). In my research I recognised possible issues of creating conflict between members of conservancies or between conservancies and the FVCT.

Each participant was informed of the research topic in detail, each interviewee was also informed that they may withdraw from the process at any time should they wish. I used verbal consent that included details of the research question and asked the participant if they wished to remain anonymous. Ensuring such anonymity and confidentiality also helped to gather more trustworthy information from participants if they felt they did not want to share negative thoughts of FVCT. Most respondents gave permission to use their real names, however after some discussion with my supervisor over ethical considerations it was decided that all landowners should remain anonymous and given pseudonyms. This was decided based on the sensitive topics discussed in my paper that may cause harm to landowners. These sensitive topics include issues around political tensions that exist in landownership in South Africa.

This thesis was written in such a way that landowner’s identities have remained confidential through the use of pseudonyms for individual landowner names. I have used my own discretion on which information to not include in this project as I felt it may lead to harm for landowners. This will also prevent conflict between FVCT and their participants as well as government institutions and the participants. I have kept the original names of conservancies, organisations and businesses as I felt bigger institutions were less vulnerable to harm than individuals. I have also received ethical clearance from UCT science faculty to conduct this research.

### **3.3 Validity, reliability and representation**

According to Punch (2005), it is important to collect information for a research project that is valid and reliable in order to achieve authentic and trustworthy data (Punch: 2005). Punch (2005) refers to reliability as the reliability and stability of the measuring instruments used to gain data. Validity is another vital factor in the measuring of data as valid information is essential in shaping the research process and understanding the topic. As I discovered in my research process, participants will hold back on their perspectives in an interview if they feel unsafe, weary or nervous, which then results in unreliable data. Unreliable data can then result in

misinformation and misrepresentation (Punch: 2005). Building of trust and rapport were then very important in creating a safe space to collect authentic and valid data. I found that specifically in this project, with the tensions around land reform, creating trust and rapport when doing interviews was important in order to insure the participants felt comfortable to open up and be honest about their experiences.

Representation refers to the way in which your data represents your research topic (Punch: 2005). In this project, the analysis represents the views, perspectives and experiences of landowners in South Africa. It is however important to remember not to use this representation as a generalisation as a small research project can not efficiently represent the South African population. Generalisations can not be made based on my findings. Considerations of reliability and validity also need to be taken into account when looking at the representations of these projects. I believe the data collected is reliable, however it is possible that landowners were not comfortable to speak about certain topics. One topic that was often avoided was that of race, therefore the paragraph around race in Chapter 5 is only the data collected from a small group of my respondents. This research rather acts as a starting point to understanding landownership through different perspectives, and putting into practice new and alternative ideas around humans and their relationships t their environments.

## **4. Chapter Four - Economics and Nature**

*“It’s all about the green money now.” - Eric, Landowner.*

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### **4.1 Introduction**

A main theme throughout my interviews conducted was the economic value of nature that manifested in different ways which will be discussed and analysed in this chapter. For the majority of landowners, their lands were their livelihoods, offering them a form of income to survive. A common and somewhat obvious human/nature relationship discussed in literature is the business/nature relationship. Scholarly literature on the neo-liberalisation of nature, although it exposes the interactions occurring between humans and nature, often overlooks deeper interactions occurring within business and nature. This literature focuses mainly on the exploitation and commodification of nature for purely capitalistic gains. The ‘greening’ of markets to encourage ethical consumption and responsible production and tourism, according to literature, is a tool through which capitalism gains support. Therefore there is a common perception that capitalism in nature is used solely to exploit the environment.

Economic dimensions did not only exist in landownership but also within conservation practices. The relationship between conservation and business is also widely discussed in literature. In recent years, conservation and business have become increasingly intertwined as conservation organisations rely more on the support of corporations and sponsorships for funding (Brockington et al: 2008). According to Brockington et al, “conservation and capitalism are shaping nature and society, and often in partnership” (2008: 5). Capitalism commodifies natural resources as marketable and profitable products to supply a demand in society (Castree: 2008). McDonald (2009) refers to this as ‘greenwashing’ as businesses are becoming increasingly dependent on clean images.

According to Igoe et al, “capitalism is turning the environmental problems it creates into opportunities for further commodification and market expansion” (2010: 489). Susanne Friedberg (2003) suggests in her article, ‘Cleaning up down South: Supermarkets, ethical trade and African horticulture’, that rather than the commodity like a dress or a vegetable being the ‘fetishism’, it is the ethical label itself that has become the ‘fetish’ for consumers.

In my study both landowners and big corporations were involved in green marketing initiatives, catering for a growing ethical and responsible consumerism trend. Although landowners made use of 'green' marketing, they were often involved in conservation not only for these labels. There was a common sense of responsibility for landowners to protect and preserve their land, even without benefiting from these labels of being 'green'. Although many landowners held economic values of nature and were involved in similar capitalistic processes discussed in literature around the neo-liberalism of conservation and nature, these values were discussed in different ways that exposed deeper values playing out such as a sense of responsibility.

Hettinger (2014) suggests that conservation priorities and practices are shaped by the desires of particular organisations or individuals driving the efforts. For the post apartheid South African government, the environment has an important economic value. Conservation offers eco tourism and employment opportunities for South Africa, this also shows the way in which the environment holds economic value not only to landowners and businesses but also to governments. For NGOs, maintaining sponsorships and relationships with corporations is vital in gaining economic support, however most conservation NGOs prioritise mainly natural values of the environment rather than economic values. These economic experiences of nature can be unpacked through the use of landowner's personal narratives. Recognising these economic values of nature shows the ways in which humans and the environments are connected through an economic dimension. Recognising this dimension within the understanding of nature, suggests that one needs to acknowledge the economic dimensions within conservation methods in order to encourage participation of owners. Recognising the economic values land holds for owners in conservation methods would be helpful in developing effective, affordable and inclusive practices that encourage participation.

Meeker-Lowry refers to Aldo Leopold's view on conservation as emphasising that the harmony of humans and nature cannot be maintained if nature is commodified (1995: 158). Meeker-Lowry argues that if humans view land as a "community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" rather than viewing it as a commodity, as this commodity view will undoubtedly lead to the exploitation of nature (1995: 158).

It is a popular opinion of conservationists that in order to maintain this act of harmony in conservation efforts and human/nature relationships, capitalism should be isolated to avoid the exploitation of the environment (Meeker-Lowry: 1995). Carr and Tait (1991) found in their project outlined in their article, 'Differences in the

attitudes of farmers and conservationists and their implications', that profit motives were stronger than environmental motives in a group of farmers in the UK although these landowners were aware of environmental issues.

The narratives of the landowners involved in this project offered an alternative discourse of capitalism and nature; one that shows the ways in which to respect your land whilst making a livelihood from it need not be exclusive but can rather exist in unity. These alternative narratives around capitalism and landownership suggest that economic values in nature need not lead to exploitation, and can therefore be recognised within conservation designs in this area of study.

#### **4.2 Living off the land**

*"Most of us are living off our lands. We need it for an income." – Matthew, Landowner.*

For the majority of the landowners interviewed in my study, their land offered them livelihoods through a variety of different ways. Forms of income included production of crops, wild flowers, wines, game hunting, cattle and eco-tourism. According to the Overberg District Municipality Report (2006) and Stats SA (2006), agriculture makes up to a quarter of the local Overberg economy through output as well as the employment of workers. Another major contributor to the economy include eco-tourism (Overberg District Municipality: 2006, Stats SA: 2006). As these types of income formed a livelihood value for landowners, protecting these livelihoods through means of conservation was common.

Landowner participation in conservation and environmental consciousness are thought to be in part influenced by land profitability (Camboni & Napier: 1993, Herzon & Mikk: 2006). Conservation held an economic value for owners in this study as it was a method of protecting these monetary and profit values of land. I discuss these forms of livelihoods as well as the way in which conservation protects their economic values before discussing the sense of responsibility that often exists within management of the land as businesses.

*"If you are living off the land you have to adapt and we keep reinventing as farmers. We do a bit of everything, mixed farming." – Ronny, Landowner.*

In a study by Carolyn Harrison et al (1998), farmers in the UK believed that farming depended on what the land would 'let' them do. Land therefore requires flexible management depending on nature's conditions, requiring the owners to adapt and work alongside the environment in order to ensure productivity (Harrison, et al:

1998). Ronny's stamen above reflects a similar sentiment described by Harrison et al. This economic value of nature to an extent influenced the organisation and management of land in order to ensure profitability. Part of adapting and working with nature to ensure the profitability of the nature, is to conserve it.

*"Some don't see the value in it (in alien clearing). You have to get them to see that is a business interest as well as a conservation value. It is a business interest because it affects so many things that happen on the farm. They have so many other things to worry about but it is important."* - Kevin, Landowner.

Kevin describes the ways in which conserving land is not only important for the natural value but also for business value. Alien clearing was one form of conservation used by landowners to protect and preserve the incomes. For example, clearing is important for those who sell wildflowers and fynbos as aliens pose a threat to the growth of the flowers. Alien clearing was also important to decrease water loss.

*"Our main goal is to conserve the fynbos. We do fynbos at a large scale. We pick our own veld and with the burning of the blocks to generate new growth. Gerard (Katherine's husband) was bought up with that. So just by knowing what works for the flowers and how to get the new produce we did well. If you want to do business then you are going to conserve and look after it. You can't just pick now and not for the future. We were hands on. In the veld every day picking out the aliens. It is so important if you harvesting to preserve the land. My neighbour does clearing on large scales because of her harvesting business."* – Katherine, Landowner.

Katherine highlights the importance of clearing and conserving to protect the livelihood of fynbos harvesters. She went on to say it is in the owner's best interest to preserve the natural value of land in order to protect the income value.

*"It's in their best interest especially if you are dependent on fynbos as an income. Some people who don't have fynbos then they might not have much to do with it. Next door, her entire income is fynbos and she does a lot of clearing for it."* – Katherine, Landowner.

Aliens take up large areas that could otherwise be used as productive land. As aliens pose a threat to fynbos, they also pose a threat to vineyard growth. Calum, a wine farmer, emphasised the way in which clearing his land of alien species was vital to him to save water to ensure productivity of the vineyards as well as clear areas that are infested so that these spaces could be used for further growth.

*"I grow vineyards so it's important to clear an area for them and clear to make sure they get enough water. Water is a big thing with aliens. If you don't clear then they take up so much water, you can't afford that." - Calum, Landowner.*

Many owners also discussed the need to clear for eco-tourism to maintain a pristine natural environment for their guests to enjoy. Many mountain areas are not arable lands and offer 'pristine', untouched locations for holidays, offering ideal spaces for eco-tourism. Steven owned a number of cottages on the mountain area of his land and strongly believed guests were attracted to his farm because of the indigenous environment.

*"People come to see the fynbos, the natural veld. They don't want to see aliens so I must clear my mountains for that too. I have some guest houses up there, and hiking and bicycle tracks." - Steven, Landowner.*

Clearing aliens from land allows for fynbos to grow, which in turn, according to landowners, encourages tourists to stay on their properties.

*"Land is an asset and has value. You have to take care of it. You have to see value is being destroyed if it's (the land) overgrown by aliens - it will cost you more, especially in the mountain areas. Mountains have some of the best botanical treasures on Earth. If you do tourism, that's what they want to see." - Steven, Landowner.*

Aliens can also be fire hazards that can destroy crops and valuable areas of productive land.

*"A fire came right through our land and destroyed all our crops. We had to start from scratch. That's why it's important to keep on top of clearing." – Stefan, Landowner.*

Stefan explained the importance of clearing his land to protect his crops from fire damage that he had experienced previously. Aliens also affected the economic value of the land when it is being sold. Land with aliens have decreased economic value when being sold. For Ronny, the potential selling value of his land acted as a motive to participate in conservation.

*"It will lose value if I want to sell it if I just let it get worse and worse. If you want to buy a land in 20 years would you buy my land that's an ecological disaster or a clean piece of land? It loses value so you have to clear." – Ronny, Landowner.*

Some owners expressed how it could actually be cheaper to sell your land full of aliens and buy another property rather than clear the land.

*“One farmer I know actually sold his land down here and bought another piece of land. It was cheaper for him to buy a clean piece of land than to clear his own. It can get very expensive.” – Ronny, Landowner.*

Economic value of nature can play a role in the way owners manage their land, as well as the way in which they organise themselves in relation to their landscapes.

*“To be a good farmer is to be a conservationist. You have to do it in a way where you also make an income. It’s a thin line between making an income and conserving. You have to do both. It’s a very fine line how you live with nature in that circumstance.” – Tom, Landowner.*

Tom suggests that in order to be a good farmer, you have to also be a conservationist as in order to make an efficient income, you need to conserve and vice versa. Ahnström et al (2009: 40) state that farming can be “an act of stewardship” despite the perception that farmers exploit land for income. Landowners in this study offer an alternative understanding of landowners as stewards and entrepreneurs rather than exploitative farmers. Although money played a part in motivating owners to conserve, money was also often a limitation when it came to conservation as it can be a costly expense. Many then use a portion of their income to preserve their land. Declan outlined the importance of farmers to find a way to both conserve and farm productively.

*“There’s a farm next door that is just a holiday place so they conserve. It used to be pastures and now they only have natural veld. He spent millions to do it though, we can’t stop farming to conserve otherwise everything would crumble. That doesn’t work. We have to find a way to farm and conserve.” – Declan, Landowner.*

Some farmers also discussed the importance of conservation in creating sustainable and stable income for their workers as well as themselves. Calum’s farm is a big producer of fruit picking such as pears and apples, employing about 100 people. He felt environmental protection and job creation go hand in hand, while also maintaining an income. Fruits are only picked from June to August, offering the workers only a few months of employment. In the off months, he uses some of the workers to clear the area of aliens.

*“Clearing can make things a bit more sustainable. My workers will sit for months without jobs waiting for us to plant more, this way some of them can still work.” - Calum, Landowner.*

For Calum, creating all year round jobs was very important. This emphasises the way in which the economic value of their land went beyond the owners themselves and also held economic values for workers. Calum's narrative shows the sense of social responsibility he felt not only towards his land but also his workers.

According to Ahnström et al, landowners can be characterised "as having ties to land that foster deep awareness of natural cycles, appreciation for natural beauty and a sense of stewardship, but at the same time farmers are characterised as primarily utilitarian, causing misuse of the land" (2009: 361). There is then an idea that farmers in general can simultaneously both care and pollute their land, but that they design landscapes to prioritise them to be useful and practical rather than sustainable (Ahnström et al: 2009). Although farmers in my study view land as their livelihoods, the value their land held was not prioritised over a deeper sense of responsibility. This can be seen through Ronny's narrative of his land.

*"We live here, it's our home, but it's also our livelihood." - Ronny, Landowner.*

Although Ronny viewed his property as his livelihood, he also viewed it as his families "home". This sense of home often came up when discussing business and economics with regards to land, as it meant owners viewed the land as both home whilst simultaneously being their livelihood. This sense of belonging is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, Identity, Belonging and Nature. Although economic factors influenced the management of land, this sense of responsibility for one's home was often underlying many business activities as well as conservation efforts. Ruth Gasson and Clive Potter (1988), found in their study titled, 'Conservation through land diversion: a survey of farmers' attitudes', that in order to make farm business profitable agricultural production needs to be prioritised above conservation. Although a small amount of owners admitted to prioritising profitability over conservation, the majority believed strongly that owners need to find a balance in order for both conservation and production to prosper. This can also be seen throughout the use of green marketing by owners in this study.

### **4.3 Green money**

*"It's all about the green money now. It looks good for the product that you are part of conservation in some way. That's what people want now." - Eric, Landowner.*

This statement emphasises the way in which most landowners recognised that although their lands were their livelihoods, they also needed to conserve it to benefit their product marketing. The responsibility of a landowner to be part of ethical

production is now an integral part of farming. Ethical responsibility was therefore motivated by both public pressure as well as personal interests.

Jane Mills et al argues that farmers are not only motivated by financial values but by other factors such as “personal interest in environment, game shoots, a sense of social responsibility or farming self-image” (2013: 26). According to Mills et al (2013), contemporary farmers feel a greater sense of social and environmental responsibility than previous generations of farmers.

James Carrier suggests that “one of the ways that people are encouraged to protect the environment is by assessing the objects that they buy in terms of the degree to which they meet environmentalist criteria” (2010: 672). According to Carrier, ethical consumption “marks a conjunction of capitalism and conservation, for it identifies people’s market transactions and market mechanisms generally, as the effective way to bring about protection of the environment” (2010: 673). The narratives of the landowners involved in my study highlight the way in which ethical labels can, as Carrier puts it, mark a significant “coexistence of capitalism and conservation” (2010: 673).

Freidberg (2003) describes the fetish of the ethical label in which the ethical label has become a fetish and priority in consumption rather than the behaviours of the producer. Likewise for the producers, the goal may be to obtain the ethical label therefore their motivation to participate in sustainable farming is to obtain the ethical label status rather than the desire to be involved in responsible production. Although owners in this study used green labels for the marketing of their products, there was also a common sense of social and personal responsibility in their behaviours. The labels themselves were not prioritised over sustainable management of their land, nor were they the sole motivator in sustainable production in their business management of the land. Although the profitability aspects of these labels plays a role in the conservation of land, these conservation efforts were motivated by a deeper sense of responsibility highlighting the complexities that exist within the business management of nature by these landowners. This sense of responsibility further shows the ways in which it is possible for these landowners to capitalise on their land whilst maintain harmony.

*“Everybody is looking for some type of responsibility that is on the farmer. One has to look at that, we do have a responsibility. With all these sustainable initiatives for wines and other products these days that’s an important part of the product.” - Jim, Landowner.*

Jim highlights the way in which responsibility and stewardship is recognised by most farmers.

As owners use nature to gain incomes, doing so with sustainable methods has become vital not only to protect these livelihoods but also to cater for this growing ethical consumer pressure. An indication of the growing popularity of ethical and responsible consumption can be seen in Britain's sales of certified Fairtrade products (Hickman & Attwood: 2008). According to Martin Hickman and Karen Attwood (2008), sales in these products increased by 49 percent from 2005 to 2006 and further increased 80 percent in the following year, to a total of £493 million (R9.2 billion). Participating in conservation offers farmers 'green advertising' opportunities for products such as wine beer, meat and flowers.

#### **4.3.1 Green wine**

Wine is a product involved in green advertising and many landowners who produced wines were involved in sustainable agriculture in some way.

