

“Nothing Changes in the Kalahari”:
Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park
Agreement and the effects of difference, discourse, and the past

by

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HGHCAT002



A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award
of the
Degree of Master of Arts in Practical Anthropology

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University of Cape Town
November 2005

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DECLARATION

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

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the perceptions about and understanding of the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement amongst South African National Parks (SANP) employees in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The 1999 settlement of a land claim filed by the Khomani San and Mier people provides the Khomani San with access to 26,000 hectares of land in the national park for “symbolic and cultural uses”, and is entitled a “Heritage Park”. National parks have, in recent years, been required by legislation, popular opinion, and SANP policies to change how they interact with local communities. However, both staff in Kgalagadi and local residents consistently reiterate that “nothing changes in the Kalahari”, and this is a dominant discourse in the Park. Experience of living in the region (including the National Park) has demonstrated to residents that little does change in their material social reality.

Based on the experience of nine months in the Park as a volunteer with South African National Parks, complemented by a month of fieldwork, this study gauges the interpretation of a “Heritage Park” and co-management by the authority implementing the Agreement. Through interview and survey data this study argues that the power of discursive modes of communication and their control of knowledge and differing uses of and interpretations of the past limit the conceptualization of possible change. The emphasis placed by residents on racial difference restricts possible subject-positions and therefore, the possibility of multiple types of relations beyond apartheid-era categorization. While experience within the place creates its own set of limitations on social life. The Kalahari, I argue, is internalized by its residents and stifles a sense of possibility through a particular sense of the passage of time, the past, and different conceptions of its effect on the present. These factors combine as restrictions on any meaningful social change for the residents of Kgalagadi. I argue that it is the social dynamics within the Park that curb the success of the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement. The social world inside Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park can by extension, be seen as a microcosm of the larger South African picture; a nation scored by differences of race, access to information and meaning in knowledge, and influential but ambiguous discourses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The people of Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park for their resilience, sense of humor, and openness with a persistent foreigner. This includes Marna Herbst and Claire Warner for their support, cheer, and for chasing down extra information. South African National Parks for taking allowing the research to go forward.

Aubrey Murphy for his intelligence, insight, support, and enthusiasm for my work. My fieldwork was a success because of the generosity and love from him and his family.

Vet Piet Kleinman, in memoriam, for his integrity and passion to achieve a better future for his people.

Owen Sichone for his supervision from the start. Sally Frankental for seeing me through patiently and with inexhaustible compassion to the bitter end. Colleen Peterson for her constant cheer and assiduity in running Social Anthropology.

Karine Rousset for providing a Master's thesis that was a valuable and well-used resource throughout the writing process.

Nina Hoel for listening and caring as a true friend. Fiona F. Johnson for her unwavering support, firmness, and above all, love. Barbara F. Hughes, for introducing me to Africa when I was 14, and for always being right as only a mother can be. Lastly, Pax and Jazz for being a needed and affectionate distraction.

This research was made possible by a generous grant from the Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiative, a programme running under the auspices of the IUCN South Africa, and funded by the Centre for Integrated Study of the Human Dimensions of Global Change, by way of a cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation (SBR-9521914).

Photo cover page: Landscape in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, SANP file.