*"There are so many different things now, like the BWI which is the Biodiversity wine initiative. I don't even know anymore there are so many different organic this and that. Everybody is looking for some type of responsibility that lies with the farmer." – Ruan, Landowner.*

Ruan who owns a wine farm and restaurant explains the social responsibility farmers feel to participate in ethical land management. This responsibility he refers to comes from consumers who looked to farmers to produce products that allow them to support environmentally friendly practices, giving them a sense of moral reassurance. Carrier (2010) argues that ethical consumption offers consumers, at a personal level, the opportunity to lead more moral lives. He adds that, at a public level, these purchases can be used to influence the world at a larger scale through pressuring companies in a competitive market to participate in ethical trade and production (Carrier: 2010). Many owners discussed this desire of consumers and recognised the demand for these ethical products.

*"One has to look at that, so yeah it is very much that one has to comply. There's fair trade and all those types of things you need to look at when selling products." - Ruan, Landowner.*

Being involved in sustainable initiatives was an important part of Ruan's wine and restaurant brands. He felt consumers believed that owners had a responsibility

towards nature and preferred to support products that were part of these types of initiatives.

#### 4.3.2 Green fynbos

Landowners who harvest fynbos and wildflowers are also involved in conservation to ensure the productivity of their fynbos growth as well as benefit from green marketing. The FVCT developed a project called the Sustainable Harvesting Initiative Programme which aims to educate flower picking on sustainable picking and protect those whose livelihoods depend on it (FVCT: 2016). The programme is offered to all fynbos harvesters in the Overberg region and encourages ethical consumption of fynbos. It aims to ensure sustainability in the environment, economy and society (FVCT: 2016). Some landowners are involved in this initiative, it was however a new project when I conducted my interviews and was only starting to gain more participation. Most owners share their support for the idea as sustainable harvesting is becoming popular in consumer demands. Many wildflower harvesters claim that being involved in conservation and sustainable efforts is good for the brand and increased the chances of selling their products.

*“There are certain initiatives that help in selling flowers. The flower industry lags a bit behind because it is new and small but the customers overseas want to make sure you are part of a sustainable agriculture practices and initiatives. All of these things are part of the sustainable farming.” – Gail, Landowner.*

Gail sells wildflowers to overseas exporters and mentioned the importance of showing these clients that as landowners they are involved in sustainable harvesting and environmentally friendly productivity.

Some landowners who participated in the FVCT sustainable harvesting project discussed the benefit of their staff learning to pick sustainably without damaging the flowers. Tom talks about his experience in the programme below.

*“I send my pickers to the sustainable course through FVCT. You have to prune them not pick them otherwise they will die. You have to train people how to do it properly. You can’t do alien clearing without sustainable harvesting.” – Tom, Landowner.*

The FVCT sustainable harvesting programme has a potential green advertising element as labels could be developed to cater to an ethical market. The FVCT website (2016) states that the programme aims to “help create ethical markets for fynbos bouquets, to ensure land users don’t convert fynbos fields for more profitable agricultural activities”. Although these ethical markets acted as a motivation for

wildflower farmers to participate in sustainable harvesting, there was often a sense of care for their land as well as the flowers. The majority of owners recognise the natural value of fynbos in the area and took extra care to protect these species, whilst producing an income from them.

*“And you can’t do alien clearing and not do fires for fynbos. You have to do it all together for it to work. I’m not here to mistreat my flowers. I’m here to do it sustainably.” - Tom, Landowner.*

Tom is an avid supporter of protecting and preserving his fynbos as he recognised the other values that they held. Owners are not only involved at an independent level in sustainable production but also in groups. Landowner conservancies also encourage green advertising for the products of the owners involved. One conservancy organised an open braai day at one of the landowner’s businesses to burn the alien wood gathered from clearing. Each pile of wood for a braai cost R25 and money raised was put back into the conservancy for further conservation activities. The aim was for each R25 raised to fund the clearing of one metre of alien vegetation. The fun day was held at one of the owners wine estates and was held at the same time of the Elim wine festival as the area attracts tourists during this time. It was the second braai event they had held. And this conservancy was thinking of adding a logo to their products to show their involvement in conservation efforts.

*“It was a fun day to bring attention to the conservancy and the businesses of the owners involved .It also shows my wine brand is involved. It’s great for the marketing and we need to gain that support for our conservancy.” - Donny, Landowner.*

The event not only shows the owners are involved in sustainable production of goods but that their conservancy also supports ethical production. This shows the ways in which conservancies also recognise the importance of sustainable farming to develop green advertising labels. Conservancies and individual owners are not the only entities participating in green marketing - companies in the area are also involved.

### **4.3.3 Green crops**

There are a number of landowners participating in biodiversity initiatives that offers green marketing for their crops such as fruits and vegetables. The South African Brewery (SAB) owns a piece of land in the Overberg area and participates in conservation efforts as green advertising is an important part of their brand. The land is used for growing barley crops for beer, an important segment of the SAB

business. The SAB is working alongside the WWF to establish a sustainable agriculture project called the 'better barley, better beer project'. This project shows the benefits of green advertising for both the environment and the business which I outline below.

The SAB participates in the FVCT clearing project for a number of reasons including clearing the land of invasive aliens to save water and protect productive land. Another motivation is responsible land management. The 'better barley, better beer' initiative has set up a checklist for farmers in the area involved in producing barley as well as for their own land. The checklist aims to assist barley farmers make responsible decisions to farm sustainably.

*"Green labels are important now. Green business is the way now and it's necessary to be part of it." – SAB, Project Manager.*

I interviewed the project manager who was facilitating the programme between SAB and WWF. There are plans to develop labels for the beer bottles that show the sustainable project to promote the product.

Corporate social responsibility has become a priority for many corporations as environmental awareness grows (Hanks: 2003). This can be seen in SAB's involvement in conservation efforts for green advertising. According to Newell (2012), business support of conservation is aimed at gaining public trust to cater to a growth in the growing market of ethical consumption. This exposes the ways in which business and nature have become increasingly dependent on the other. SAB relies on conservation to create ethical marketing whilst conservation is dependent on the business for funding to continue conservation efforts.

#### **4.3.4 Green meat**

Cattle and meat is another form of income for many landowners. Organic and sustainable management of land can also play a role in the image of these products.

*"A lot of farmers are into the whole green marketing thing now. One farmer supplies free range chickens and vegetables to Woolworths. If he shows that he is actively involved in conservation it helps a lot. He has spent a fortune on conservation and if his workers don't have anything to do then they clear." - Wendy, Landowner.*

Wendy's statement shows the way in which green marketing has become a priority for many owners in the meat industry. Brandon's story also outlines the relationship that exists between business and nature through his involvement in sustainable organic farming. Brandon bought his farm in 1994 and focused mainly on free range

pigs. He also does some eco tourism offering getaways in cottages on the mountain area of his land. He started the eco-tourism as a way to utilise his whole mountain area and use the funds to clear alien vegetation, making it financially sustainable to clear. According to Brandon, free range pig farming is relatively new in South Africa and is a niche market product.

*“Free range these days could mean anything, as long as it’s outside. We aim to be truly free range. They have so much space for the pigs. It’s important for me to produce pure and truly natural produce.” – Brandon, Pig Farmer.*

His pigs are farmed completely off pastures and he aims to be truly free range and sustainable. No hormones are fed to the pigs, making the product organic and healthy.

*“I know there’s a market and demand for that. Commercial farming has gone hay wire. Maybe it’s consumer pressure and demand. It’s gone beyond, cheap and nasty, that’s how agriculture’s gone.” – Brandon, Pig Farmer.*

Brandon described market demand as part of the motivation for organic farming, showing the ways in which ethical market demands play a role in the management behaviours of landowners. Organic farming for Brandon caters to a growing market demand for ‘cleaner meat’, but there is a deeper motivation behind his farming style and methods. Brandon described that he cares about “what we eat and what we feed our children”. This statement refers not only to his own family and children but also his client’s families and children.

*“Mass production is terrible, for me it’s more important to produce pure and natural products. In mass production they get force fed, fed antibiotics and steroids, that is not the way anymore. Doing it real, there’s a huge interest in it now, my clients that I produce for really care. I like doing it like that, its small production and its harder but it’s also good for the nature, no chemicals. I know I’m doing the good thing.” – Brandon, Pig Farmer.*

Brandon’s statement emphasises the way in which some farmers are moving towards more organic and sustainable methods of farming rather than mass production. This is partly due to ethical consumption pressures but also in part due to the desire to do the ‘good thing’ and do farming the ‘right way’. Brandon describes his farming methods as “farming with nature, not against it” to keep his products ‘pure’ and ‘real’. John Fairweather and Hugh Campbell, discuss a finding in their study that showed the majority of farmers in New Zealand shared a common view of, “rather than controlling nature, we need to learn to coexist with the natural

environment” (2003: 9). This is the method of farming Brandon aims to achieve through sustainable and organic productivity.

According to Ben Schoon and Rita Te Grotenhuis, for conventional farmers, nature held mainly economic values and these farmers followed a “we have to control nature” method (2000: 21). For organic farmers however nature held other forms of values and they followed a “go with the flow of nature” (Schoon and Te Grotenhuis: 2000: 21). Similar results were found in a study by Oddveig Storstad and Hilde Bjørkhaug (2003) in farmers in Norway. In my field research I did not find a significant difference in the perception and management of land between organic farmers or non organic farmers. The management of land depends rather on the individual owner, their experience and perception of land and all owners involved in this study feel a need to farm responsibly.

Brandon also discussed previous setbacks in farming due to baboons and the way in which he chose to work with nature to find an alternative source of income. He used to produce cider on his mountain area but had issues with the baboons destroying the fencing and eating the apples. He was unable to keep the baboons out and wanted to avoid causing any harm to the baboons so he decided to stop producing cider rather than keep them away with drastic measures such as shooting them. This shows the way in which he decided to find alternative income that the nature around him would offer. He described the baboons as being in their home on his land, and living with them rather than working against him. He decided to adapt to other means of income rather than fighting nature to produce fruit. His land is also one of the farms known to be a pathway for the local leopards in the Overberg area.

The leopard and predator conservation landmark project has made it possible for him to keep track of how many leopards go through his land and when. The ‘Landmark initiative’ aims to reduce conflict between landowners and leopards to reduce livestock losses, increase tolerance toward leopards and to promote ethical production practices.

*“Sometimes we lose sheep to leopards and lynxes. We just share them with them though, one leopard was caught on my land and I got to go help them with it. I held it in my arms and it was amazing. Fascinating. Luckily we don’t lose our pigs to them.”*  
– Brandon, Pig Farmer.

On my way onto his property I saw there was a ‘Landmark’ sign stating that the land is involved in the conservation effort. These are two examples of how he has farmed with nature rather than fight against it. Although his land has economic value, he

respects working with the environment rather than fighting against it to create an income.

*“We did have a problem with a bush pig. We lost five pigs to it. We had to get a professional hunter to come out and kill it sadly. The conservationists said they don’t want them down here because it’s not indigenous to the Western Cape. That’s what happening more and more now. Animals are going into other territories because humans are encroaching into areas where there shouldn’t be humans. We are pushing them out. That’s why it’s important to work with nature, not against it. We need to do business but do it alongside nature.” – Brandon, Pig Farmer.*

Part of his motivation for conservation is to produce a product for an organic niche market but it is clear that there are also other motivators. These include his passion and love for nature, which lead to a sense of responsibility to produce a product that was environmentally sustainable and greatly influenced his business practices. In a study by Elizabeth McCann et al (1997), organic farmers in Michigan, USA, shared a common concern for environmental impacts of agriculture and production.

McCann et al (1997) believed that this environmental concern manifested in the adoption of sustainable practices and resulted in behavioural changes of farmers. Schoon and Te Grotenhuis (2000) painted a different picture of both conventional and organic farmers as they stated that environmental concerns did not cause behavioural changes in the Netherland’s farmers as their views of nature were different to farmers outside the country. Although Brandon’s organic farming method and other farmer’s sustainable methods were motivated in part by environmental concerns, these methods were also influenced by consumer demand, a sense of responsibility and a deeper desire to want to be part of ethical farming practices. This desire shows the behaviours of business that are often ignored in literature around capitalism and nature that show the relationship between the two as exploitative and negative.

#### **4.3.5 Green tourism**

Eco-tourism is another form of business that benefits from green marketing and gives an insight into the business behaviours of landowners. One conservancy involved in the study was planning on developing bicycle and hiking trails crossing their land to attract more tourism to the areas. The fynbos of the area is a main attraction for tourists, preserving it is then also important for this reason. Being involved in conservation efforts can attract and encourage tourists to these particular lands which are seeking to cater for responsible tourism markets.

*“I’m in the public domain with tourism and wine so I am interested in it (conservation). It helps tourism, the more people I get here then the more wine I sell. It depends on which business you are in. It helps with the brand and marketing so for me it’s very important. We just added accommodation now.” – Donny, Landowner.*

Grootbos is part of the Walker bay conservancy and is a reserve for eco tourism with lodges. They have contributed a number of offices on the property for the conservancy to work from, including their hired project co-ordinator. Grootbos is an example of responsible tourism catering to ethical tourism whilst making an income. This extract from the Grootbos website (2016) highlights the way in which responsible tourism is important.

*An Investment in People and Environment*

*Grootbos is about more than just luxury accommodation and eco adventures. Your visit directly contributes to the conservation efforts of the Grootbos Foundation as well as the development of sustainable nature-based livelihoods amongst local communities.*

*It is this philosophy of conservation linked with social development that has made Grootbos an award winning world leader in responsible tourism.*

The website goes on to explain the impact guests of the reserve have in conservation, speaking to the desire for consumers to lead more moral lives through their consumer choices.

*What if we told you your visit had a direct positive impact upon the unique natural environment of the Walker Bay region and its people? Grootbos has been committed to the conservation of the regions biodiversity, as well as the developing sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism, enterprise development and education.*

*Funds generated by the Grootbos ecotourism business, together with donations received from guests and external donors are invested through the foundation’s key programmes. In this way, all Grootbos guests directly support our aims of biodiversity and social development in the Walker Bay region.*

Grootbos is an example of the way in which eco tourism caters to a responsible tourism movement. Contributing to both social development and biodiversity attracts guests looking to support responsible tourism to the reserve, benefiting both the business and conservation. FVCT is one of the donors of the Grootbos reserve,

supporting alienating efforts on the landscape. The Trust has set out to support and encourage more responsible tourism.

Walker Bay conservancy is also part of establishing mountain biking and walking trails across some owners' lands offering short strolls to overnight trails in the fynbos and forests. A number of landowners discussed the possibility of other conservancies implementing these types of activities for the public for a small fee which would then go back into the conservancies to pay for conservation efforts.

#### **4.4 Economics, government and conservation**

Landowners, conservancies, the South African government and FVCT recognise economic values in conservation and nature. As conservancies are organised and run by landowners themselves, economic values are incorporated into conservancy practices and methods of conservation. Conservancies worked to ensure conservation efforts whilst protecting the livelihoods of each owner involved.

*“One of the conservancy’s principals is that we are all committed to the cause but we need to maintain our net income value. We make our living off our land, the moment that impacts negatively on that then it’s a default. It has to be compensated for. It’s all about protecting the natural veld while making use of the productive land for farming.” - Donny, Landowner.*

Donny discussed the importance of his conservancy in implementing methods and practices that protect the land’s natural and economic values. Most owners discussed the ways in which their conservancies recognise the need for land to be productive and worked to incorporate these values into their policies and practices. Natural values are not necessarily prioritised over these economic values as conservancies rather aimed to find a balance between conserving and protecting landowners’ income and land.

These conservancies also recognise the financial difficulties of funds to support conservation activities. Conservancies help landowners to access funds for conservation efforts which help to make conservation such as clearing more feasible and affordable for landowners.

*“People who give funding for conservation don’t want to work directly with a landowner. They want to work with farmers associations, a conservancy or an organisation like FVCT. No one works directly.” – Ronny, Landowner.*

Ronny describes the difficulty of obtaining funds from sponsors or government departments as an independent landowner. Owners prefer to work in groups or with other programmes to ensure funds for conservation support.

*“Our conservation gets access to funds, that’s why it’s important to participate in conservancies. Money, time, whatever you can offer to it is good because you get something out of it in the end.” – Ronny, Landowner.*

Some conservancies suggested that conservation organisations ignored the economic dimensions in landownership that conservancies recognised. According to some landowners, conservation organisations and conservationists often prioritised the natural values of land whilst ignoring values such as livelihoods. Participating in a conservancy run by themselves and other landowners in their area ensured that landowners’ priorities were protected. Donny described it as being in control of their own destinies.

*“We are in control of our destiny here. We often bump heads with green conservationists because they want to restore it to what it was 150 years ago.” – Donny, Landowner.*

Donny describes the priorities of conservationists to restore nature to a pristine, untouched state prior to human influence. Donny refers to green conservationists as conservationists who encourage the separation of humans and nature to restore the environment to its pre human ‘prestine’ state. His conservancy had experienced difficulties in differences of conservation methods, practices and priorities with ‘green’ conservationists. According to Donny, these types of conservationists do not want to include capitalism and money in conservation designs and often ignore or refuse to recognise the money values involved in landownership.

Conservation is a term that means different things to different people (Carr & Tait: 1991). Ahnström et al believe that, “clashes of opinions between farmers and conservationists are a key obstacle for sound nature conservation in the agricultural landscape” (2009: 41). Chapin (2004) claims that conflict in interests can be one of the biggest challenges in conservation designs.

Donny explained this conflict as a result of difference in priorities and visions for the design and management of owners’ landscapes. Landowners want to develop land to incorporate their incomes into their conservation designs where as these ‘green’ conservationists want to design landscapes that mirror the natural landscapes before large productivity.

*“We want to get it to the vision we have for it, not to look like it did 50 years ago. You can’t take it back, it’s gone. Work forward. Plan how it should be in the future, nothing stays the same. Change is part of life. Farmers are here now. Agriculture is here now. Let’s do that but do it sustainably.” – Donny, Landowner.*

Donny believes that conservationists need to recognise the role humans play in landownership that contributes not only to personal wealth but also the wealth of the country through food production, eco-tourism and the wildflower industry. He suggested that conservation methods can no longer separate humans from nature and business from conservation. Carr and Tait (1991) describe the way in which farmers view themselves as conservationists, whilst conservationists do not. According to Robert Ryan et al (2003), what it means to be a good steward of the land to a farmer differs immensely to the conservationist’s definition of being a good steward. According to Ryan et al’s (2003) article, farmers claimed that they conserve their agricultural landscapes whilst still farming, while green conservationists did not accept farmers’ methods of land management as conservation. Similar to the above studies, farmers in my study said that they felt they were not recognised as stewards by ‘green’ conservationists.