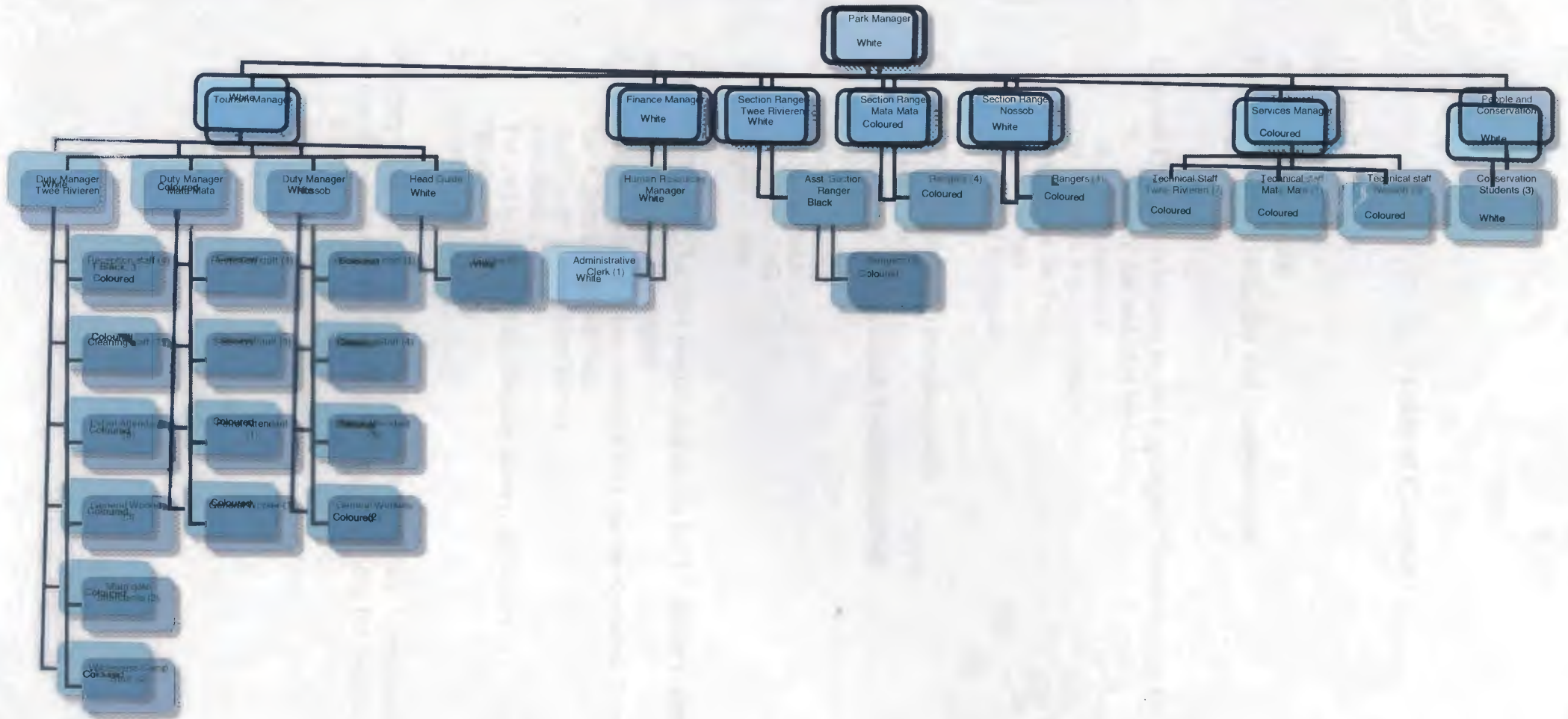


Figure 1: Kgalagadi SANP Hierarchy

This diagram serves to illustrate arguments in the thesis regarding group boundaries and the perils of racial division; to demonstrate that what may appear as ‘race’ is actually a combination of several differences including rank and locality of origin.

In using the terms ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ I do not advocate relying on race to define individuals. These classifications are made explicit here because they are the definitions used by staff of Kgalagadi. In addition, I am not implying that senior staff should be non-white (i.e. ‘affirmative action’) or junior staff white, again, there is no justifiable connection between race and job rank.

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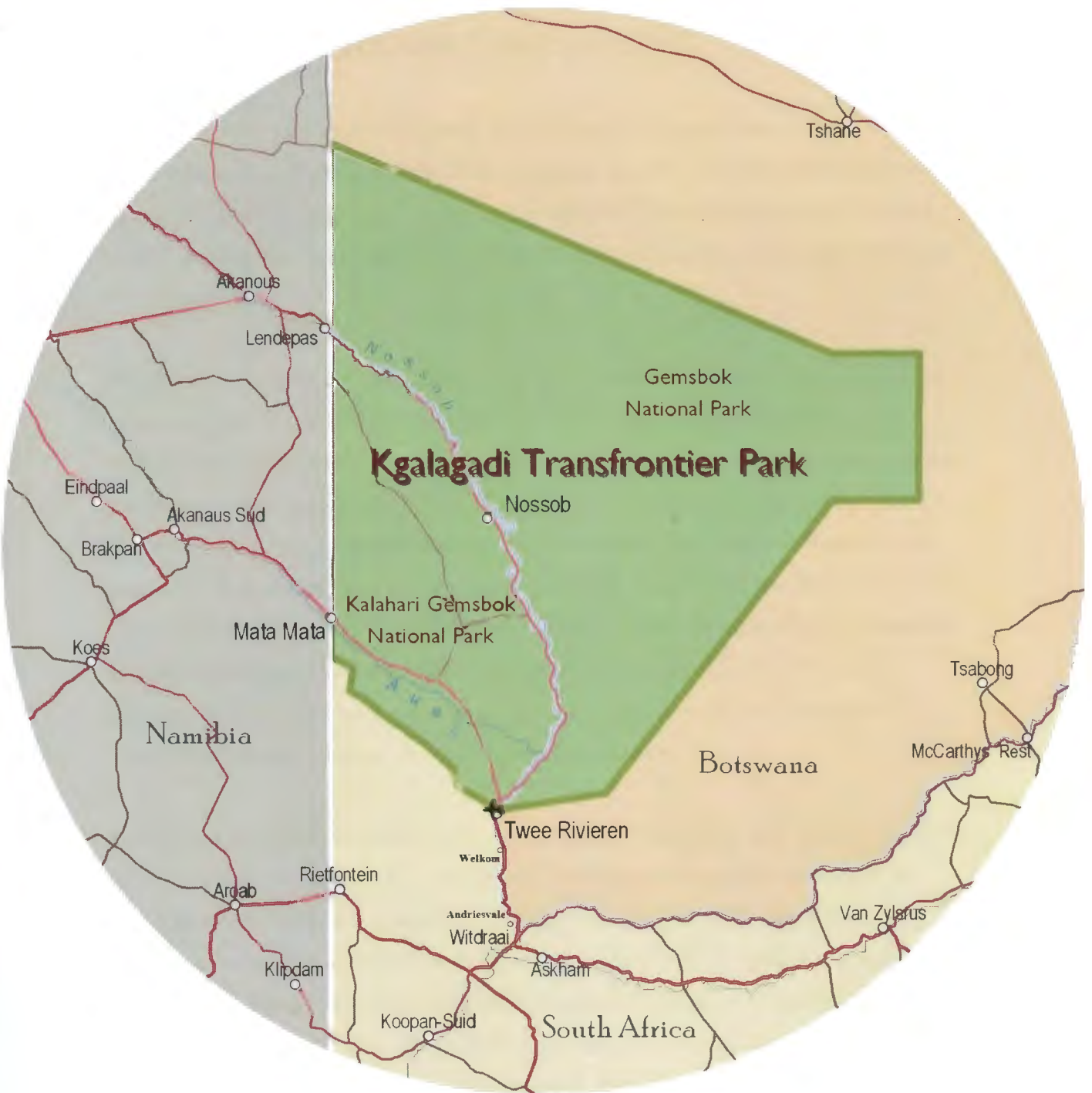
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Map 1: Map of Southern Kalahari Region