Sustainable agriculture should be recognised and discussed more widely in mainstream conservation as a method of conserving as well as protecting the economy. A method of conservation that recognises and ensures both the preservation of owners’ livelihoods as well as the natural values of their lands could foster better partnerships between farmers and conservationists and bring about efficient, effective conservation practices and designs.

Some landowners also voiced the benefits of conservancies and conservation organisations partnering with big businesses and corporations. Brockington, Duffy and Igoe suggest that “capitalist policies and values, often neoliberal policies and values, pervade conservation practice” (2008: 3). As discussed in the literature review, conservation organisations have become increasingly dependent on capitalism and consumerism to ensure financial support (Brockington & Duffy: 2010). Green advertising, social networking and ethical consumption can benefit both corporations and NGOs. Both parties benefit from legitimacy whilst NGOs benefit from much needed funding (Brockington & Duffy: 2010). Conservation offers capitalist businesses legitimacy and new market opportunities that facilitate capitalistic expansions (Hanks: 2003). Businesses working with conservation organisations can benefit through ‘greening’ their images (Hanks: 2003). Some owners felt that big companies did not care about conservation but rather just about

the money, although most recognised the importance of conservation organisations to partner with these companies for funding. Rodney, a landowner and farmer, stated that *“there’s a value in partnering with big companies”*.

He did however believe that the value in conservation for these companies is for marketing and profit.

*“The value for them is marketing, ethical marketing. They don’t care about conservation, they care about the value in marketing for them. But they can offer funding for these projects so ABI can get sponsored and they can get marketing from it.” – Rodney, Landowner.*

Although he recognised the capitalist priority of these companies, he acknowledges the benefits for both conservation organisations and landowners.

*“More time should be spent on getting involved with bigger companies. Everyone will win that way and everyone will get more advertising.” – Rodney, Landowner.*

These relationships that exist between companies, landowners and conservation NGOs link nature to capitalism, however in these cases owners often thought these partnerships were beneficial to them and their land. These partnerships, contrary to popular literature, do not necessarily have to lead to the exploitation of nature and the commodification of land. As owners and conservation NGOs work together with companies to ensure conservation methods that benefit both nature and profitability, money in these cases does not always need to be at the expense of conservation.

Some owners are also concerned about the priorities and methods of conservation by the South African government. There was a common concern that government departments may not recognise the value of land to owners’ livelihoods and incomes.

*“The government owns a piece of land on that one side. It just sits there. It gets cleared but it is a productive piece of land that could be producing. This is a business, it’s nice to have fynbos but it’s not the only priority. They (government) don’t get that.” – Martin, Landowner.*

This statement highlights the main concern of some owners with regard to the government’s management of conservation and land. Some owners in the study felt that government departments did not recognise or prioritise their land as a form of income. Other owners strongly believed that government departments prioritised their financial desires above conservation. In recent years, conservation has offered the post apartheid government a way of addressing legacies of poverty and

inequalities through the creation of employment opportunities. Politicians and corporations have also become 'green' in what Brockington and Duffy (2010) described as 'greenwashing'. Conservation therefore also holds an important economic value for the government, sometimes creating a resistance of landowner participation in government run conservation programmes.

*"The alien clearing thing is a job creating thing and nothing more for government. I don't know if they care about our businesses or our land."* – Michael, Landowner.

There is also a general perception of landowners that other owners who are not involved in any conservation efforts are more focused on the economic value of their land, prioritising ways to make a livelihood from it rather than spending time and money on conservation. According to the conservation manager of SAB, it is important landowners understand land can be effective forms of livelihood whilst also being conserved. On the other hand, some owners felt landowners who did not make income from their land, having them as rather holiday destinations, were less involved in conservation as the land held no economic value for these landowners. My study was unable to determine the validity of either of these claims, however according to owners involved in this study; financial aspects of land plays a role in both motivating and deterring owners from conservation. Owners who made livelihoods from their land are seen by some owners as having extra motivation in conservation as conserving land would protect the profitability of land. On the other hand, a small amount of owners are concerned that the profitability of land could lead to exploitation of nature.

All owners involved in this study are involved in some forms of conservation whether they were lifestyle landowners or commercial farmers. There were however three common factors in all owners' ability and willingness to participate in conservation, namely affordability, convenience and accessibility. McCann et al (1997), suggest that economic pressures on farms can work against the participation of conservation actions. Similarly, Joanne Millar and Allan Curtis (1999) suggest that the desire to be stewards is not enough to motivate landowners to change their management methods as it is largely influenced by financial setbacks. For owners, a common challenge in conservation efforts is the affordability of conservation practices as most found this a costly activity. Other challenges include accessibility and convenience, as owners are often very busy and time restricted, conservation efforts that are drawn out and require a lot of attention are often less desirable. As FVCT provides financial support, regular meetings and communications, it provides a platform for conservation to be affordable, convenient and feasible for all

landowners in the area, thus encouraging more landowners to participate in conservational activities.

Recognising the economic dimensions and values of nature in landownership can further encourage the participation of landowners. Some owners are wary to work with conservationists who do not acknowledge these dimensions as their methods often do not incorporate these types of values. Incorporating and understanding the roles private land play in the financial sustainability of owners can encourage efficient methods of conservation that encourages both financial and environmental sustainability.

*“If you explain to any landowner that aliens can have negative effects on the value of the property and that this is help, financial help, they will get involved. To help protect their values they will. If it’s affordable to him then there’s no reason on earth not to participate.” – Boris, Landowner.*

Boris described the importance of affordability in conservation participation for owners. Timmy highlighted the lack of income from conservation efforts such as alien clearing as a main challenge in maintaining preservation of land.

*“I had a whole area of black wattle that I cut out because it was like that on the other side of the farm. Six months later it grew back. Trying to keep on top of it, but in a farming situation when there’s no money coming back from alien clearing it feels like you are losing to forces you can’t beat. You do need financial help.” - Timmy, Landowner.*

FVCT clearing project offers important financial support for landowners in clearing their land.

*“FVCT is so important. It helps landowners so much with finances. Some of us can’t do it without that.” - Timmy, Landowner.*

Many owners discussed the importance of finding financial value for alien wood in order to make clearing more financially affordable.

*“The trick with aliens is how to make it sustainable and affordable.” - Ronny, Landowner.*

Some owners had made efforts to make an income from alien wood through selling it to builders, wood companies and even buying boilers from overseas to make the wood useful.

*“We need to make a sustainable economy for aliens. We need to find a way for jobs to continue. Maybe these gas heaters are the answer. They need wood to heat up things. If you create a business by selling wood then that’s good. These gasification boilers are sustainable like solar panels. We use the wood to make gas to heat up water .It’s not cheap to install but it heats up the house, water, can even do under floor heating. It’s sustainable then.” – Gerry, Landowner.*

These financial aspects within conservation efforts show the ways in which economic values in nature manifest in different forms for different entities. Economic factors not only play a role in landowners’ management efforts but also shape relationships between conservation NGOs.



Figure: 4.1

Boilers burn alien wood creating a sustainable source of heat to warm water and livestock shelters.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Discussions around capitalist interests shaping conservation and nature have become popular in recent years. These aspects were seen in some ways in the landowners’ experiences and narratives. The links between the economy and nature manifested through a variety of aspects and practices in landowners’ daily lives. According to Ahnström et al (2009: 41), early studies around landowner behaviours assumed that “farmers behave as profit maximising agents responding in uncomplicated ways to the financial incentives on offer”. As discussed previously, Meeker-Lowry argues that humans need to view land as a “community to which we belong”, by doing this then “we may begin to use it with love and respect” (1995: 158). The idea here is that this view is necessary in order to protect and preserve land and nature and avoid the exploitation of land as commodities (Meeker-Lowry: 1999). Viewing nature as a business opportunity leads to land being viewed as a commodity, leading to the exploitation and abuse of nature (Meeker-Lowry: 1995). This suggests that land are not viewed as a business at the same time as being viewed as a place of belonging, a home that is to be loved and respected.

Landowners' narratives in this study offer an alternative standpoint, that it is possible to view a land as both a business as well as a home. Business behaviours of landowners were not devoid of respect and love for their land but were rather motivated by these. These narratives therefore offer an alternative discourse to the capitalist/nature relationship in landownership and conservation as exploitative and abusive. Throughout owner's personal economic narratives, there was a consistent sense of social and personal responsibility shaping business behaviours of the landowners in the area. Ahnström et al suggest that "farmers' decisions are made under great external pressure from the market, national laws, regulations and subsidy programmes" (2009: 49). Although capitalist interests play a role within landownership in the Overberg, there are dimensions and values playing out that are often ignored in discussions around the economy and nature.

Mary Zimmer et al claim that "current concern for the environment is readily observed in consumer polls and lifestyles, in political campaigns, in the media, and in product offerings and marketing strategies" (1994: 63). As responsible and ethical consumption and tourism becomes increasingly popular, so does the need for responsible farming. As the economy and nature become increasingly intertwined, so do the connections between society and the environment. Recognising these important economic dimensions that exist within the personal narratives of landownership exposes the human dimensions that exist with nature.

These owners' business behaviours and experiences not only emphasise the importance of land as livelihoods but also highlight a sense of care and responsibility that influences them. This suggests that mainstream conservation policies and practices that have been shaped by negative narratives of capitalism in nature, should consider these dimensions in their method implementation. Some landowners felt mainstream conservation methods did not acknowledge the importance of the need to conserve while maintain productive land and incomes, often claiming that contrary to popular conservationist belief, the two can be achieved in harmony without the destruction of nature.

Ahnström et al (2009) claim that economic reasons for participating in conservation behaviour are nearly always accompanied by other motivations. This is observed in the Overberg landowners' narratives as they often see their land as more than an economic asset. In some cases there is also a spiritual, historical and personal connection to land. I go on to discuss these emotions in the next chapter.

## **5. Chapter Five - Identity, Emotions and Nature**

*"I love my land more than anything else." – Tom, Landowner.*

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### **5.1 Introduction**

Another main theme throughout the interviews conducted in my research was emotion. These emotions highlight the ways in which human identity is deeply entrenched in their environments, being shaped by it whilst also shaping it. As Fred Myers (in Flint and Morphy: 2000) suggests, landownership is an experience of processes of exchange and negotiations of identity. Landowners' discursive narratives offer an alternative way to understand the nature/human relationship. Their identities are shaped through different manifestations of emotional experiences and perceptions of landownership and nature. Emotions also offer an alternative view of landowners to the early farmer behaviour studies that perceived farmers as economic agents, exploiting and abusing their land for capitalist gains, uncovering the more than money dynamics that exist within landowner discourses (Ahnström et al: 2009).

Personal values such as pride, purpose and love are some emotions that play a role in forming landowners' identities. Another prevalent emotion is the sense of belonging in nature, in South Africa and to their land. Spiritual values of nature and land form another emotional connection. Land as well as the environment play an immense role in contributing to personal wellbeing through creating a sense of purpose, spirituality and belonging. All these emotions contribute to shaping the personal identities of the landowners in my study, informing land management behaviours.

I unpack these values through an analysis of landowners' personal accounts of attitudes and experiences. Management practices such as conservation also offer a platform from which to acknowledge these types of emotions associated with nature that are largely ignored in mainstream conservation policies.

Debates around environmental ethics discuss a need for conservation to acknowledge subjective intrinsic values of nature in conservation policy and practice methods (Burton: 2004). Rob Burton (2004) describes identity and 'self concept' as being influenced by an individual's habitat and moral obligation. These then shape an individual's attitude and behaviour to certain aspects such a conservation, nature and land (Burton: 2004). Farmers are discussed as having social identities, shaped

by social norms, as well as their own individual personal value systems and views shaped by their own experiences and moral values (Schoon and Te Grotenhuis: 2000). According to Schoon and Te Grotenhuis (2000), landowners and farmers hold their own personal views on what it means to be a good landowner and farmer. McHenry (1998) suggests a need to analyse the ways in which individuals conceptualise and interpret their worlds, specifically views of conservation and sustainable farming. This is necessary as farmers “negotiate the notion of conservation to fit their constructions of farming” (McHenry cited in Mills et al: 2013:6).

Carr and Tait (1991) argue that farmers and conservationists view the conservation problems differently and thus have different objectives and motivations. Landowners’ attitudes and values around nature and its protection are significantly different to those held within government, its agencies and in environmental NGOs (Beedell and Rehman: 1999). Grabbatin and Rossi believe that conservation needs to understand the value of the landscapes to “livelihoods, regional identities and people’s environmental imaginaries” in order to implement inclusive methods (2012: 276).

Understanding emotions around nature and landownership would allow for more efficient conservation planning, practices and implementation in the Overberg area. As Daniel Botkin explains in his book that focuses on the human/nature relationship, ‘No mans’ garden’, “the relationship between individual human beings and nature is so important, fundamental, and deep within each of us that we are generally unaware of its significance, it is intrinsic to each of us” (2001:13). I go on to discuss some of these main emotions through the use of a number of landowner stories that highlight the ways in which human identity is deeply embedded within their environments, challenging the ideal of the human/nature dichotomy.

The growing recognition of nature’s role in forming personal identities has given rise to the need for rethinking mainstream conservation methods which have largely ignored emotional values and encouraged the separation of humans from the environmental management policies. Perspectives such as queer ecology and eco-feminism offer alternative ways to understand the role of nature in forming human identities and were therefore useful in analysing landowner emotions and identities throughout this study. For the majority of landowners involved in my study, both land and nature held values that went beyond economics.

## 5.2 More than money

According to Ahnström, a main value associated with farming in the UK was income, but other values were just as important such as “maintaining a nice place to live, being close to the land and nature, and independence” (2009: 41). Although there are economic values of land, the majority of landowners expressed more than money values associated with their land such as a sense of belonging, identity and closeness to nature, similar to the findings described by Ahnström (2009). Although conservation is often costly for landowners, many farmers discussed the importance of prioritising conservation despite the costs.

*“It’s not only an economic decision, it’s actually costing them money.” - Wendy Landowner.*

Landowners discussed that although conservation is an expense, it is important in order to protect the land that means more than money to them. Wendy’s statement shows that the landowners don’t necessarily think they will gain any economic advantage.

*“I don’t mind sacrificing some income to conserve. I would rather conserve some of the valuable land than use it for crops or anything.” - Calvin, Landowner.*

As seen in Calvin’s case, landowners are willing to sacrifice income in order to protect areas of valuable land. I observed that many landowners had reserved areas strictly for preserving and protecting rather than for income. For the majority of landowners, their land and its fynbos had natural and aesthetic values that need to be protected. Many owners recognise the ‘treasures’ they have on their land that are being threatened by alien species. Some participants emphasised the importance of getting more landowners to realise the importance of fynbos species and the responsibility they have as owners to preserve it.

Some landowners had contributed to preserving very rare, highly endangered fynbos species that were threatened by alien infestation. These species were endemic to some of these ranges of habitats on private land, making owners participation vital in order to conserve them. Landowners and conservancies are also involved in other forms of conservation efforts. One couple have wind turbines, solar panels and compost toilets in order to be more environmentally sustainable. Another landowner uses wood from aliens to generate heat for the chicks on his chicken farm offering a sustainable use of the aliens he had cut down.

Often, landowners were clearing or had cleared parts of neighbouring areas. Many owners emphasised the importance of neighbouring landowners getting involved in clearing as seeds pass from neighbouring land. Some landowners even participate and encouraged conservation in other areas that do not affect their land.

*Wendy and Graham contacted the Caledon Casino to lobby for them to conserve the land they have as it is home to rare Buchu and other valuable species. The Casino was open to preserving the land. This shows the way in which landowners can get involved in lobbying for conservation even on lands that are not their own. – Extract from Research Journal.*

This conservation effort by Wendy and Graham was an example of the way in which conserving is important to landowners even without it holding an economic value for them personally.

Another landowner, Andy, discussed an independent project developed by his son to help the local township community grow their own crops to eat and sell. His son started an initiative by giving the community seeds, fertiliser and water. They grew a vegetable garden that they enjoyed doing. The landowner lent the community his car every Saturday to sell their vegetables at the market. The government found out about the project and wanted to get involved. The landowner explained that the government gave them cattle that ate all the vegetables and the initiative ended. “This is what happens when they (government) get involved,” said Andy. The initiative was a way of the landowner’s son to share knowledge on crop production as well as making a difference through nature. These stories show the ways in which owners will participate in sustainable and conservation projects despite there being no economic value or income for them personally. Andy’s story also highlights feelings of frustration that government initiatives do not always include local farming knowledge.

Ahnström et al suggest that being a farmer is “not simply a profession but a way of life and thus money is not all that matters; quality of life and independence are important” (2009: 42). What it means to be a landowner is shaped and formed by the personal values and identities of these owners which work to develop their perceptions of nature and the ways in which they manage these landscapes. Beneath these more than money values lay emotions that motivate efforts of conservation, such as purpose, passion, love and belonging. Ownership of a farm and land creates “emotional links and willingness to honour and maintain the status of the land” (Segalen cited in Ahnström et al: 2009: 42). This dynamic is seen

through the emotional links formed by landowners in this study. These emotions contribute to forming landowners' individual identities that are deeply entrenched in their land influencing their personal roles within their environments. A main theme throughout the interviews is the sense of purpose derived through experiences of landownership.

### **5.3 Purpose, passion and love**

For some landowners being involved in conservation efforts gives them a sense of pride and purpose, contributing to their well-being. This is especially evident in retired and older landowners. Nature holds emotions for them in the way it creates purpose in their lives through their interactions with it. Dereck, Marcus and Steven's narratives of landownership and participation in conservation highlights personal emotions of purpose they have established with their environments, contributing to their identities.

Dereck lived and worked at a family business in Cape Town before retiring early to the Overberg. He wanted to make a contribution towards the fynbos in the area so he began by removing alien vegetation for 10 years on this small plot of land. He also bought a larger piece of land on a mountain area where I arranged to meet him for an interview.

During the interview, he mentioned that the mountain land found him rather than him finding the land. The previous landowner did not want to sell the entire property as he had inherited it from his father and was a third generation farmer but he then decided to sell a portion of the land. At first there were some issues in purchasing the land as the original owner wanted to divide the land to keep a small portion to farm off and live on until he retires. Dereck decided to start clearing whilst the decision over land division was being made.

However, six months later permission to divide the land was refused. Dereck believes this was because the government would not sanction the land splitting into divisions so as to avoid adding value as they want to eventually buy all the land in the area. He decided to purchase the entire plot and let the original owner live and farm on a hectare until retirement. This shows the way Dereck as a landowner himself understands the role the land plays in identity of the original owner as a farmer. The main reason and aim for purchasing the land was to clear and contribute to fynbos preservation. Dereck described himself as "not a farmer but a mountain man" stating that he is happy when he is up on the mountain land which was a reason for him to purchase the mountain area. He stated that he was pouring

his money into the land without gaining an income for it but enjoying it immensely, again this emphasises a more than money value for Dereck.

Dereck was not participating in the FVCT alien clearing programme and is clearing many hectares of aliens on his land independently. He pays teams that clear weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays. 1.25 million Hakea was cleared in 50 working days with 12 labourers and 10 chainsaws. Dereck is also a trustee and shareholder of a reserve committee that focuses on various conservation efforts. Above his land is a government owned reserve which is neglected, Dereck and his team also clear aliens on this reserve to keep it alien free and keep the paths clear.

He described the piece of land as his “paradise” and clearing aliens as his “passion”. A rare fynbos species endemic to the mountain range area, that was thought to be extinct was discovered on his land, this species could have been lost forever had he not started clearing aliens from this property. He was extremely proud to play a role in protecting rare fynbos species such as the one discovered on his land. For Dereck, his main motivator for conserving is passion and love for nature and fynbos.

*“The fynbos was my main motivation (for conserving the land). I love doing it, it makes me happy. I don’t think I’m doing anything good, I’m just doing something I love to do and something that should be done. I will leave something behind this way. I will leave a piece of paradise behind.” – Dereck, Landowner.*

For Dereck the land offers him a sense of purpose and passion in his retirement. Conserving the fynbos is the main motivator for owning the land and he shows immense dedication to conservation through clearing. He said spending productive time on the mountain contributes to his wellbeing and happiness. Dereck has established a deep emotional connection both to his private land as well as nature, contributing to an important part of his identity as a “mountain man” and a conservationist. These parts of his identity were deeply entrenched within the land, creating a sense of personal purpose that will outlive him through the land that he will leave behind.

For another landowner, Marcus, a sense of purpose and passion are also emotions he had associated with his land.

*“I bought this land in 2001, I retired a bit earlier and it was something that interested me. I grew up in the Cape and my parents left me some inheritance so I used it to buy this piece of land. For me the clearing is solely for the fynbos. Wildlife has always been very important to me.” – Marcus, Landowner.*

As an avid amateur botanist, he decided to purchase a piece of land on a mountain area and set up a small guest house on the land where he does some fynbos picking. He also sells some alien wood to a wood business. During the interview, he proudly showed me before and after photos showing the extent to which the land had been cleared. The before photo shows a person walking in an area of land infested with aliens, the after photo shows a person walking through the area that is now completely cleared of aliens, allowing fynbos to grow. Another rare fynbos species endemic to this one range of mountains was rediscovered on his land. The species was only known from a painting from the early 1800's and thought to have been extinct. This species is extremely threatened by alien infestations making his land even more valuable to conserve. Had he not conserved the area, this fynbos species may have gone extinct.

*"For me conservation is a hobby. It's a purpose for me. I love the plants too so I am happy to see the difference that clearing has made."- Marcus, Landowner.*



Figure 5.1 - Fynbos blooms again where alien plant species once infested Marcus' land.

For Marcus, clearing offers him a hobby and a purpose. The land for him holds a value of purpose and passion that contributes to contentment in his retirement. Steven also shared a similar experience to Marcus and Dereck. He is a retired farmer, extremely passionate about conservation describing it as his way of giving back. He lived on another piece of land in the Eastern Cape where he made a living off producing wine and crops before retiring on a piece of land in the Overberg area.

Steven cleared his land entirely to be declared a nature reserve. He has also reintroduced animal species that used to be present on the land. His aim is to see the land the way it was meant to be prior to alien infestation. The below extract describes the process he followed to have his land declared a nature reserve.

*“There was a guy that used to have a house down by the lagoon at the end of the road. He spoke to a couple of people and they decided that they should try to preserve the nature here. Most of the private owners agreed to remove the internal fences and conserve the whole area to turn it into a nature reserve. There were a lot of animals here too. Then nature conservation came to see if they could recommend it as a nature reserve but they said no there were too many aliens to recommend it as a nature reserve. So we decided to start doing it on our own property. We carried on clearing on my land and on my brother’s. His children have carried on. We bought in some bush buck and waterbok. They were indigenous here so we want to keep them here. They do very well here. I get excited when I see them. We’ve managed to clear our whole land now and become a designated nature reserve.” - Steven, Landowner.*

Throughout the interview Steven described a passion for conservation. Conservation offers him a way to give back to nature. Nature for Steven, is a part of who he is and giving back to it in the form of protecting and preserving it offers him an immense sense of pride and purpose. Reintroducing the animals to the area was a way in which he played a role in restoring the land to its previous natural state. Being surrounded by indigenous flora and fauna gives Steven a sense of peace and happiness. He spoke enthusiastically about the way in which conserving this area of nature was now his life’s purpose.

These three accounts of experiences offer a similar understanding of the sense of purpose personal land can create for landowners. Conservation, land and nature play an important role in shaping identities of these landowners through creating a sense of purpose, passion and love. The land also offers a passion and hobby to owners, contributing to their general wellbeing and happiness.

Robin Liffman et al (2000), found in their study, ‘To ranch or not to ranch: home on the urban range?’, that the ‘love of the land’ was one of the main ways in which ranch owners expressed a sense of stewardship towards their land. This love of the land was expressed through conservation efforts by ranch owners, shaping the ways in which they interacted with their ranches (Liffman et al: 2000). Likewise in a study of farmers in USA states of California and Colorado, there was a shared love

for land and a sense of pride (Liffman et al: 2000). Similarly, many landowners in my study expressed an emotion of deep love for their land, which acted as a motivating factor for them to be involved in conservation efforts. Love also contributes to the experiences of purpose, passion and belonging, making this emotion especially important to recognise when discussing the human/nature relationship and the ways in which humans should be involved in conservation.

*“A strong reason (to conserve) is because landowners love their land. They truly love their land and nature. They actually want to be able to drive their cars up into the mountain land and see the beautiful nature. They want to appreciate it.” – Wendy, Landowner.*

Wendy describes the sense of love and affection owners feel towards their land as well as nature. I found this to be a common sentiment throughout the interviews conducted.

*“I’m amazed by how many landowners and farmers want to clear just for the sake of clearing because of the love they have for their land. They actually really want to clear. I mean that is partly our reason too. It’s also for fire security and for the water.” – Wendy, Landowner.*

For Wendy, part of the motivation behind conserving her land is for practical reasons such as water and fire security. Another reason is her love for her land and desire to see it flourish. She went on to describe her desire to see the environment as it should be, emphasising her method of landownership as non-exploitative but rather finding a balance in living off her land whilst protecting the nature.

As Wendy highlights in her statement, the love and care that landowners put into their land shape a part of their identities. For some landowners, their land and nature are an integral part of who they are. Love and affection for the environment often manifests through preserving and protecting it through activities such as clearing.

*“For her this is her piece of paradise so she wants to get rid of the aliens to be able to enjoy the flowers that grow here indigenously.” – Arthur, Land Manager.*

Arthur is a land manager who lives and works on a piece of land. His role is to manage the land for its owner, including protecting and preserving its nature. This is a main concern for the owner although she did not live on the land herself. Arthur describes the land as the owners ‘piece of paradise’, this was shared view by many owner about their land.

*“She’s also got a strong affinity for nature so she would help preserve that so they don’t all get lost and destroyed by farming and aliens. It’s her way of playing a part in nature.” - Arthur, Land Manager.*

Arthur also described the owner as having a strong affinity towards nature. This love for nature motivates her to prioritise conservation on her land. Conservation is a way of playing a part in the natural system of the land. This forms a part of her identity as a good landowner.

For Tom, being a farmer is an immensely important part of his identity and his role in the world. This can be seen in an extract from an interview with Tom.

*“I tried to work in an office when I was young. At the bank. But I grew up on a farm, my father is a farmer. And I am a farmer too. I need to be outside and I need to be a farmer.” – Tom, Landowner.*

For Tom, his land shapes his identity and in turn this identity affects the way in which he manages his land. Contributing to nature through conservation is a way he feels that he means something to his land and can leave something behind. For landowners such as Tom, his identity as a farmer and a landowner meant he was also a conservationist.

*“Now, you cannot be just a farmer, you have to be a conservationist too.” – Tom, Landowner.*

The emotions the land holds for him such as purpose and love influences his land management behaviours.

*“I love my land more than anything, I’ve put so much into it. There was nothing there when I started and we created something. We are creating something with FVCT too.” – Tom, Landowner.*

This statement from Tom, emphasises the love and affection he felt for the land. For him the work he had done to make the land a working farm offers him a sense of meaning and purpose for his life leaving something special behind for his children. Tom described being a good farmer as something his children could be proud of when they grew up. To him, his identity of a landowner also played into his identity as a good father in providing for his family. This was particularly interesting as it highlights the ways a landowner’s identity as a farmer or owner are not separate from their identity as a father, a husband or other personal forms of identities. I speak more of Tom’s land and family experience in the next section of this chapter.

Conserving the land also means he plays a part in making a difference to his land and nature. In the extract below, it is evident that “meaning something” to his land is also important to him. In preserving and protecting it, he means something to the land.

*“It’s a real farm now. I want to mean something to my land and to the world. I did something.” – Tom, Landowner.*

For Tom, being a farmer is an extremely important piece of him as it shapes how he lives his daily life and the way in which he views himself and the world around him. Being a farmer offers immense happiness and fulfilment for this individual landowner. Leaving behind a working, productive and beautiful land for his children is important for him. Tom recounted how he and his wife bought the land when they were in their early twenties and built the farm from scratch. When they first moved onto the land they had just a few rooms in a building that was infested with snakes and they slept on mattresses on the floor. His years’ of hard work to create a working farm is fundamental to his identification with the land.

Landowners often expressed a love not only for their personal land but also for the surrounding environment. This statement from Michael shows the way nature is often deeply entrenched in the fabric of landownership identity.

*“I believe it is a genetic thing for me (love for nature). The first game I can remember playing was paddling down the river shooting crocodiles and animals that tried to climb in my boat. There was nothing from my environment other than it was always in me, I really believe that love has always been my driving force. Animals and birds.” – Michael, Landowner.*

Michael describes his love of nature as ‘genetic’ as if it exists within his DNA. This concept of a genetic love for nature plays an integral role in Michael’s personal identity and motivated him to purchase a piece of land. This deep love and affection for nature itself is a driving factor for him to preserve the land offering a way to play a role within the system of nature. Playing a role in nature, also offers landowners a sense of belonging. Often owners felt they belonged close to the environment, and belonged on their land for a number of reasons such as family histories. These senses of belonging manifested through different narratives that I will go on to discuss in further detail.

*“We saw getting involved as doing our part for nature. We are great nature lovers so clearing aliens was a way to do our part.” - Wendy, Landowner.*

#### 5.4 Sense of belonging and family histories

Barbara Bender (in Bender and Winer: 2001), suggests that spaces hold peoples' life narratives, historical contingency, changes and contestations. For many landowners, their land creates a sense of belonging through family histories and a desire to play a role in the web of life as well as in the country. Some areas of land have been in families for many generations, serving as a motivation to protect and preserve the land. Landowners not only want to conserve land for past generations but also for future generations, connecting them to both past and future family histories.

Land also often holds important memories for the owners. The stories of landowners in this section highlight the importance of history in landownership as well as in conservation methods. John O'Neil et al describe in their book, 'Environmental values', that an "individual's identity, their sense of who they are, is partly constituted by their sense of belonging to a particular place" (2008: 39). Landowners' sense of belonging on their land and in nature works to shape their identities and influences the ways they manage and organise their land in relation to their identities.

Geoff Wilson (1996), suggests in his article, 'Farmer environmental attitudes and ESA Participation', that owners and farmers living on an old family farms develop a greater sense of sympathy with the land and were more interested in conservation, in comparison to relative newcomers to farming. This was seen in some owners in this study as old family farms meant owners hold a sense of affection towards land as it embodies family histories. Calvin is the third generation from his family to live and farm on his land. His family has been in the area since settlers began to move in, which encourages him to be passionate about the area's history. His experience shows how history can play a part in the relationship established with nature. He had many history books scattered around his home and went into great detail explaining the history of people and the land to me during our interview. He is so passionate about history that he has written and published a book about the area's history. To him, the history of his land is what connects him most to it. Below, he describes why he wrote his book.

*"I won't live forever. I want to pass on what I know about these lands to other generations. The history of the region has mostly been documented by the English and some things have been lost. What I knew would have been lost with me. I got a lot of information from other books and some from my farther."* – Calvin, Landowner.

The book offers him a way of sharing the histories of not only his land but other land in the area. He is a semi-retired farmer, harvesting some fynbos and wildflowers with most of his income coming from sheep, wheat, dairy or cattle. Calvin appreciated being able to bring his children up close to nature and described the farm as very special to him, calling it a valuable asset. Knowledge that had been shared through generations of landownership was another important value that landowners held in relation to nature. Landowners held important knowledge on fire control, flower picking, crop production, cattle, culling, maintaining the populations of wild animals, conservation and management of land. Some of this valuable knowledge had been passed down through generations and learnt through living on the land.

Landowners do not only conserve their land for past generations but also future generations. The main reasons to join nature conservation in a study by Ryan et al (2003) were the attachment to one's land and the desire to conserve land for future generations. Tom shared similar motivations to conserving his land because of his attachment and developing a sense of family history. He manages his land in such a way that the future generation would be proud of it.

*"My kids can say one day my farther cleared this all and left something behind. He built this. When me and my wife started this, there was nothing. No electricity. Puff adds in the house. No furniture, no money but we made it. You can't take trips but every day is outside this way. I am satisfied now, I can die tomorrow and I won't come back to haunt anyone because I've been part of this land. We have friends who live in the city and I feel lucky to be here. No traffic and no tense stuff. I can sit under an oak tree and watch the cattle on a farm. There are small things in nature that give you a big heart and say I'm glad to be here, we need to conserve, for our children too." – Tom, Landowner.*

Conserving for him is not because of past generations but for the future generation. Tom also spoke about knowledge and the way in which this knowledge would benefit his land and his children in the future with regards to managing the land.

*"I know the area and I know how to conserve it so I must." – Tom, Landowner.*

Fuller et al suggests that "cultivating fields and managing the same land over generations gives farmers a unique local knowledge and thus a good understanding of how to care for and conserve land for future generations" (cited in Ahnström et al : 2009: 40). For Tom, Diane and Calvin, they feel their knowledge is an important aspect of land ownership.

Diane explained the important knowledge around landownership her husband has learnt from his father.

*“Gerhard knows how to do it and when and where. He can tell the fire brigade more than they know, He knows from growing up on this land. He learnt from his father and he knew from his father, our children will know from us. You can fight fire with fire. If it breaks out on another farm you go and fight it there, you can’t wait here. It’s a general community thing. Fire breaks out and you all help.” – Diane, Landowner.*

These types of knowledge act as a way of connecting the past and future generations of farmers and owners such as in Calvin’s case. For Calvin, his land was not something that only belonged to him, it was something that he himself belonged to. His main motivation for being involved in conservation efforts such as alien clearing was the history associated with the land and the sense of belonging he had established with the area.

*“The land isn’t really just yours, it belongs to your family. The blood, sweat and tears of my grandfather is on this soil. My father’s and his father’s. I am only here for a short time. If I can make an effort now, that can save my grandchildren so much more. A farmer has his land as his livelihood. It’s not necessary for you to tell him he needs to conserve, they know it is valuable to their grandchildren even. The land has been in families for 100s of years and will go as far as possible.” - Calvin, Landowner.*

Calvin’s statement emphasises the ways land can connect owners to both past generations as well as future generations through not only the physical land but also the knowledge of managing the land. Conserving the land offers a way the land can protect past generations’ contributions as well as protect it to be shared with future generations. Another reason Calvin thought his land was special was because of the botanical treasure on the mountain area. He started doing some Erica plant research 40 years ago and discovered his land had a special ecology and lobbied to get assistance to protect the fynbos through setting up a conservancy. He also has plans to put up wind generators soon. He is careful to keep his vulnerable areas clean to allow it to be rehabilitated, stating that although he makes his income from the land, his main priority is to protect it as his ‘home’ for future generations.

*“This is my home. This is my own farm and I like it here. There are a lot of comforts I don’t have like cafe shops but I have no idea what it means to sit in traffic or worry about crime. I have no desire for that. The fact that my children could play in the mud and not be locked in concrete, tar and glass. They could be close to nature and*

*further away from negative influences like crime and drugs. They were safe here. This farm is very special to me, it is private and even though it can get dirty, I like the silence. That is part of living on a farm.” - Calvin, Landowner.*

Calvin feels that his land is part of not only his life story but also his family's. Bringing up his children close to nature was important to Calvin as he felt it protected them from negative influences that were more prevalent in cities such as crime and drugs. Nature provided a safe, stable and peaceful environment for his children. Calvin was also more comfortable living closely to nature himself as he had always been a farmer and spoke about living in nature as an integral aspect of being a farmer.

Ronny has a similar connection to his land. His grandmother inherited his land in the 70's, but it had been in the family for generations since the 1800's. There is a sentimental value based on this historical connection that shapes the way Ronny manages his land as it acts as a motivator to preserve it. Anton, another landowner with sentimental land value, is the seventh generation on his land that dates back to 1830 in his family. He explained that he grew up knowing he was going to be a farmer and describes the land as a 'blessing' to him. He conserves the land for the historical sentimental value as well as to conserve some fynbos species that only grows in that specific mountain range. "I saw it in my dad, he taught me to conserve so it's so important to me to keep doing it," said Anton. As he is the seventh generation to live on this land, the land is part of his personal and family identity. Other landowners had similar connections with their land through family memories.

*While Gerard gave me a tour around his land, he stopped to point out a tree on the land where the family held social gatherings. "My sister even got married here" he said with a smile and a sense of nostalgia. – Field work journal, 29 September 2014.*

For Gerard, the land holds values based on the memories he had made with his family. These memories of spaces contribute to an individual's identity as land can "embody the history of their lives and those of the communities to which they belong" (O'Neil et al: 2008: 39).

*"All I'm doing is providing my grandchildren the right to do what I'm doing now and the right to see this fynbos." - Dereck, Landowner.*

Many owners view themselves as being within the system of nature as they work and live closely with it. Being part of nature and belonging within the cycle of the environment offered a sense of happiness and meaning.