Source: Peace Parks Foundation

Chapter One

Introduction to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Two weeks into a nine-month internship in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, I was asked to accompany San trackers into the Park, ostensibly as their protection from dangerous predators. As three large bakkies (pickup trucks) filled with at least a dozen Khomani San Community members pulled through the Park gates, I was handed a rifle and told to hop in the back.

We drove down one of the sand tourist roads for about 40km and then veered off onto a track that led deep into the dunes towards the Namibian boundary of the Park. After about an hour we stopped at a rusty metal windmill used to pump water into a trough as a watering hole for game. The 'Master Tracker', Vet Piet Kleinman, began by showing the dozen younger men the tracks around the water hole¹. Interspersed with old hyena tracks, Vet Piet spotted fresh lion tracks. I was put in the lead with Vet Piet and Paul, a young white Capetonian to track the lioness. Afrikaans was the only language spoken by my companions and a language I had no familiarity with. Fortunately, Paul spoke Afrikaans and English and he translated Vet Piet's instructions to me. Mainly these consisted of: if a lion charges, do not shoot and do not run.

We marched up and down dunes following the spoor of the female lion. Using the tracks left in the sand, Vet Piet told the story of what had happened a few hours earlier. A lioness had been stalking a gemsbok or perhaps several gemsboks². The lioness had walked around behind a blackthorn bush and crouched down. A slight depression in areas of sand showed where she had been lying and behind that a curved brush of sand where her tail had swished on the ground. She had been agitated, excited at the sight of prey. We followed Vet Piet beyond the bush down the wide flat dune street and he

¹ Most informants' names have been changed. However, Vet Piet Kleinman and several others have not been. See Ethics section in Chapter Two.

² A gemsbok is a large antelope with long straight horns and striking black and white markings, found only in arid regions, see photograph in Appendix 1.

showed us the tracks of several gemsbok. We saw that the gemsbok were standing, resting or grazing. One had been lying down; there was a huge depression in the sand with two parallel marks where its legs had been folded beneath it. The gemsbok had risen quickly and the tracks showed that all had suddenly started to run. We stepped back and could see where the lion had been running in this direction—fast, precise spoor. Her spread was wider and the pattern of her paws had changed. Alas, Vet Piet explained, she had failed: there was no carcass and no sign of a kill: instead the lioness had wandered off over one of the dunes.

With the entire group behind us, talking excitedly, we walked towards the rising dune, following the lioness' spoor. As we started the steep, sandy climb the young men grew hushed. This ascent of a dune is the most dangerous part: you do not know if a lion is sitting on the ridge or just on the other side until you get there. Frightening a lion is putting oneself at serious risk. Vet Piet asked Paul to tell me to take the gun off my shoulder and hold it in front, to be ready. He was slow and calm but visibly alert and focused. I too found every sense completely alive to the air, sounds, and the appearance of every bush and clump of grass. We crested the dune as the group fell further and further behind. Vet Piet stopped and looked wistfully at the lioness' spoor as it continued on across the ridge of the dune into the distance. He turned to the group and explained that this was the end of their land. Resigned, Vet Piet and the others turned back to walk down the dune. Dunes stretched out like waves to the horizon. There were no visible markers, just grasses and shrubs repeating themselves and an occasional short grey camelthorn tree breaking the field of vision. Bewildered about how Vet Piet knew where to stop I turned back. We would not find the lion that day. She was in the Park but beyond the boundaries of the area where the Khomani San are permitted to track³.

The Khomani San and Mier land claim

The land Vet Piet and his group had walked is part of the San Heritage Land on the South African portion of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (see Map 2). On this land the

³ This expedition was part of a San tracker training program supported by the South African San Institute (SASI). Vet Piet died in April 2004, since then the tracker program has disintegrated.

Khomani San community members may conduct activities “pertaining to conservation and sustainable economic, symbolic and cultural use compatible with conservation. . .” (Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement, 2002:sec.18.1). This means hunting wildlife and gathering plants in what is considered a sustainable manner, as determined by South African National Parks (SANP) as conservation authority, using the land for educational purposes (such as the tracker training program described above), and possibly developing eco-tourism facilities such as accommodation or 4x4 trails. This land is a “contractual park” (titled the “Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park”) which means that SANP is under contract to manage its daily operations and include the Khomani San Community in all decisions pertaining to this land. Another community, the Mier, also have Heritage Land in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park which abuts the Khomani San land and is also considered a contractual park with South African National Parks.