*“I still look at it like I like to be part of nature. I don’t want to rule over nature. I believe what I am doing is what people have been doing for thousands of years, wild people. Bushmen.” – Michael, Landowner.*

This statement by Michael helps to rethink the notion of humans being in control over their environments. As Castree and Nash (2004) suggest, rethinking human identities is useful in challenging the ideal that humans are central to everything, including nature. As Michael states, he does not wish to rule or control his land but rather to work with it to contribute to its system. Rethinking landowners’ identities as part of their landscapes through various activities such as conservation disrupts the belief that human beings should be separated from the management of environments.

Michael discussed in detail during the interview his desire to play a role in nature. For him, being a landowner offers him this opportunity. He is an avid hunter and started a hunting business when he first moved to the land. The animals he hunted were not only trophy animals but also for culling reasons in order to contain populations from growing too large and starving. He saw this as a sense of purpose through which he could play a role within the balance of nature. He related the role he played in nature to the way in which bushmen interact with their environment.

*“If I look back I’ve always been very interested in the bushmen. I hunted with the bushmen and had some fun. I have a similarity to them in some ways. They love the animals but it’s a source for them, the lions kill them and they kill the Elands. They didn’t wipe out the Elands to plant like the white men. They lived with them, they lived with nature. That is how I still see it. That’s how I like to live, in the system of nature. People who sit in the city and moan about farmers, don’t understand nature. When you have agriculture, you get humans and nature and animals together. We understand how to live with nature.”- Michael, Landowner.*

Michael is not interested in controlling nature, but rather in living within nature.

*“If you leave some of the animals then there becomes too many and too little food and they die. The number of animals diminishes dramatically. Once they move somewhere else the natural vegetation can recover. Because we live where we do it doesn’t happen unless you let it which would be a disaster. The balance wouldn’t be here without us.” - Michael, Landowner.*

For Michael, managing his land offers him a role within the system of nature. He culled the animals on his land in order to maintain their survival. He is also very

active in conservation of the area and this offers a way of being within the balance of nature.

The modernist understanding of nature has encouraged a human/nature dichotomy, that understands humans' identity as above or detached from the natural world (Bonner: 2008). Queer and eco-feminist perspectives challenge this ideal of humans, rethinking what it means to be human as identity is ever changing rather than static (Morton: 2010). Through the use of these perspectives, emotions of nature challenge what being human means in relation to our environments. As these narratives of belonging discover, humans do in fact exist, as Bonner, puts it "within the web of life" (2008: 12). For many of these owners, belonging within the natural system is what makes them good landowners.

*"We want the environment to be as it should be. Obviously we change it. I'm not saying that's a bad thing. We should limit that change to make sure there's plenty of space for the natural nature that was here. You have to be sensitive about changing the environment. You have to understand that you can't live here without changing the environment. You have to be sensitive with everything you do your land." – Wendy, Landowner.*

Wendy acknowledges the ways in which humans both change and influence their land to an extent. Similar to ideas within eco feminism that humans co exist with nature rather than control it, these narratives highlight the importance of owners to live with the environment rather than controlling it (Bonner: 2008). This desire to co exist with nature often means adapting farming methods that work with nature rather than against it.

Living, working and conserving land in South Africa also plays a part in forming landowners' identities. Many expressed their love for the country and that owning land here means something important to them.

*"We are all African inside. We all want to play our part." - Keith, Landowner.*

For some landowners, owning land elsewhere would not be as valuable to them as being South African also formed an important part of their identities as seen in Kevin's statement.

Gerard had travelled and worked extensively throughout Europe, but he wanted to come back to South Africa to work on his family farm.

*“I love South Africa so I won’t buy land anywhere else. I belong here so I will do what I need to protect it (his family land). It’s easier to do something you know and this is what I know (farming in the area).” - Gerard, Landowner.*

Steven described his main motivation of conserving as his way of giving back to South Africa through preserving a small part of its nature. For him contributing to South Africa through conserving his land offered him a sense of purpose and belonging.

*“It is very expensive but the way I look at it, some people like to spend their money on a vacations or a BMW. But we put our money back into the land. Back into Africa, because I love Africa. Especially South Africa. It keeps me going, looking after this land. One has to do something in life that’s good so I am doing this.” - Steven, Landowner.*

Land often creates a sense of belonging both in nature, on the land and even in the country. Belonging in a space, shapes human identity and influences the ways in which we interact with our surroundings whilst simultaneously being shaped by these spaces as seen through these owners narratives.

### **5.5 Spiritual emotions in nature**

In some cases there are also spiritual connections to land. The Wortelgat Outreach Trust property is a Christian campsite resort used for church and school groups during the week. The resort bought in 1963 is owned by 21 stakeholders. According to one of the Wortelgat employees I interviewed, the resort aims to “bring people closer to Christianity and spirituality in a natural atmosphere”. The resort is very involved in conservation in order to preserve and protect the fynbos on the land. The following is taken from the Wortelgat website (2014), it emphasises the way in which a natural landscape is the perfect setting to connect to God and your own personal spirituality.

*“Imagine a place that has been touched by God, a place where wild animals roam freely and where birds soar and call out endlessly. Imagine fynbos nestled close to your doorstep. Imagine cosy cottage accommodation or rustic bush camp rondawels nestled under milkwood trees, lagoon water gently lapping along sandy, reed lined beaches. Imagine mountain views, magnificent sunsets, star laden skies and roaring seas over the distant dunes.*

*Imagine being able to break-away from the stress of life, the busyness of the city, telephones and TV. Imagine being able to hear nothing but God's voice. Now stop imagining and discover Wortelgat.*

*Wortelgat Outreach Trust runs an interdenominational Christian campsite and conference venue for churches, schools and other groups. Programmes on offer are multifaceted including educational, environmental, social and spiritual components.*

*It is God's own place uniquely and picturesquely set in natural vegetation of limestone fynbos and ancient milkwood thickets on the banks of the Kleinrivier estuary with magnificent views of the Kleinrivier mountains, situated 10kms from Stanford near Hermanus. Walks and hikes meander through the fynbos, along the koppies and under the milkwoods along the lagoon edge. Hikes through the forests to waterfalls in the mountain add to the variety of flora and fauna as does the walk through the nature reserve to a long white sandy beach with magnificent views of whales and dolphins."*

This extract from the Wortelgat website highlights the way in which a natural landscape is considered the ideal scenery in which to explore spirituality and connect to God as it is considered 'Gods own place'. For the Wortelgat, the land is an area touched by God. This very sentiment describes the way in which a natural space can be a space to participate in spirituality and religion for individuals. The spiritual connections that these visiting groups are said to feel through the natural landscape, encourages a sense of belonging for these individuals. Nature to these landowners has a spiritual value, conserving it is then important in order to preserve the landscape as 'God had intended it to be'. The land manager stated that, "it is important to keep the fynbos here. That is the way it is meant to be, if you see how it used to be in the past. It was all fynbos". The outreach trust believes that aliens pose a threat to the idyllic, pristine ideal of the 'land that was created by God', threatening the spirituality of the landscape in a way. Preserving the land in its indigenous form is then important to maintain the spiritual connections. Conserving it plays a vital role in maintaining the land's embedded sense of spirituality. In Wortelgat's case, spirituality acted as a motivator for conserving the land.

For another community, spiritual values acted as a challenge to conservation in the beginning. This area is an extremely remote and quiet space within the Overberg area that until recently had no electricity. It is still only accessible by dirt roads that are often flooded or damaged. Church going is an integral part of this small local

community. The church is very involved in a social upliftment programme that also incorporates a conservancy for landowners.

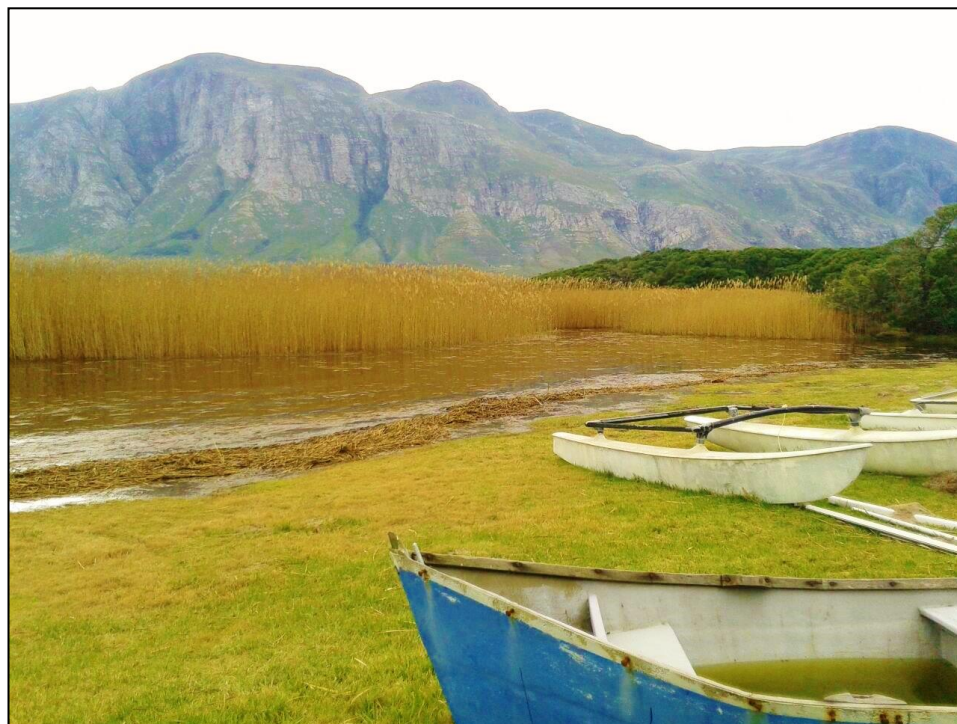


Figure 5.2 - Wortelgat aims to offer its guests a pristine, spiritual location.

This social upliftment programme focused mainly on the implementation of electricity and water for the community. The upliftment programme then began to bring in conservation aims as many in the area rely on their land as their livelihoods. The Church in the area owns some areas of land and leases them out to locals. Philip, the chairman of this conservancy, described the difficulty of getting older landowners involved in the projects as many of them thought of their land as ‘holy’, partly due to some of it belonging to the church. Many of the older community members also did not want to tamper with their land too much, even denying electricity as they wanted to live like they did in the old days. He described one landowner who didn’t want to remove his alien trees stating that, “there was a man who said his trees were holy, he doesn’t want to disrupt them. Doesn’t want to change the land at all”. For this community the ‘holy’ value of the land acts as a challenge to conservation efforts. Philip explained however that more landowners have begun to get involved in alien clearing once they have realised the benefits it had to their land.

The story of this religious community shows the ways in which nature and land can be sacred and holy spaces for these individuals. Changing their way of living or their natural landscapes could interrupt this connection to their spirituality. This narrative not only shows the presence of spirituality within an individual’s environment, but

also the role it plays in their management, organisation and participation of conservation.

### **5.6 Emotions in conservation and government**

John O'Neil et al believe that the loss of land for owners, whether natural or urban, results in the "loss of something integral to their lives" (2008: 39). Landowners in this study felt a fear of losing an integral part of their identity, sense of belonging and self as a motivator to protect and preserve the land as they embody these personal and family memories. This sense of protectiveness also influences their interactions with conservation organisations such as FVCT and government run organisations.

It is imperative for conservation efforts to take into account emotions of nature in order to develop effective management policies and practices that encourage participation and inclusion of humans in nature. There is a common perception amongst landowners that government run conservation projects did not recognise these types of emotions that landowners hold both with nature and their land.

Many landowners feel extremely protective over their land due in part to their love and sense of belonging. Protectiveness over these lands sometimes acts as deterrents from working with government run programmes such as Working for Water (WfW). Some landowners also perceive the government as not valuing the environment as anything more than an opportunity to create employment and income. The government's value of nature as an economic value is often perceived by landowners as ignoring other values that the environment has such as emotions.

*"I don't know if the government sees more to nature than money. It's just a way to create employment for them. It's not about anything else."* - Luke, Landowner.

Government conservation programmes could benefit from recognising and discussing these types of values. Acknowledging emotions of landownership may encourage trust and participation of landowners in projects. Research into the aims, methods and the decision making processes of government and municipality conservation organisations may be useful in understanding the values these entities have around aspects of the environment and conservation. Communication between landowners and government entities may help to build rapport and bridge the differences in methods towards land management that may exist. Trust, communication and inclusion are important in establishing methods of conservation on private land in South Africa as political aspects also contributed to fear in these relationships. I speak more about landowner and government relationships in the next chapter regarding political aspects. This emphasises the ways in which these

relationships that are plagued with issues of trust and fear are not only affected by emotions but also aspects of other values playing out in nature such as politics.

There is a general perception that FVCT is more in touch with emotions as they work with landowners on a more personal level. Continuous and open communication between the landowners and FVCT contribute to a sense of trust and understanding. Regular meetings allow for an open platform for experiences and perceptions to be shared.

Studies have found that “it is important that farmers do not feel trapped in a rigid scheme, but still feel that their knowledge about production and nature is considered as an important input in the development and the realisation of nature conservation in farmland” (Ahnström et al: 2009: 42). There is a shared desire for owners to be involved in conservation activities and share their knowledge around land, nature, production and conservation.

*“Roger is amazing, he walks around the farm with me and we discuss which area to clear. You don’t get that with the government at all. They don’t talk to you or include you.” - Martin, Landowner.*

Martin discussed appreciating the method of FVCT in including him as an owner in the conservation planning and implementation process. Conservancies run by landowners themselves also recognise emotions. As conservancies are organised and run by landowners themselves, emotions influence and shape the ways they conserve and manage their land. These values play a role in setting out the aims and priorities of the conservancies in their projects.

*“What I find with a conservancy and with FVCT is that everyone offers something. Everyone plays a role and brings different things to the table. Simon is good at botany, Kirsten is amazing with her notes and organising, things get done. Everyone listens to each other and shares what is important to them. There is a lot of knowledge and information shared. That wouldn’t happen with the government. They don’t care.” - Greg, Landowner.*

As conservancies are run by owners themselves, they offer spaces for landowners to learn and understand important aspects of conservation and ownership. Conservancies offer a platform through which owners can navigate land management and set out their own roles.

According to Ahnström (2009), a study in the Netherlands found that farmer’s discussions with other farmers, with advisors and land neighbours is an important

aspect of land ownership. To be acknowledged as a good farmer in the farming community it is important to share knowledge (Ahnström: 2009). The importance of sharing and exchanging knowledge is seen throughout landowners' narratives in the Overberg.

An example of this is the way in which conservancies organise for speakers to come in to discuss different topics. Some landowners discussed engineers coming in to explain how to prevent roads from flooding whilst others spoke about bringing in political analysts to discuss the political atmosphere of the country.

*“There is so much support in conservancies. It’s good to keep up with what’s happening in the community and with other landowners.” - Matthew, Landowner.*

Ahnström (2009) states that farmers and owners need to feel supported through advice and engagement as well as financially to participate in conservation.

*“It helps to be part of a conservancy, if it burns there are people who can help you. With the fire protection association you get equipment and people come in and back you. It’s good. If you are doing burns on purpose then they are on standby.” – Diane, Landowner.*

Diane describes the sense of support conservancies offer to owners.

Employees of these conservancies often also hold similar values to nature as landowners. Tommy is an intern project co-ordinator for a conservancy. He discussed his passion for nature during our interview.

*“I realised my passion, I love nature conservation. Looking at the values and impacts it has keeps me going. This isn’t about money. Passion first, money later.” – Tommy, Intern.*

## **5.7 Conclusion**

O’Neil et al describe the need for environmental understandings to acknowledge human identity as not only holding social dimensions but also environmental dimensions; the environment is then “not just something of instrumental value or a physical precondition of human life” (2008: 39). The environment can hold historical values, values of belonging and values of purpose that contribute to our identities as humans (O’Neil et al: 2008). Through emotions of landowners involved in this study, human identity can be seen as holding environmental dimensions that manifest in different dynamics.

According to Shannon Sullivan et al (cited in Ahnström: 2009: 40), farmers are characterised as having connections to land that contribute to a “deep awareness of natural cycles, appreciation for natural beauty and a sense of stewardship, but at the same time farmers are characterised as primarily utilitarian, causing misuse of the land”. This deep sense of awareness, knowledge and appreciation is evident in the landowners involved in this study. As discussed in the previous chapter, Economics and Nature, early studies around farmer and landowner behaviour characterised them as exploitative of their land. This chapter shows the more than money connections that owners have with their land that motivates their deep desire to be stewards. Similar to Sullivan’s (cited in Ahnström: 2009: 40) findings, landowners in this study hold a deep awareness of natural cycles, often viewing their personal roles as within these cycles rather than controlling from the outside.

As Jeffery Foss (2009) suggests, landscapes offer spaces for personal experiences and values, this can be seen through the narratives of these landowners in my study. Emotions manifest through purpose, passion and love. O’Neil et al (2008: 198) suggests that “we make sense of our lives by placing them in a larger narrative context, of what happens before us and what comes after, environments matter because they embody that larger context”. Landowners make sense of their lives, past, present and future by their attachments to their land. Land and nature offers a sense of belonging to landowners through the histories attached to them as well as spiritual connections.

Knowledge is a valuable aspect in landownership as it connects owners to their land. Many landowners feel their land and nature play a part in shaping their personal identities through these various emotions. Their identities are shaped by their land whilst also working to shape it. For many, emotions act as motivators to conserve. Queer and feminist perspectives were useful in analysing these emotion narratives of landownership as it offered a platform through which to rethink and imagine alternative identities of landowners and human roles in nature. O’Neil et al argue that to imagine an individual’s identity as “prior and independent of such attachments, one will not be properly able to capture this dimension of environmental concern” (2008: 39). Understanding land as embodying landowner’s identities challenges the idea that nature is a pristine ‘otherness’ to humans.

O’Neil (2008) believes that environment policies should proceed from the “human scale of values”, as these values shape the ways humans interact and manage nature. This means to start from “human relations to other beings and to the worlds we inhabit, and from our human responses to those beings and worlds” (2008: 202).

As landowners hold these types of emotional connections to their environment, understanding these emotions are then imperative in developing inclusive and effective environment policies, practices and processes that encourage the participation of people.

Recognising and acknowledging emotions emphasises the importance of close and personal participation of humans within conservation practices and policies, especially in private land conservation efforts. Taking these emotional accounts into consideration when developing methods of nature protection and preservation will help to develop further trust and communication. Often these emotions also contribute to feelings of fear and distrust that discourage landowners to participate in government led conservation. Political values also play out in these emotions of fear and distrust. I go on to discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

## **6. Chapter Six - Politics and Nature**

*“In farming and land ownership there are huge political, social and economic pressures and factors playing out.” - Jacob, Conservation Manager.*

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### **6.1 Introduction**

Dynamics of politics is another theme that manifests in different forms through landowners' experiences and attitudes of nature, conservation and conservation organisations. This theme is expressed in the form of fear, distrust, issues of exclusion, corruption and communication that play out in shaping landowners' values of their environments. Attitudes and participation both towards conservation as well as nature in turn this influence the way they relate to conservation bodies such as government run programmes as well as the FVCT. It thus affects the ways they organise and manage their own land. A fear and general distrust in the South African government was discussed in many of the interviews, highlighting the role political aims and structures of the country play in shaping values attached to nature and land.

Landowners share a common feeling of unease in working closely with the government on any activities, including conservation. Most landowners had been involved in some conservation projects funded by the government but prefer to avoid it and a few now refuse to work with them at all. These fears partly stem from the threats of expropriation and South African land reform laws. Some owners expressed the fear that land reforms would follow the same patterns as the Zimbabwean land laws that resulted in huge areas of land being expropriated from farmers and landowners. The political system in neighbouring Zimbabwe therefore also contributes to the fear many landowners in South Africa feel in working with the government.

There are also issues of corruption, general distrust, communication and inclusion that occur. I unpack these manifestations of political values through the use of various case studies and quotes from interviews. Understanding political dynamics that play out in nature can be beneficial in developing conservation methods that recognise these factors. Harvey makes this case by stating that “looking more closely at the way ecology and politics interrelate becomes imperative if we are to get a better handle on how to approach environmental/ecological questions” (1996: 182). As Grabbatin and Rossi (2012) put it, nature and politics are so intertwined that it cannot be ignored.

In order to implement successful conservation in the Overberg area, political aspects need to be understood to ensure conservation methods take these in to account. To encourage participation of landowners, communication, inclusion and rapport need to be prioritised. Values of nature understood through conservation practice also allow us to understand the ways in which humans and nature are intertwined. On a small scale it opens up further possible discussion of the need for conservation to move away from the human/nature distinction towards more human involved conservation practice methods. Acknowledging these political dynamics, specifically within a South African context, can encourage participation of private landowners by developing trust in government, conservation and landowner relationships.

## **6.2 Fear**

The tension around land ownership and control is by no means a new phenomenon in South Africa. The process of the Land Reform Programme (LRP), established in the 1997 White Paper, is a noticeable aspect of addressing the inequalities perpetrated by apartheid and colonial practices and policies whereby South African citizens were organised in spaces based on segregating races (Lahiff: 2007). These patterns of spatiality still exist in contemporary South Africa. When discussing land in South Africa, the concept of race and class therefore cannot be ignored as these have played an immense role in how land has been managed and organised. The aim of apartheid, established in 1948, was to maintain white domination over economic and social systems in the country through the use of a number of racially segregating policies (Feinberg: 1993). Racial discrimination was institutionalised through various laws and processes as segregation was intensified through policies such as the Native Lands Act and Group Areas Act.

According to Edward Lahiff (2007), the Native Land Act of 1913 established under the colonial government was one of the most systematic land dispossession processes by the state. The Act apportioned eight percent of South African land areas as reserves for black South Africans to exclude them from other land reserved for the white minority (Lahiff: 2007). The land available for black use was increased by five percent in 1936, a total of 13 percent of South Africa, however the majority of that land remained in state ownership under the South African Development Trust that was, according to the government, a trust for the black population (Lahiff: 2007). According to Lahiff (2007), this meant that 80 percent of the population was confined to only 13 percent of land while less than 20 percent owned over 80 percent of the land. The black population were also prohibited from buying land in areas outside

the reserves (Lahiff: 2007). The Group Areas Act of 1950 established under the apartheid government, the National Party, was used to reinforce the racial segregation established under colonial rule (Feinberg: 1993). The Act aimed to set out the processes for forced removals of non white people from white declared land areas (Feinberg: 1993). Under the Group Areas Act, black farmers who had retained land under the Land Act due to title deeds to land, were also removed (Feinberg: 1993).

In order to redress some of these past inequalities, the LRP focuses on three areas of processes including land restitution, land tenure reform and land redistribution (Cliffe: 2000). Land restitution is the process by which the government compensates individuals with money who had been historically forcefully removed from land as a result of the Native Land Act (Cliffe: 2000). The land restitution process has been largely unsuccessful and difficult to establish and the policy was then shifted to a redistribution process that works to secure land tenures (Cliffe: 2000). The land tenure reform is a system of recognising the right to own and control land, according to the Land Reform Policy Discussion Document (ANC: 2012), this process is somewhat slow due the complexity of tenure reform in communal areas.

Redistribution is the most fundamental component of the land reform process within South Africa (ANC: 2012). According to the Land Reform Document, released by the African Nation Congress party (ANC), issues facing land reform processes include, "No proposals on foreign land ownership, land ceilings and land/rural tax; No proposals on proactive, supply-driven approach to land reform; little direction in terms of institutional reforms to support land reform; and lack of commitment to freehold title or unitary land registration system" (2012: 8). Land was initially bought from willing selling owners by the government as willing buyers to be redistributed to those who had put in land claims for being disposed after the year 1910 (Lahiff: 2007). It has however proved to be very difficult and complicated to implement (Hall: 2004).

According to Ben Cousins, in an article published in *The Conversation*, since 1994, "about eight million hectares of the total of 86 million hectares of white-owned farmland have been transferred to black South Africans through land restitution and redistribution" (2016: 1). The government's initial target in 1994 was to transfer 30 percent of agricultural land by 1999, however due to the slow progress this target date was moved to 2014 (Cliffe: 2000). In 2000, the South African Government decided to review the redistribution process in order to develop a more decentralised and area based planning system (Cliffe: 2000). The idea was to have

local integrated development plans in 47 districts of South Africa to encourage community participation and increased redistribution (Hall et al: 2007). In 2006, the ANC government announced that land would start being expropriated, similar to a process that took place in Zimbabwe (Hall: 2004). However, according to South Africa's then chief land-claims commissioner, Tozi Gwanya, unlike in Zimbabwe there would be compensation to owners whose land was to be expropriated which would be negotiable (Hall: 2004).

Some argue however that the compensation would be less than what the land was worth or could be sold for (Cliffe: 2000). The monetary compensation also does not take into consideration the connections the landowners have to their land. The ANC government recognises that land reform outcomes will have a "significant impact on the party's credibility, effectiveness and future support" making the process a high priority for the government (James: 2007: 3). Deborah James (2007) states that land reform policies can run a risk of exacerbating racial tensions but if practiced correctly it could also defuse racial tensions and create a new sense of partnerships across racial divisions whilst addressing past inequalities. The South African government can however learn useful lessons from the implementation and practice of the land reform policies in Zimbabwe that have caused many controversies around these policies (James: 2007).

As of May 2016, South Africa is in the process of updating the Land Reform Act as the need to speed up the process has become increasingly important (Aljazeera:2016). The amendments will enable the state to purchase land at a value determined by the government adjudicator and expropriated for the "public interest", putting an end to the previous negotiation and willing-buyer, willing-seller approach to land reform (Aljazeera:2016). According to the ANC (BBC News: 2016), this amendment "is historic and heralds a new era of an intensified land distribution programme to bring long-awaited justice to the dispossessed majority of South Africans". The Rural and Land Reform Minister, Gugile Nkwinti, believes that imposing farm size limits to free up land for black redistribution may also help in speeding up the land reform process (BBC News: 2016). This came just before the South African municipal 2016 elections which is significant in the way that it shows how deeply embedded the land reform process is in the politics of South Africa (BBC News: 2016). According Aljazeera (2016), economists and farming groups have said the proposals could lead to a decrease in investment and production at a vulnerable time after a severe drought, highlighting the economic damage linked to farm seizures in neighbouring Zimbabwe. The ANC government continues to

reassure that although the South African redistribution process needs to be accelerated in order to address the past wrongs and provide opportunities to previously disadvantaged, it will not follow Zimbabwe's example (Aljazeera:2016).

A small number of participants in my study have already had land expropriated, one in Zimbabwe and one in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. One landowner who had land expropriated described how painful it had been to lose his land as he had built so many memories on it over more than 40 years that he had owned it. His land had been bought for development of housing for a marginalised community. Another landowner had lost a significant amount of money he used to set up a game farm with two other partners in Zimbabwe.

These types of experiences have encouraged feelings of distrust amongst landowners on government influence over their land. Fear is a main theme discussed through the interviews conducted. These feelings of fear are as a result of South Africa's current land reform programme, Zimbabwe's land reform experience as well as past experiences of landowners. The personal experiences of land expropriation emphasise the ways political structures of countries, even neighbouring countries, can influence the ways in which individuals interact with their environments as well as their involvement in conservation. These types of experiences also influence other landowners' methods of land management and relationships with entities such as the government.

According to Mills et al (2013), lack of conservation efforts are in part due to farmers who are scared of outside interference and loss of management control of their land. It was found in the US that 56 percent of farmers would not allow any biological surveys of their land to be conducted due their fear of losing control over their land (Brook cited in Ahnström et al: 2009). In the UK, it was found that there was a general mistrust by farmers towards experts from the commercial input and processing sectors (Ahnström et al: 2009). In a study on Dutch farmers it was found that farmers were more comfortable in taking advice and working with suppliers or the bank over government representatives (Schoon and Te Grotenhuis: 2000, Ahnström et al: 2009).

Robert was a successful lawyer in his younger days and bought his farm in the Overberg when he was 60 years old. He first fell in love with farm life as a young lawyer when he was taken on weekends to his boss's farm to go trout fishing and help build dams. He set himself a goal to buy his own farm one day. He bought his first plot of land with three other partners in the early 1990s in Zimbabwe. It was an

area of 8 500 hectares of land. Their plan was to build an eco-tourism business and bring in foreign money. They built 80 kilometres of road for tourists to cycle on. This land was also part of a conservancy that covered an area of 18 000 hectares. Robert excitedly spoke about the first seven visitors to the business shortly after they purchased it.

They trained and hired local people with rifles to accompany the tourists due to the presence of rhinos, hippos, lions, antelope and elephants on the land. In 1992, they received 90 buffalo from the Gonaro zoo, which were on the verge of dying from dehydration due to a severe drought. The buffalo were put in a paddock and looked after until they were fit again. They also bought more hippos for the land. By 2002, the buffalo count was 320 from the 90 they began with. The hippo count went from seven to 60. In 2002 however, the land was then expropriated without compensation by the Zimbabwean government due the change in the land reform policy. The campsites were demolished and the R6 million that was spent on the reserve was lost. Many members of the staff lost their jobs as a result.

Robert strongly believes the South African political structures regarding land management will follow the same process as Zimbabwe. He believes South Africa is running an "exact parallel" as Zimbabwe. Although conserving land is important to Robert he avoids working with the government on anything to do with his land saying "I don't trust the government very much. I wouldn't work with them at all".

The political systems in neighbouring Zimbabwe plays a role in forming the fear that Robert feels in working with the government. Land reform in Zimbabwe began officially in 1980 with the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement that aimed to distribute land more equally between black subsistence farmers and white farmers of European descent (Palmer: 1990). Initially, land was bought by government from willing sellers however by 1990 land began to be confiscated from white owners without compensation (Moyo: 1995). It is clear that the political systems and power structures play a central role in the management and control of space. Land management and planning is often politically motivated and is sometimes shaped by the political discourse and priorities of the country in question.

Government conservation projects such as WfW allows government officials access to landowners' land as well as access to knowledge of the land and the owners. This fear of government access to land was commonly mentioned by landowners as experiences of landowners such as Robert also affects their own attitudes. As landowners share knowledge of ownership and farming experiences, these

experiences are well known in their communities and encourage other landowners to become wary. Zimbabwe's political structure and discourse were often discussed by participants in my study.

Deborah James (2007), states in her book, 'Gaining ground? Right and property in South African Land reform', that land reform experiences in Zimbabwe highlights the negative implications reform can have. These fears are exacerbated by members of social movements and some politicians that support some of these sentiments (James: 2007). A number of landowners discussed their distrust in the South African government's priorities and methods of addressing past inequalities.

### **6.3 Distrust**

Distrust in a number of outspoken politicians was also discussed. Recently a number of South African politicians have spoken out in support of intensifying the land reform process, leading to further tension between landowners and government departments. James suggests that the experience of Zimbabwean land invasions as well as the "escalation in South Africa, of black on white farm attacks" has encouraged a fear around such policies (2007: 2). Although many landowners discussed their fear of expropriation being further intensified by the land invasions in Zimbabwe, no landowners in my research discussed farm attacks. The majority of the landowners interviewed mentioned in fact that they enjoyed living on farm land due to how safe it was. They preferred to bring up their children on farms as they felt there was no concern for safety and well being.

Andrew's story shows similar signs of political dynamics manifesting through fear shaping his experience of land ownership and participation in conservation. These experiences have also worked to create a sense of protectiveness when dealing with government departments on conservation projects.

Andrew is an elderly retired farmer and his previous farm was expropriated by the government to build economic housing. It was a very painful experience for him as he had lived on this farm for 45 years. There were squatters on both sides of the property and although the money offered for the farm was well below its value, he and his wife agreed to sell to the government due to the increasing township development in the area. For Andrew the undervaluing of the land was not the only distressing factor in the expropriation. He and his family had developed personal connections to the land over the years. The piece of land that he is living on now has been registered as a private nature reserve to avoid this from occurring again. Private nature reserves are less likely to be expropriated as they are

environmentally protected areas. In some cases, land is expropriated in order to conserve it, if land is already being conserved this makes the need to expropriate land less likely (Paterson: 2010).

There is a strict process that one needs to go through in order to have land declared a protected area. When Andrew first tried to get his land declared a private nature reserve, authorities said it was too infested with aliens to be declared a reserve. This was one main motivator for him to clear the land of aliens and he has since cleared most aliens allowing it to be declared a protected area. As land that is registered as a nature reserve is less likely to be expropriated, this has given Andrew a sense of ease and security. The policy of land reform and Andrew's past experience of expropriation acted as a motivator to conserve his land. This is however not the only reason Andrew is involved in conservation, he has a strong love for nature as well as Africa.

*"I was extremely sad to see my land go like that. We were there for 40 odd years and had so many memories there. But now I have this land so I will try protect it as much as I can."* - Andrew, Landowner.

These experiences highlight how fears can influence the ways landowners manage and relate to their land. The feelings of threat can put a strain on the relationship between landowners and government departments, which in turn shapes the ways in which landowners get involved in conservation both in a positive ways as they use conservation as a form of security and in a negative way as they avoid government in conservation projects. The majority of landowners preferred to work through an organisation that was not directly run by the government. There was a common fear of landowners losing control over how their land is managed through conservation activities. An organisation that acts independently from the government but still offers financial support from the government has an important place in conservation within a current South African context.

These fears can motivate landowners to participate in conservation privately or through non-government organisations. For the Nuwejaars conservancy, one of the nine conservancies involved in the FVCT project, political factors play a huge role in the methods of conservation for the involved landowners. This is the story of the conservancy as told by two of the main founders of the land management area.

#### **6.4 Nuwejaars Wetland Special Management Area**

The Nuwejaars area has been declared a special management area (SMA). Such special management area aim "to protect highly sensitive, outstanding ecosystems,

species or geological or physical features in the area or to make the area primarily available for scientific research or environmental monitoring” (Paterson: 2010: 20). The formation of the management area was partly due to a threat of expropriation of the land in the area. According to Michael and Daniel, two main key players in the Nuwejaars conservancy, there was a threat of possible expropriation of the land in the area in order to conserve them as part of a larger protected area under SAN Parks. The Protected Areas Act (2003) has a provision for procedures that allows the government to acquire private or communal property, even if the landowner does not want to enter into an agreement (Paterson: 2010).

Paterson states that, the “Minister and relevant Minister of the Executive Council, acting with the concurrence of the relevant members of their respective Cabinet or Executive Council, may acquire land or any right in or to land (including a mineral right) for inclusion in a protected area by purchasing the land or right, exchanging the land or right for other land or rights, or expropriating the land” (2010: 23). If the owners and other parties fail to negotiate on a purchase price of the land or property right, the price is determined under the relevant statutory framework (Paterson: 2010). Paterson states that, “SAN Parks, operating with the approval of the Minister, may similarly acquire private land or property rights by purchasing the land or right or, if the land or right is donated or bequeathed to it, by accepting the donation or bequest” (2010: 23). Below are two extracts taken from interview transcripts outlining the story of the conservancy as told by Daniel and Michael.

*“A National park had been formed at the Southern-most tip and this whole area was going to be under that protected area. There was an article claiming this area would be designated as protected land areas under the SAN Parks. That pissed us off and we had to do something. We (the conservancy) started in 2001 and got going in 2008. Landowners thought we could try conserve our land better so 12 of us signed a letter of intent and sent that to the development bank. Our aim was to marry agriculture with conservation. We wanted to conserve the land and people were keen. It was a way of fighting against SANparks in a way, taking back control of our own lands.*

*Each member has to pay a sum so people want to see something come out of it. We make our living off our land. We can conserve our own land and we thought if we could do it well then they would have no reason to take it. Landowners are very wary of the government, that was part of the reason for the conservancy. Part of the agreement with the German funders (the conservancy received funding from a German organisation to help set up the conservancy as a wetland special*

*management area) was that we had to be declared a National protected area. I think the government doesn't acknowledge how aliens affect the environment either, that is another reason for the conservancy. They just focus on the social but they also need to be strategically focused on the environment to make a gain. I have a big doubt about government and environmental affairs but it is difficult to read a situation.” - Michael, Landowner.*

Michael was one of the founding members of the SMA and emphasises expropriation as a main motivator for the project. The threat of land expropriation for the purpose of conserving it was one main motivator for the Nuwejaars conservancy to create a managed area in order to avoid this and create security. This shows the way political situations and priorities of a government can shape how land is organised and managed. It is also a way for the landowners to reinforce control of their own land. As Michael put it, *“It was a way of fighting against SAN Parks, taking back control of our own land.”*

Below is an extract from another member of the same conservancy further emphasising the politics that played a role in forming the conservancy. I go on to discuss the process of implementing the SMA as told by Daniel in order to give an in-depth understanding of how and why this conservancy went about conservation.