These community lands within the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park are the result of a landmark land claim case filed by the Khomani San Community and Mier Community for land in the Southern Kalahari of South Africa. The Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994 allowed communities and individuals to file a claim for land from which they had been removed after 1931⁴. After four years of negotiations between lawyers, mediators, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the Khomani San Community, the Mier Community, and South African National Parks, including workshops attended by hundreds of interested parties⁵, the claim was settled out of court in 1999. An agreement was reached between South African National Parks, the Khomani San Community and the Mier Community granting the Khomani San Community access to 26,000 hectares of land in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and ownership of six farms outside the Park boundaries. The conditions of the access to Kgalagadi are outlined in the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement, finalized in 2002.

⁴The Bill of Rights states: “A person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress.” (Bill of Rights S25(7) 1994).

⁵ A list of these participants is in the Ae!Hai Agreement, 2002:Annexure 10.

The Mier Community

The Mier Community joined the Khomani San in their land claim in 1998. The Mier are the Afrikaans-speaking “coloured”⁶ residents of the Southern Kalahari. They trace their descent from a Captain Dirk Philander and his people who settled in the town of Rietfontein (see Map 1) and across the region into German West Africa (present day Namibia) and Bechuanaland (present day Botswana) in the second half of the 19th century⁷.

Many Mier people had lived on and farmed land incorporated into the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (the predecessor of part of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park) and much of the park land had been used for hunting and grazing by the community. About 6,000 people currently live in what is now the Mier Municipality, the area adjacent to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The municipality seat and most of this population are in the town of Rietfontein; about 70 kilometers from the Park entry gate. This population constitutes the Mier Community and they are the beneficiaries of the Ae!Hai Agreement.

The Khomani San Community

Most Khomani San currently inhabit the land around Andriesvale and Askham (see Map 1), about 60 kilometers outside the Park, on the farms gained in the land claim settlement. The current population of 1,500 Khomani San Community is the result of a group of 300 who filed the land claim in 1995. The Khomani San are descendants of the so-called “Southern Kalahari San” who were present on the land that was proclaimed the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in 1931⁸. However, San people leading a nomadic lifestyle within the National Park were considered incompatible with conservation. By 1956 (and

⁶ The terms “coloured” and “white” are used throughout this dissertation but not without hesitation. Both are apartheid-era racial classifications that continue to be used by the Kgalagadi employees. I am aware of the sensitivity around using these terms and it is not my intention to imply that distinctions based on what is labeled as “race” rest on any solid foundation. However, these labels are very ‘real’ for the residents of the park and are therefore relevant for this study. I use the South African spelling of “coloured”, rather than American spelling which is used through the thesis. I do this to denote the particularly South African racial concept and category rather than the American term used in the past and now considered especially derogatory.

⁷ Ae!Hai Agreement, 2002:sec.4

⁸ The term San was developed in the 1930s by anthropologists who found the term ‘Bushman’ to be derogatory. At the turn of the 20th century and through many decades afterwards, ‘Bushmen’ were

some accounts say 1970⁹) all San (except those who remained employees of the Park, including Vet Piet) had been removed from the National Park by the South African Parks Board¹⁰. These San dispersed throughout South Africa, usually living in small landless groups or clans in settlements on the outskirts of rural towns (Chennells 2003:2). These San were brought together to form a ‘community’ for the purposes of the claim for land in the Southern Kalahari. As Roger Chennells, the lawyer for the Khomani San, stated, it is “a reconstituted and ‘virtual’ community” (2002a:52). As elaborated by Robins (2001) and Chennells (2003), and others¹¹, currently the Khomani San Community faces many difficulties with leadership, alcohol abuse, violence, and a diversity of interests and opinions within the community which have created splinter groups and tension amongst its members (elaborated in Chapter Four).

Landscape of the Park

As demonstrated by the expedition with Vet Piet, the Kgalagadi landscape is dominated by a sea of sand dunes that stretch beyond the visible horizon (see cover photograph). Indeed, sand is the most distinguishing feature of the region, a few species of trees and hundreds of species of grasses grow in this sand, along with several edible melon species. This sea of orange sand dunes is broken by two dry riverbeds where the sand mellows to a yellow and white. These rivers, the Nossob and Auob (see Map 1) flow between every 50 to 100 years. The Park receives approximately 150mm in the south and up to 350mm of rain in the northern sections annually. In addition to the aridity, temperatures soar to 45 Celsius in the summer and regularly plummet to -15 degrees on winter nights.

considered part of the ‘fauna’ of South Africa (Smith, 2000). The common and generic label ‘Bushman’ was consequently changed to ‘San’. Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of the term ‘Bushman’ and in academic discourse today, ‘San’ and ‘Bushman’ are virtually interchangeable. As the literature on the Khomani San and the Agreement (and SANP) refer to ‘the San’, I use this term most frequently in the thesis. However, in the Kgalagadi region, residents refer to the Khomani San as “die Boesmans” (the Bushmen). Thus, there are times when I use this term to reflect local usage.