*“SAN Parks had announced in a newspaper article that they wanted to do a national park here and they would use our land for that. Our view point was if we can conserve the land and get help to do that, what reason would there be for anyone to expropriate the property or use it. That is where the model started. We decided we had to do something. In our model we utilised the intensive areas for food security and production while keeping the people on the land. We still have our workers and the whole economy still goes around. In the SAN Parks model that would all go out, you aren't allowed to farm. So you lose all that productive land.” - Daniel, Landowner.*

After they received approval the Development Bank the Nuwejaars conservancy signed up 23 landowners and set out three basic principles to establish an SMA. The first one was that landowners were to retain title deeds so that “whatever they do in the project, the land stays our land”. The reason behind this according to Daniel was to prevent the land being expropriated. The second principal was to join up all the natural areas whilst still using the productive land for farming. The conservancy has 46 000 ha of which 22 000 ha is natural land covering the whole catchment area of the river system. The intensive area is still used for farming. The

third principal was that all landowners were committed to the cause but also had a priority to retain their net income value as they make their living off the land. Town planners from Stellenbosch were brought in to develop a plan for the conservancy. Spatial development frameworks (SDF) and an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for the municipalities and government were developed as the conservancy wanted to put in place a system that was accepted nationally in local government and internationally. The project was written into the IDPs and SDFs and became an accepted project. Each landowner then signed off on the developmental framework.

*“We basically said even though we aren’t conservationists, we are farmers, it’s just as important to conserve farming and to conserve the natural veld and reintroduce the natural game that was here. We took everything. Agriculture, social, conservation, infrastructure and tourism. We set out our principals and how we would like to see the area in fifty years. It’s very much a forward looking system. Obviously we needed to get funds.” - Daniel, Landowner.*

The conservancy then applied for a project offered by a German Nuclear programme for funding. They received a R20 million grant channelled through SAN Parks to put up game fencing, reintroduce game, build infrastructure and set up an office. They wanted to reintroduce buffalo and hippos into the area. This was successful and the buffalo on the land are the first in 200 years and the hippos are the first in 150 years since they were naturally in the area. Buck were also brought in. The conservancy worked with SAN Parks on a fencing agreement to add some of their land to the SMA.

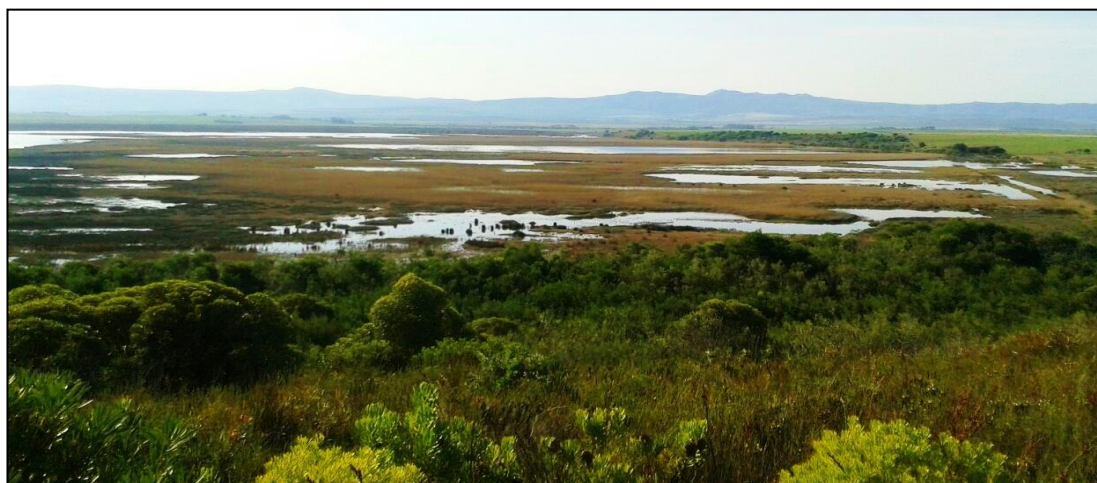


Figure 6.1 – Hippos have been reintroduced to the wetlands area of Nuwejaars.

They hope in the end to become a destination in the Southern Cape for eco-tourism and are working hard to develop tourism as this will bring in further income for the conservancy to run the SMA. They are now doing alien clearing through the

Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) with the government. The SMA employed 200 people permanently in the implementation phase and now employs 60 people annually. The Nuwejaars Wetland SMA is described as “an area of excellence and good practice, where the ethos of sustainable development is served in practice and in accordance with international standards for environmental sustainability” (Kruger & Patel: 2011: 4). According to Kruger and Patel, the Nuwejaars Wetlands SMA is an “integrated approach to conservation and development that ensures the collaboration of local people and government to promote sustainable farming” (2011: 7). The SMA has been a successful form of conservation and job creation project as well as an effective form of creating a sense of security amongst the landowners involved.

The formation of the Nuwejaars SMA was largely influenced by a perceived political threat of land expropriation that would have taken away livelihoods of farmers and workers. Conserving their land themselves made their land less vulnerable to expropriation. Participating as part of a conservancy can give landowners a sense of safety and security against threats of land reformation and government influence. It can in a way be a form of fighting against threats of expropriation and government run conservation organisations that challenge the ownership of land. Conserving individually and as a group is a way for landowners to keep both power and a sense of control over of their space, knowledge and livelihoods.

### **6.5 Knowledge, race and corruption**

Some landowners are not only cautious about the government having physical access to their land but also having any knowledge of their land, how they manage it and what they do on their land. There is not only a sense of fear among landowners but also general distrust in the government around access to knowledge, corruption in state entities and the priorities of the ANC government.

*“No, I don’t trust the government very much. I wouldn’t work with them at all.” - James, Landowner.*

The general distrust of government entities intensified the desire for landowners to remain fairly private about their land. The below extract from my research journal emphasises the level of distrust some landowners have with governmental organisations, preferring for them to not gain any knowledge regarding their land.

*Carl was initially very distrusting of me. He asked if I would not record during our interviews and asked in detail who would have access to my research. When I left he asked politely for me to be very careful about what information I make public as*

*the threats to the farmers are very real. His fear was that my project would be used by the government to gain information on their land and possibly facilitate them in the land reform processes. He was at first cautious to divulge too much information about his land to me. – Research Journal, 1 October 2014.*

James (2007) states land reform policies can run a risk of exacerbating racial tensions but if practiced correctly could also defuse racial tensions and create a new sense of partnerships across racial divisions, whilst addressing past inequalities. Racial dynamics in landownership is hard to ignore, considering race has played a significant role in land organisation and management both in South Africa's past and present day political spheres. Landowners were very careful when discussing issues of race as many felt it was a rather sensitive topic, due to apartheid's legacy and contemporary land reform policies. Some owners feel somewhat threatened as white farmers in the new political dispensation of the country, which adds to an increased sense of fear when working with government departments and an increased sense of protectiveness over land and knowledge. One landowner discussed his sense of discouragement as he feels the government did not recognise him as African or even as South African as a white farmer. He thought this lack of recognition leads to a lack of support from government departments.

Another landowner said some of the older farmers and owners in the community were fearful of working closely with a different race. This community is predominantly coloured. This landowner believed that as many of the owners grew up during the apartheid years, some of the older ones had adapted to a system that instilled in them a sense of fear and mistrust in other races, black and white. He thought this may have act as a deterrent when it comes to these landowners working with outside departments or individuals, preferring to work within their own community. The same landowner recalled a memory as a young boy growing up in a farm village that may be rather telling regarding certain fears instilled in this community. *“When I was little, people used to say be careful of the black man. They used to tell me to be scared of them and I think that might affect some of the older people here still. To not trust anyone else.”* Although issues of race are deeply imbedded within the land reform policy, the majority of owners preferred to avoid the topic. Race may influence landowners land management practices but this subject may be best analysed in a focused study as it is a deeply complex and important topic of discussion in contemporary South Africa.

Corruption is another factor often discussed in interviews that lead to both fear and mistrust. Many landowners feel that corruption is a common experience when

working with government, further intensifying the level of distrust in these departments. One landowner discussed his experience of government corruption when trying to receive funding for a conservation project making him even more wary of working too closely with the government on some of his conservancies' conservation efforts.

Ryan's conservancy was involved in a government funded project that helped landowners clear their land. He claimed that the project ran out of money, he believes this was due to theft and corruption. A similar experience occurred in a different conservancy. Ron discussed working with a government department that funded conservation projects to get one of the conservancy's conservation projects off the ground. According to Ron, the conservancy was threatened by government officials when there were disputes around the amount of money the conservancy would be granted. The conservancy decided to not take any money from these government officials and have now employed a conservancy officer who deals with government representatives on their behalf as they prefer not to communicate directly.

## **6.6 Inclusion and participation**

Along with a sense of distrust and issues of corruption, some landowners also feel that government organisations were unreliable and difficult to communicate with. Lack of communication and inclusion in projects on their land also plays a role in forming attitudes towards government run conservation efforts.

*“They (landowners) just don't like working with them because it's unreliable. There's issues of this person moving out of the department so having to start all the way at the bottom again with the new person, or erratic funding problems. All red tape problems, all government problems.” – Luke, Landowner.*

Luke explains why landowners prefer not to work with the government. Unreliability is one of the most common deterrents from working closely with government affiliated departments. Joe also expressed this in his experience.

*“The problem with funding from Lotto and Landcare was that it was so erratic. They would only give us half of the money and it was often late. Once they refused to give us the money because we hadn't spent all of the previous year's budget, that they hadn't even given us. So it was just unreliable. We were left doing no clearing for a long period of time, and after that time is gone the aliens are back. It needs to be a constant process.” – Joe, Landowner.*

Landowners prefer to feel included in any project or activity occurring on their land. Not knowing when and where clearing is taking place or by whom often leaves the landowners feeling excluded and agitated as control of their land is taken out of their hands to some extent.

*“The only time I knew they (Working for Water) were doing any work on my land was when I saw them on my land. They just come and go. There is no communication; you have no control over the process at all. I just left the gate open for them and didn’t know who was coming off and on the land and what they were up to.” - Kevin, Landowner.*

A common word used throughout interviews was ‘control’. This did not refer to control over nature but rather a desire for owners to feel a sense of control over activities that were occurring on their land. This was found in a similar study by Nordstrom et al that “many farmers perceive the lack of control of the decision-making process for the farm as the most important factor that hinders their ability to continue farming” (cited in Ahnström et al: 2009: 44). Losing control over land is a common fear among farmers (Ahnström et al: 2009). Similarly in a study by Mills et al (2013) farmer most reluctant to participate in conservation efforts were those “fearful of outside interference and loss of control of their management” (2013: 4)

*“Every farmer likes to think we are unique and in control of our land and we know what we want to do and how. With the government you get none of that. Conservancies and people can’t be very involved. When we work with Flower Valley we get a sense of control and involvement. When the Working for Water does clearing then we have no control. Governments are also just always late.” - Richard, Landowner.*

According Bawa et al (2011), decentralising conservation is important as strict state control over management of the environment can lead to exclusion, dispossession and alienation of local people. Landowners in general prefer to work with FVCT. This is partly due to the general distrust, fear and lack of communication with South African government departments and government run conservation organisations. There are also political dynamics that existed between government departments and conservation organisations. The FVCT relies partly on grants offered by the Department of Environmental Affairs. This places the NGO in a position between the government and landowners. There is a shared feeling by the landowners that having a middle partner involved is extremely important in the implementation of alien clearing and other conservation activities.

*“I much prefer to work with someone in the middle. I don’t trust the government, all the red tape. They use it as an excuse to gain control of your land. I know better than anyone how to conserve my land and I can have a say in FVCT.” - Christopher, Landowner.*

There is also regular communication with FVCT that has built rapport and trust between landowners and FVCT. Landowners also do not feel as threatened by land reform laws when they are working with an organisation that is not directly run by the government, as this limits government access to their land and knowledge of the land.

*“I would choose to work with a middleman like FVCT anytime. Roger comes and has a look at the lands and we discuss where is to be cleared next and why. That wouldn’t happen with a government programme.” - David, Landowner.*

The landowners have also built trust with the teams working on their land through the FVCT programme as these teams regularly consist of the same individuals. This trust is another incentive for the farmers to work through FVCT rather than through a government organisation. Relationships were never built with any government organisations teams as they were often not introduced to these teams and the teams were there for short periods of times.

*“These same (FVCT) teams have come to work on our land a few times and I know them. I trust them. I think most landowners trust them now.” - Michael, Landowner.*

There is also a sense of ‘fighting the same battle’ together with FVCT rather than fighting for different priorities. Landowners often discussed the government’s priorities of social upliftment and job creation in conservation projects such as alien clearing rather than focusing on environmental factors. The priority of the government to address poverty and create employment is seen by some landowners as neglecting the environmental needs of the country.

Colonial and apartheid government policies have legacies that influence the discourses of conservation today. A priority of the democratic government in recent years has been to address past inequalities which include an emphasis on supporting economic opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups. Conservation has been used as a way of encouraging these projects. In recent years the Department of Environmental Affairs has increased its focus on pairing conservation with projects promoting economic inclusion of marginalised individuals. This method of job creation in conservation is one example of the way the political nature of South Africa has influenced conservation thinking and practice. Many

landowners feel the government priority of job creation takes away the focus on conserving land for natural values. This adds to the distrust felt towards government organisations as can be seen in Mitchell's statement below.

*"I don't even know what the E is doing in the DEA (Department of Environmental Affairs). They don't care about the environment. Their main priority is job creation." - Mitchell, Landowner.*

These relationship dynamics that exist between the landowners, government organisations and conservation organisations highlight the ways in which conservation can be deeply politically motivated.

I found that organisations such as the FVCT play a vital role in managing conservation efforts between government and farmers. As the FVCT depends largely on the participation of landowners, establishing trust and communication is a vital part of the process. The majority of respondents expressed good experiences with the FVCT alien clearing project. Open and continuous communication is a common experience of landowners involved with FVCT. Regular newsletters and meetings are thought to be helpful and inclusive for landowners. The meetings offer a platform for landowners to discuss a variety of matters concerning conservation and land management. Some landowners mentioned that they find it difficult to attend meetings due to time restrictions, however I found that the newsletters cover most of what is discussed in meetings to include those who can't attend meetings. Inclusion is a prominent theme throughout the interviews.

Many landowners expressed a fear of being excluded or ignored concerning activities on their land. Maintaining inclusion is therefore very important in ensuring continuous participation in conservation efforts. Landowners can become despondent when they feel their land is being controlled and managed without their input. An interviewee emphasised that landowners don't want to feel dictated to when it comes to managing their land and are very protective over their land, space and knowledge. Landowners appreciate when their knowledge of their land and management of nature is acknowledged. Conflicts of interests, lack of communication and exclusion of local knowledge are some of main challenges in conservation efforts (Chapin: 2004).

This was evident in the way land users discussed their methods of conservation, farming, fire prevention and land management. Often landowners had learnt these methods from their fathers or grandfathers. Meetings also offer a platform for knowledge to be shared. Rai et al (2011) suggest that making use of local

knowledge, institutions and practices in conservation efforts can empower the communities to better manage protected areas, allowing people to govern themselves and manage their own natural resources and encourage participation and success in protecting areas.

Many landowners appreciate the time FVCT alien clearing staff take to come to the land and discuss where, when and how aliens should be removed. Building and maintaining rapport throughout the alien clearing project is essential in ensuring the success of the project. Trust, communication and inclusion should remain priorities of the FVCT.

*“You need a person who is constantly in communication with farmers, give them feedback. Monitor the projects. The contractors you monitor. It’s just a continuous communication with the farmers. Flower Valley does that quite well.” - Ian, Conservation Manager.*

Some landowners did however express a concern that the project is financially unsustainable and relies too heavily on government DEA funds. The majority of finances come from the government fund, R18 million is given for a period of three years. At the end of the three year period the project will need to apply for further grants. As this is unpredictable, some participants expressed concern over what would happen if the grant is not extended. The clearing that had occurred could possibly be a waste as aliens need to be constantly monitored and maintained once cut down. Many felt the project needs to become more sustainable rather than rely too much on government grants. Some suggestions made by landowners included a contribution fee or membership fee to the project to ensure extra funds and less dependency on the government.

Many landowners however rely on the financial support the FVCT offers them and would struggle to clear without this support. If a contribution fee is implemented, it would need to be discussed and a suitable, affordable fee should be agreed on by all parties. Financial support from donors and other organisations are also important. One participant who had experience in governmental clearing projects suggested that these types of government grants work in such a way that alien clearing can become affordable to landowners once enough clearance has been done over time. Maintenance of aliens is not as costly as the initial clearance of aliens. Funding the initial clearing process can then make it affordable for landowners to continue maintenance themselves, this is however a long process to becoming financially sustainable for landowners. The FVCT can make conservation affordable over time

for landowners to continue with maintenance of aliens, however a longer period of time is needed to get to this stage. FVCT also has good partnerships with donors such as WWF and these relationships should also continue to be a priority.

*“A first step that needs to be taken, is they (FVCT) needs to look at how to make it sustainable.” - Mike, Conservation Manager.*

*“I think maybe they need to contribute something. Even now we charge our conservancy members R5 per person per clearing day. It’s just to cover hidden costs of the conservancy like banking charges. It’s not much but still a contribution so they have more of an interest. Maybe if it’s R10 a day and R5 goes to the conservancy and R5 to Flower Valley it would help keep them interested in what it is they are contributing to.” – Ben, Landowner.*

Some also feel that the organisation and model of the FVCT needs to be better managed. One respondent who is a conservation manager with extensive experience in similar projects emphasised the important roles that play a part in an efficient conservation process. FVCT may benefit from learning lessons from similar organisations that have been through similar projects such as WfW. Understanding the challenges and successes of these projects may help in building an even stronger conservation model for the FVCT.

*“There are lots of models for these types of projects at the moment. We developed a project working with landowners and alien clearing. Focusing on land clearing and labour. In my personal experience from running a project like this is that you need a variety of actors working in the projects. One of the best ways is you have someone on the ground that runs it. Firstly, you need to have a quality controller that works with your teams (alien clearing teams), to make sure they are doing things properly. Then you have someone who looks after the safety and who works with your landowners on the ground and makes sure they are happy. Relationships with farmers is a key part of it, then you also have to have admin set up somewhere to control this whole thing. A project manager too. When you are working with a lot of teams, landowners and admin you need that. Their safety is also a big concern.” – Chris, Conservation Manager.*

The FVCT has many of these actors working within the alien clearing project already and these should continue to play roles in the process. Having a project manager that communicates and visits the land to plan clearing plays an important role in building relationships of trust with landowners. The safety of alien clearing teams should also be a priority to ensure trust between all actors. One participant

expressed the concern over safety of the clearing teams and whose responsibility it should be. Who is liable and responsible for safety issues of clearing teams needs to be made clear to landowners to ensure they are not worried to continue to participate in the clearing process.

As discussed previously, conservancies are another important part of conservation processes. Many of the conservancies are involved in other conservation activities outside of the FVCT. These conservancies are organised and managed by landowners. Alien clearing was a main focus area for the majority of the conservancies and many had organised clearing outside of the FVCT activities. There are different roles within conservancies. All of these play a vital part in creating a body whereby landowners can facilitate organisations such as the FVCT. It is then important to maintain strong relationships with each of these conservancies and the key members running them. Other conservancies in the area who are not involved in the FVCT also expressed an interest in getting involved in the project. I believe this indicates a growing interest within the area about the organisation. These conservancies believed they could learn a lot from how the FVCT is managed to better implement their own alien clearing project. The FVCT project over time could possibly be successful in getting more landowners to participate and could grow to cover an even larger area of land if managed effectively.

The FVCT alien clearing project is currently a three year programme, however the organisation is hoping to extend the project to a 20 year programme. All respondents I interviewed agreed that the project should be extended and they would continue to play roles in conservation for as long as the project continues.

*“These three years has been wonderful, but it will be useless without 20 years. Follow up is critical, to maintain is vital. For every 100 you kill 10 percent regrow.” - Marcus, Landowner.*

As 20 years is a long term commitment it is vital that FVCT has an efficient and effective method of clearing to ensure continuous participation of landowners.

*“Certainly the landowners will participate. And why is there a number on it? There's no question in my mind it needs to be the longest option. I don't see why it should have a number on it. You need to spend that 20 years getting rid of them then another 20 years following that up. Maybe after 40 years you would have won but there are seed banks that sit there for 100 years in a pristine patch of fynbos you know where you don't see in aliens. They are all lying there is the seed banks and as soon as a fire goes through then they just pop up.” – William, Landowner.*

Inclusion, communication and trust are important factors within the conservation process. In conservation, sometimes actors such as landowners can be excluded from the process. Exclusion can lead to conflicts and unwillingness of owners to participate or facilitate these types of projects.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Politics plays a significant role in the management and conservation of land in South Africa on different levels and can both positively and negatively affect efforts of conservation. There is a lot of focus on who owns land in post apartheid South Africa and how to address inequalities as well as create employment. The South African government has a somewhat difficult task in creating employment, addressing past inequalities and preserving the country's valuable biodiversity. Redistribution and reform has been used as a method to encourage equality, but this also plays a role in shaping attitudes towards both land and conservation by landowners. Many landowners felt government's only priority in environment efforts were influenced by political gain. As land can be used as a means of political power this was a common discussed dynamic in landownership. Conservation is sometimes seen as a tool which government uses to gain land or meet their goals. Fear and distrust can influence the ways in which landowners manage and relate to their land. The feelings of threat can put strain on the relationship between landowners and government departments, which in turn shapes the ways in which landowners get involved in conservation.

The fear of corruption and unreliability of government organisations also deters landowners from working closely with them. This was seen in both Robert's and Andrew's experiences as well as the implementation of the Nuwejaars SMA. Participation of private landowners has become increasingly important as they own valuable areas of biodiversity. Government projects are important in offering financial support to landowners and employment opportunities therefore the continuation of them is an imperative, participation then needs to be encouraged. Conservation organisations such as FVCT can play a vital role in implementing projects whilst offering government funds as landowners are more open to participating in organisations that are not directly government affiliated. Regular communication and inclusion in FVCT has built rapport with landowners that is often missing with government organisations. Landowners do not feel as threatened by land reform when working with an organisation that is not directly run by the government. There is also a sense of 'fighting the same battle' rather than the different priorities the government has on social upliftment aspects.

Conservation has typically tried to distance itself from being associated with politics as nature was idealised as an entity isolated from the human and political world (Harvey:1993). Politics has become hard to ignore with the growing conversations around nature and human resulting in the movement of conservation into methods that are inclusive of humans (Toal et al: 1998). Conservation organisations are often affiliated with corporations as well as government departments, making it impossible for these organisations not to be influenced by political factors (Hanks: 2013). Conservation organisations are also influenced by the political atmosphere as these affect how landscapes are organised and designed, affecting the ways in which conservation is practiced and thought about (Hanks: 2013). On one hand it can deter landowners from participating in conservation efforts, on the other hand it can act as a motivator for landowners to conserve as a way of creating security and reinforcing control over their land. Future research into municipality and government aspects would be beneficial in understanding their motivators, process and implementation.

Landowners associate a number of political aspects with their land that manifest through different forms and experiences on various levels. Understanding these politics allows for a crucial discussion around conservation efforts that encourages human participation. Conservation methods should take into account issues of fear, distrust and corruption in order to develop better management schemes that encourage participation of private landowners. Recognising political experiences and discourse in nature also challenges the ideal of the human/nature dichotomy. This highlights the ways in which these human values should not be excluded from the understanding of nature as well as the conservation of nature.

## **7. Chapter Seven – Conclusion**

*“Once you learn to read the land, I have no fear of what you will do to it, or with it.*

*And I know many pleasant things it will do to you.”<sup>2</sup>*

*- Aldo Leopold, 1947 (1887-1948).*

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This dissertation looks at the values that motivate landowners' conservation practices in post apartheid South Africa, through the personal narratives of owners in the Overberg area of the Western Cape, South Africa. Challenging the mainstream, modernist concept of nature, this study aims to uncover important values that shape nature imaginations and influence land management behaviours. In the past, scholarly literature has mostly painted the environment as a secluded entity, existing within its own autonomy separated from the human world. This picture of nature as anything that is “distinguished from the world of humanity” was largely influenced by the modernist understanding of nature (Soper: 1995: 15). Historically, mainstream conservation methods have followed this ideal of nature in forming environmental management policies and practices, aiming to create and maintain an isolated, pristine nature through the use of various methods. These methods often worked to eliminate the biggest ‘threat’ to a pristine environment, humans (Fall: 2005).

This ideal of nature has thus largely ignored the roles of humans within their natural spaces, as has conservation (Fall: 2005). A range of new fields of studies in recent years have offered new debates around these relationships that challenge the hegemonic understanding of nature through emphasising the inconsistencies that exist within the human/nature dichotomy. Contemporary scholarly literature has thus explored new ways of imagining the environment, focusing on the human within nature as well as the nature within the human, for example Gaard (1993), Harvey (1996) and Castree (2001). Discussions around identity, belonging, business and politics in these alternative fields of study exposed the inconsistencies that exist in the separation of humans from nature. Through the use of these alternative imaginings of nature, this research uncovered a variety of ways in which ‘humanness’ and nature are deeply embedded within each other. This research thus challenges the ideal of a pristine and isolated natural space, whilst both supporting and filling in the gaps of contemporary literature around alternative imaginings of the environment and humans.

According to Hussain local communities hold “wide ranging conservation ethics and institutions that, in addition to economic considerations, are also based on spiritual, aesthetic, religious, moral and other non-economic values” (2002: 64). Similar to values discussed by Hussain (2002), this study found both economic and non-economic values attached to nature. A common and widely acknowledged human/nature relationship discussed in literature is of an association based on economic factors. Scholarly literature on the neo-liberalisation of the environment, although it exposes the interactions occurring between humans and nature, often overlooks deeper interactions occurring within business and land management behaviours. This literature focuses mainly on the exploitation and commodification of nature for purely capitalistic gains. The ‘greening’ of markets to encourage ethical consumption and responsible production and tourism, according to literature, is a tool through which capitalism gains support (Brockington & Duffy: 2008). Individuals involved in business practices in nature are viewed in a similar aspect, as exploitative.

Early studies of conservation behaviour such as Brotherton (1991) focused mainly on farmers’ and landowners’ economic motivations and values of nature and their landscapes. These early studies showed farmers’ behaviours towards conservation as dominated by their personal interests of the farm business (Ahnström et al: 2009). As Ahnström et al point out, these studies assumed that “farmers behave as profit maximising agents responding in uncomplicated ways to the financial incentives on offer” (2009: 41). Farmers and landowners have then been characterised as money agents rather than conservationists (Ahnström et al: 2009). This study found similar values motivating and shaping landowners’ land management practices. As landscapes hold livelihood values in the form of incomes for the owners and their families, land management practices are partly influenced in order to encourage profitability. Conservation is often necessary to ensure profitability, thus the economic value of land is a motivator to preserve. Landowners are also involved in green marketing to cater to a growing ethical market, further motivating them to conserve their land.

This study did however find a deeper value playing out in landowners’ business behaviours that often go ignored in literature around business and nature, a sense of responsibility. This sense of responsibility is both personal and social. Some owners feel a sense of social responsibility to their customers and the general growing ethical market, influencing their participation in conservation efforts. This is clearly seen in Brandon’s business behaviours as organic farming is specifically

catered to a niche market and he voiced the importance of producing clean, healthy and environmentally friendly products for his clients.

There is also a sense of family responsibility as landowners' families also depended on income from land. The most significant and telling responsibility is however, a deeply embedded personal responsibility that is entrenched in almost every business decision surrounding land. This personal responsibility is to themselves as farmers or owners, as well as to their land as their 'homes'. Although economic values of land are important, it was not necessarily prioritised over the environment. To ensure an income but to do so in a respectful and responsible way is a common sentiment of owners. Some owners who are very committed to conservation feel that owners prioritising business might not be participating at all. This study found however that the few owners who discuss business being their first priority are still involved in conservation. Landowners' narratives in this study offer an alternative standpoint around the business/nature relationship, that it is possible to view a land as both a business as well as a home. Business behaviours of landowners are not devoid of respect and love for their land but were rather motivated by these.

Landowners are then both business people and conservationists, this multidimensional identity is often not acknowledged in literature or by conservationists. Conservation is believed to be the "act of harmony between man and the land" (Meeker-Lowry: 1995: 158). Some green conservationists believe the commodification of nature may disrupt this act of harmony as well as the environment, as capitalism in nature leads to the abuse and exploitation of land (Meeker-Lowry: 1995). This is in part due to the commodification of land leading humans to believe that nature is ours to control as it "belongs to us", thus it is a popular opinion of green conservationists that in order to maintain this 'harmony' in conservation efforts, capitalism should be isolated (Meeker-Lowry: 1995: 158). A common standpoint in conservation literature regarding the neo-liberalisation of nature argues for the separation of nature from the economy, especially within conservation designs.

This viewpoint leads to the exclusion of farmers and landowners from conservation efforts and intensifies conflicts, as farmer, Donny pointed out in his sentiment: "*We butt heads with green conservationists*". This was as a result of these green conservationists arguing that farmers in his conservancy could not encourage production and agriculture while simultaneously conserving their land, despite vulnerable and valuable land being left for preservation.

Landowners discussed the need for both conservation organisations and government departments to acknowledge the importance of encouraging income practices as well as conservation efforts simultaneously. Owners believe this will encourage participation of landowners in conservation efforts as economic values of land for landowners should not be ignored, nor discouraged. It should however also be recognised that these economic values in landownership do not stand alone. This study mirrored Ahnström et al's (2009) claim that economic values and considerations in conservation and land management are accompanied by other motivations.

These personal narratives also uncovered the ways there are more than money motives taking place in landownership in the Overberg. There are more than just business in landownership narratives occurring; landscapes embodied deep and meaningful emotions, experiences and discourses of daily human life. Landscapes embody personal emotions of owners through shaping their identities, spirituality, belonging and family histories. Similar to Bender's claim that spaces hold the "complexity of people's lives, historical contingency, contestation, motion and change" that shape an individual's personal identity, this study shows the ways landscape can create a sense of place, belonging, loss, negation and identity (in Bender & Winer: 2001: 2). As Myers put it, landownership is then "an embedded index of processes of exchange and negotiation of identity" (in Flint & Morphy: 2007: 87).

According to Rai and Bawa (2013) exclusion of humans and communities within conservation designs is intensified by the lack of acknowledging personal identities and values. Ignoring local knowledge around nature and management further intensifies exclusion (Rai and Bawa: 2013). Thus understanding "livelihoods, regional identities and peoples' environmental imaginaries" can develop efficient conservation methods (Grabbatin and Rossi: 2012: 276). McHendry (1997) supports this notion as he suggests the need to analyse and understand individuals such as landowners' perceptions of their worlds, specifically conservation and sustainable farming. This study supports the need to understand and acknowledge personal emotions playing out in landownership in order to encourage inclusive conservation methods.

Landowners' stories highlight the ways human identity is deeply embedded within their environments, challenging the ideal of the human/nature dichotomy. Queer and feminist perspectives were particularly useful in analysing these emotions as these perspectives allow for alternative ways of imagining both human and nature identity

as well as challenging otherness of the environment. Emotions established with land act as motivators to be active in conservation practices, whilst conservation encourages these types of emotions to be experienced. For landowners participating in conservation activities contribute to a sense of pride and purpose, benefitting their personal well-being. Landowners' identities are therefore deeply entrenched within the land, creating a sense of personal purpose. The emotion of love is also often an underlying motivation for conservation, contributing to the experiences of purpose, passion and belonging, making this emotion especially important to recognise when discussing conservation.

This is seen in Tom's experience of landownership. Tom expressed a deep love and affection for his land as his identity as a farmer is connected to it. Tom's narrative shows the way his identity as a landowner is not exclusive but rather tied into his other identities, for example for Tom being a good farmer, meant being a conservationist, and being a good conservationist meant being a good father and husband. This is particularly interesting as it highlights how a landowner's identity as a farmer, or as an owner are not separated from other personal forms of identities. Land is also seen as embodying both personal and family histories in a number of owners' narratives. The main reasons given to participate in nature conservation according to a study by Ryan et al (2003) were to conserve the land for future generations and feeling attached to one's own land. Similar to Ryan's (2003) study, this study found that personal land holds both connections to past family histories as well as to future families, creating a sense of belonging to their land. Landowners are therefore not only motivated to conserve their land for past generations who had passed on the land on but also for future generations.

O'Neil et al (2008: 39) believe that the loss of places that contribute to identities and belonging, results in the "loss of something integral to lives". Fear and protectiveness over land are partly motivated by owners' emotions and the fear of losing something essential to their identities and lives. This sense of protectiveness influences landowners' interactions with conservation organisation such as FVCT and conservation bodies, sometimes acting as deterrents from working with government run programmes such as WfW. Some landowners also perceive the government as not valuing the environment as anything more than an opportunity to create employment and income. There is a general perception that FVCT is more in touch with emotions as they worked closely with the landowners on clearing efforts. This study shows that emotions are not the only factors influencing landowner

participation in conservation and contributing to a strained government/landowner relationship.

This study shows politics can manifest in landownership and conservation within a South African context. Dynamics of politics also influence landowner management practices and relationships with government and conservation organisations such as the FVCT. Politics manifest in different forms such as fear, distrust and corruption. Early literature around nature and conservation have painted both as 'apolitical' and neutral (Brockington & Duffy: 2010). Recently literature has acknowledged the political factors that exist within nature and conservation. Ignoring political aspects can lead to disconnected relationships between local communities, governments and organisations (Chapin: 2004). This is seen throughout the narratives of landownership in the Overberg area.

Simon Dolby (1998) argues that conservation can be used as a way of gaining control and power over land. Landowners have a common fear of working with government departments as they perceive this may lead to a loss of control. This is in part due to the political atmosphere of both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Both past and present day political contexts of South Africa shape how owners interact with their land, specifically the threat of land expropriation. It thus affects the ways they organised, negotiated and managed themselves and their land. Chapin (2004) argues that differences in interests and values in conservation as well as the lack of communication in conservation efforts leads to conflicts over how, when and where to conserve. The general distrust of government entities intensifies the desire for landowners to remain private about their land. Landowners in general therefore prefer to work with FVCT.

These political factors, emotions and economic dynamics all play a role in shaping landowners' attitudes, resistances and participation both towards conservation as well as nature, in turn influencing the organisation of owners in relation to conservation bodies such as government run programmes as well as FVCT. Government projects are important in offering financial support to landowners and employment opportunities therefore the continuation of them is an imperative, participation then needs to be encouraged. Conservation organisations such as FVCT can play a vital role in implementing projects whilst offering government funds as landowners are more open to participating in organisations that are not directly government affiliated. Trust and rapport can be developed through collective efforts of conservation (Mackelworth et al: 2013). The co-operation of all actors is then needed to avoid conflicts that restrict efficient environmental management

(Mackelworth: 2013). Building communication, rapport and knowledge exchange platforms with landowners in the Overberg area would be beneficial in creating successful conservation efforts. Research into the aims, methods and the decision making processes of government and municipality conservation organisations may be useful in understanding the values these entities have around aspects of the environment and conservation.

As this study is limited to landowners, further studies on the teams, contractors and government departments would also be beneficial in developing projects that are collective efforts encouraging support and participation of all these actors. As Kahn puts it, studies around human relationships with nature that explore aspects of “history, science, policy and human behaviour” are then vital in developing inclusive conservation policies and methods (1997: 1). This study offers a starting point in understanding the values that shape and influence land management practices such as conservation as well as owners’ behaviours in the Overberg area. As this study focused primarily on landowners who are already involved in conservation through the FVCT, it may be beneficial for future studies to look into the behaviours of owners who do not participate in conservation and the reasons behind these behaviours.

These values also show the inconsistencies that exist within the idea of the human/nature dichotomy. Hettinger (2014) argues that aiming to replicate virginal environments is unrealistic as the roles of humans become increasingly recognised. The breakdown of society/nature dualism emphasises the need for environmentalism to move away from modernist ideals of nature as an independent entity that have until recently played a role in shaping the aims and goals of conservation (Hettinger: 2014). Similar to Hettinger’s (2014) suggestion, this study shows the ways humans can be included within conservation without threatening nature as we ourselves are part of nature. Drawing on queer ecology and eco-feminist perspectives, landowners can be understood as co-existing within the web of their surrounding environments rather than agents existing in isolation from the pristine otherness of nature. Emotions, politics and economics challenge this idea of otherness as it connects land and owners to each other. Conservation, management and organisation of land should thus take into account these deeply complex, multidimensional and integrated complexities that are embodied within the daily narratives and discourses of landownership.

(Words: 46 044)

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## **8.2 – Endnotes**

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