⁹ Knight and Joyce, 1997:29.

¹⁰ Elias le Riche: personal communication.

¹¹ For more writing on the Khomani San of the Southern Kalahari, their history and present circumstances see Isaacson (2001) and South African San Institute (SASI) publications, particularly: Crawhall, Nigel. Dec. 2001. *Written in the sand, Auditing and Managing Cultural Resources with Displaced Indigenous Peoples*. SASI/ UNESCO. Many scholars have conducted research among the San people in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. Some of the best known are: Smith, Melherbe, Guenther, and Berens (2000), Robert Hitchcock (1996, 1978), Megan Biesele (1993), Alan Barnard (1992), Richard Lee and Irven deVore (1976). Hugh Brody (2000) has also written on and worked directly with the Khomani San and writes on the plight of indigenous peoples worldwide.

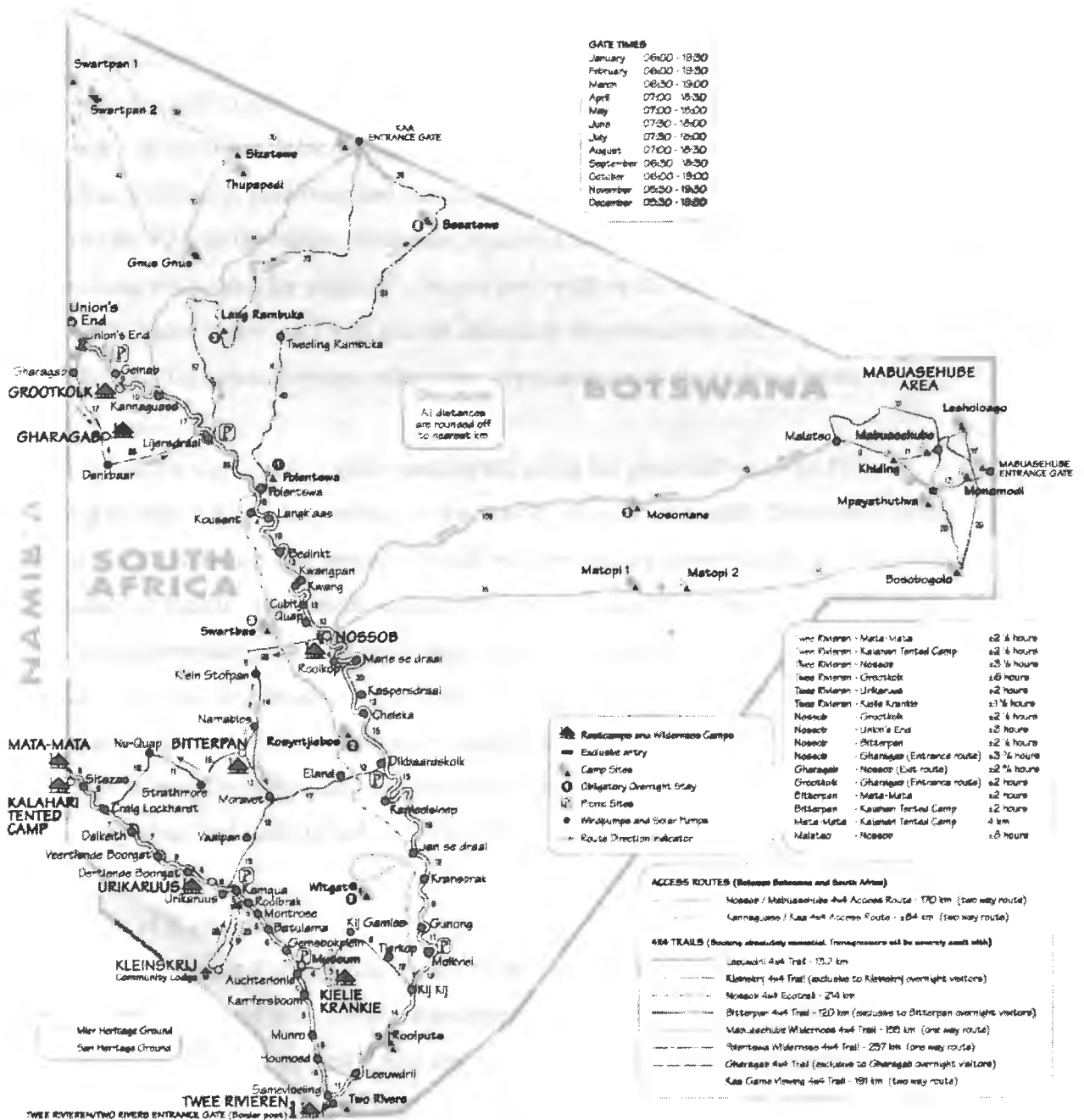
Surprisingly, this harsh ecosystem contains a large diversity of life. Gemsbok, springbok, hartebeest, wildebeest, steenbok, and porcupines are the main prey of lions, leopards, cheetahs, brown and spotted hyenas, caracals, African wildcats, jackals, foxes, and a huge variety of predatory birds¹². From beetles to snakes, pygmy falcons to bat-eared foxes, all wildlife have adopted special characteristics to suit the extreme temperatures and lack of water. Many burrow underground, while all can survive without water for days or weeks. Despite the fencing around each camp, residents of Kgalagadi live in an environment of dangerous predators, poor water, and extreme temperatures. This harsh climate is part of the difficult environment that affects residents and frames this thesis.

Life in the Park

Human habitation in the Park is confined to three main rest camps –Twee Rivieren, Nossob, and Mata Mata, each at different edges of the Park –and a handful of small upscale wilderness camps (see Map 3). The purpose of each of these camps is to provide facilities for visitors to the Park and for staff who manage that specific region of the Park. Each rest camp comprises a few low buildings, campsites dotted with small camelthorn trees, tourist chalets, a shop, and a petrol station. The staff residences are located beyond these tourist facilities. Junior staff quarters are small houses in close proximity to one another. At a distance from these are the larger houses of senior staff. At Nossob and Mata Mata there is one larger house for the Section Ranger and Tourism Manager of the camp while at Twee Rivieren there are six senior staff houses.

Twee Rivieren has telecommunications (cell phone access and land lines) and electricity from outside the Park (through power lines). Nossob and Mata Mata each have radio communication with the other two camps and electricity powered by a diesel generator.

¹² 64 mammalian species and 291 bird species have been recorded in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (Mills and Haagner, 1989 quoted in Annexure 11 of the Agreement: Management Plan for the San and Mier Heritage Grounds: 247).



Map 3: Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park Tourist Map

Twee Rivieren, the location of park management and the site of this research, is the largest and main camp with about 43 staff members; Nossob has 13 and Mata Mata 11 employees. The work day for Park staff starts at 7:30 and finishes at 4:00 in the

afternoon, with a half-hour for lunch. Rangers, because they travel out to the veldt, start at 7:00 and finish at 4:30. Each morning junior staff walk half a kilometer from their houses in the staff quarters over a large dune to their jobs in camp. These staff work in Tourism—at reception or cleaning chalets or campsites; at Technical Services—fixing vehicles, machinery, plumbing and maintaining park housing; or as field rangers—going out into the Park to fix broken windmills, repair Park fences, manage problem animals and enforce Park rules for visitors¹³. Senior staff walk or drive from their houses (about half the distance junior staff walk) to the offices of the Administration Building, camp reception, or Technical Services where they are managers of the various departments.

Throughout the day, tourists arrive and depart, going for game drives in the Park or driving to other camps. Depending on the season, tourists are usually European (during summer in the northern hemisphere), South African (during school holidays), American, Canadian, or British, and almost exclusively white. Tourists are families, couples, individuals, overland trips, and small tour groups with a guide. At 4:00 in the afternoon, all staff (except receptionists, rangers, and guides) finish work and return to their homes. Other than television there is little entertainment after work and most staff spend the evenings at home with their families or on their own. At about 6:00 in the evening the Park gates close and tourists and staff stay within their camps for the night.

Residents of Kgalagadi

The 71 employees of Kgalagadi are a mix of people who are local and non-local, male and female, young and old. Some are relatively recent arrivals to the Kalahari; ten staff had arrived in the past two years, four staff had arrived in the past few months, about twenty have lived and worked in the park for several years, and the other thirty-seven have been with the Park for a decade or more. The difference between local and non-local is noticeable and is important in how staff relate to each other and to the Park, as demonstrated in Chapter Five. However, the primary distinction perceived by staff in

¹³ Some Kgalagadi residents also work for the Twee Rivieren restaurant and the camp shops, they are employed by an outsourced company. These staff live amongst SANParks staff and are included in discussions here of 'junior staff'.

Kgalagadi is between 'white' and 'coloured' people. These are the divisions that residents of Kgalagadi see, experience, and employ.

Unquestionably, there are significant objective differences between the two groups. White staff occupy senior management positions in SANP and coloured staff are almost all in junior positions. White staff originate from all over South Africa and their stay in the Park is always considered temporary even if the stay lasts ten years. Coloured staff are almost exclusively from the region, with families and extended families living close to the Park. Nearly all are considered Mier, with three employees registered as members of the Khomani San Community.

Until his untimely death in 2004, Vet Piet was the only Khomani San who had lived his entire life in the Park. His familiarity with the landscape and subtleties of the Kalahari were near unrivaled. He was passionate about achieving land for the Khomani San and maintaining their connection to the Kalahari, their heritage. My experience with him was one, among many, that led me to the research and production of this thesis.

Chapter Two

Introduction to Research

Research Focus

This study focused on the outcome of the settlement of the land claim: the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement. I wanted to see how people in Kgalagadi experience, conceive of, and interpret the notions of 'heritage' and co-operative governance in a national park. Much social research has been done on the Khomani San and their past and current situation, pre- and post-land claim¹⁴. As a complement to that research, I sought to explore what the post-land claim circumstances looked like from inside the Park, for those tasked with effecting change. The concept of including local communities, whether through co-operative management or by incorporating their particular histories, is relatively new for protected areas and conservation in South Africa, and as a result, requires change in what was the former operational status quo. While information is available on South African National Parks' supportive *policies* towards local communities and co-operation, it is not always clear what conditions facilitate or limit how these policies and concepts are interpreted and take shape on the ground inside parks.

Relationship with Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

My association with Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and SANP began in 2003. From mid-April 2003 to end January 2004, I was a volunteer with the Social Ecology department of South African National Parks in Kgalagadi. In February 2003 I had come to South Africa through Global Vision International¹⁵, as one of ten foreign volunteers, to work in support of the Social Ecology Department of South African National Parks (SANP). A few progressive thinkers in the environmental education division of SANP had developed this internship to provide Social Ecologists with additional personnel and new ideas. As

¹⁴ Specifically the authors mentioned in Chapter One and several PhD and Masters candidates from South Africa and abroad.

¹⁵ Global Vision International is based in London, UK and organizes volunteer expeditions. This was their largest project and is currently finishing its third year of operation.

2003 was the pilot year, responsibilities were uncertain but the intention was that volunteers work with the Social Ecologist in a particular national park on environmental education initiatives (outreach to schools, school programs, environmental education plans for schools, etc). However, very few of the volunteers spent their year focused solely on environmental education. Instead most, including myself, spent time on various projects of our own creation and any that arose in different departments. I spent much of my time as a guide for tourists conducting nightdrives, 4x4 trips and daywalks.

I, a 24 year-old white female from Washington, DC and a 29 year-old male Londoner of Sri Lankan descent, were sent to Kgalagadi after two and half month's training in Kruger National Park. We were both to stay in Kruger, however, the Kruger staff decided they did not need us and we had scrambled to find another park willing to have two volunteers. While the Social Ecologist in Kgalagadi welcomed us, the attitudes of the rest of the staff covered an emotional range from dubious to ambivalent to resentful of our presence. We were the first foreigners who had come to work in the Park and it was only after several months that most staff believed that we were serious about staying for a long time—many students and researchers do not “last long” in the isolated environment of the Park. Amidst an oftentimes hostile environment, we lived and worked for nine months as unpaid volunteers in the Twee Rivieren rest camp. Those nine months of living and working in the Park provided the foundation for understanding the social dynamics and complexities of life in Kgalagadi. Experiences recorded then complement the data gathered in 2005 during the formal fieldwork for this thesis.

Methods

Returning for field work a year after my original nine-month stay, residents of Twee Rivieren were delighted but confused by my return. I had been referred to as the “Amerikaanse meisie” (American girl) and my year-long absence had not changed that identity. In that sense I was like any of the international tourists that pass through the Park daily—strange and different. However, because I had lived in the Park for an extended period, I had established relationships with many staff members and my

presence was familiar. I was thus accepted and granted access to people's conversations, thoughts, and SANParks' activities and policies.

Upon my arrival for field work I approached one of the junior staff, Aubrey Murphy, a field ranger at Twee Rivieren who had been a friend¹⁶. Aubrey is from the area but speaks good English from serving in the South African Defense Force. He agreed to act as my translator and help me talk to local residents and staff. Aubrey proved to be my most valuable informant and accompanying him allowed me access to a wide array of people in the region as he was known, liked, and trusted by most¹⁷.

I needed translation assistance when speaking to most junior employees who generally speak very little English. From exposure to English-speaking tourists and perhaps English language television, all junior employees understand English but were often reluctant to speak English it. All senior staff speak English as it is a prerequisite for any senior position in SANP, whose official language is English. However most meetings, casual conversations, and everyday interactions are conducted in Afrikaans. I had taken Afrikaans lessons for several months prior to my arrival but did not rely solely on my basic knowledge of the language for data, as there would inevitably have been gaps and misunderstandings. Aubrey usually accompanied me to translate when I spoke with junior staff and in observation settings someone was usually able to explain what people said during or after the fact (a technique I used after meetings which were conducted in Afrikaans). Unavoidably, I did miss valuable insights, comments, and innuendos. However, the advantage of being a foreigner, and therefore a complete outsider considered free of South African racial prejudices, allowed me more access than I might have had as a fellow citizen. As Aubrey, who referred to me as his sister, explained I was unlike most South Africans because I did not carry some of the same racial bias.

¹⁶ Aubrey agreed to the use of his name: nearly all other informants' names have been changed. See the Ethics section below for more on the use of pseudonyms.

¹⁷ For a reflexive discussion of the influence of Aubrey's position and opinions on my research see the Ethics section.

As part of the Master's degree in Practical Anthropology, I was engaged in critically analyzing SANParks' compliance with the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement, in order to produce a report outlining recommendations for the organization, in addition to and as part of my four weeks of fieldwork. Most days therefore were spent in an office of the Administration Building in Twee Rivieren, evaluating meeting minutes, SANParks' People and Conservation policies, the Agreement, and the new Protected Areas Amendment to the Environmental Management Act, in addition to attending meetings. Document analysis was combined with participant observation in the office and during working hours. This data were used in the report compiled for South African National Parks' Head Office. Some of the data on office procedures, SANParks policies, hierarchies and social dynamics inform this thesis although this is often implicit rather than explicit. Instead, the data used to directly inform the thesis originate from interaction, participant-observation, interviews conducted outside working hours in informal settings, and documented experiences from my previous and more lengthy stay. In the evenings, I conducted interviews with specific individuals inside and outside the Park, in addition to semi-structured house-to-house interviews within the junior staff village during the period.

Many of the topics I broached: the Khomani San land claim, its settlement, ownership and entitlement to land in the region, and even personal interpretation, thoughts, and feelings of events relating to the Park were sensitive and political by their nature. As a condition of allowing me to do research in the Park, SANParks requested that I do not talk to the Khomani San. SANParks worried that, even without a uniform, I would appear as a Parks representative or official. While I did speak with a few Khomani San community members, I did so after my official research period. As a result, this research was conducted almost exclusively within Kgalagadi, mainly at the Twee Rivieren rest camp. On five separate occasions I spoke with local residents outside the Park in the town of Welkom.

Employees and residents of Kgalagadi were at first weary of voicing negative sentiments, fearing retribution that could cost them their jobs and housing or social exclusion from

their group, as past experience had demonstrated¹⁸. Their sensitivity to many of these topics restricted my ability to record, and sometimes to transcribe interactions and events as they occurred. In fact I never used a voice recorder¹⁹ and as a result, there is little verbatim transcription in my field notes. Most of the examples used in this dissertation are thus paraphrased or descriptive experiences recorded as immediately as possible, rather than explicit oral transcriptions.

Before I began asking junior staff questions about the Agreement and the land claim, one former staff member advised me that, “These people are not used to being asked questions” and noted that no one had ever asked their opinions on these topics. The Khomani San and Mier in Rietfontein had been interviewed and questioned, he knew, but no one had bothered to talk to local residents living near the Park or Park staff during the land claim process or even the Transfrontier negotiation process that occurred in the same year²⁰. This sentiment was also apparent among senior staff, as one said to me, “You must tell about what *we* experience in this Park”. He considered this the “other side of the story”—the untold story—for the media had portrayed almost exclusively the experiences of the Khomani San. As I circulated with pen and paper in hand and asked questions, staff were often hesitant to answer, in part for fear of retribution as mentioned above and in part because people did not know how to respond. While most staff were receptive to my questioning, a few junior staff avoided my questions with short answers or none at all. The unfamiliarity of being asked questions by an outsider no doubt affected the number and depth of some responses, however Aubrey’s presence put most junior staff at ease.

Ethics

The research followed guidelines set out in the American Anthropological Association’s Code of Ethics. Several considerations within this code became prominent during the course of research, including: a responsibility to safeguard respondents’ “safety, dignity,

¹⁸ The sensitivity of various topics in Kgalagadi is discussed in Chapters Three and Six.

¹⁹ As one informant stated early on in my fieldwork, “I would not have said these things if you were recording”.

²⁰ “No one” refers to the NGOs, government agencies, and mediators that had passed through the region during the land claim and Transfrontier negotiation processes.

and privacy”²¹; maintaining good host-researcher relations; and anticipating the potential impacts of the research and its findings. I strove to meet all of these in my research and in reporting the findings.

My primary obligation was to the people studied, that is, the employees of the Park. All respondents were informed of the purposes of my research. Each interview began with an explanation that I was conducting research for a Master’s thesis at the University of Cape Town. For most the concern was that their opinions or statements, when printed, could cost them their employment, Park housing, or be socially damaging. As one local resident reminded me, “I have to live here”. With this in mind, I have chosen to use pseudonyms throughout the dissertation –with the exceptions of Aubrey Murphy, Fytjie Kleinman, Dawid Kruiper, Belinda Kruiper, Aubrey Murphy, and Petrus Vaalbooi. An informant’s exact role and position is sometimes not revealed to avoid damage. Sometimes respondents requested anonymity, and it was on this condition that people spoke with me. Consequently, the thesis may suffer from lack of specificity because of respondents’ desire for anonymity and my guarantee that their wishes would be respected.

The sensitive socio-political nature of many of the topics I focused on cause politics and ethics to be inextricably linked in this research. As Pat Caplan (2003) discusses in her essay on ethics in anthropology, “the politics of knowledge” and reporting on that knowledge exemplifies how power is implicated in ethics (2003:27). Because questions about Park policies, the Khomani San, surrounding communities, or work issues were sensitive and political material for all respondents, I made every effort to understand and avoid the possible detrimental effects of reporting on their comments.

Throughout field work, I made a conscious effort to maintain a reflexive and critical stance on my role as an anthropologist and a transcriber of knowledge. I am aware that residents of Kgalagadi often responded to me as a foreign white female, and not as a peer, and sometimes chose not to respond to my questions. That said, however, most staff

²¹ AAA Code of Ethics, p.2.

usually responded to my questions openly and without hesitation. With Aubrey as my companion and translator, junior staff and local residents were undoubtedly more comfortable and when hesitant, were encouraged by him to speak. In these interview situations, Aubrey was amenable to my requests to translate exactly what a respondent had said. His opinions and positions on various topics (the Khomani San land claim, Park management, etc) were clear, but did not influence my interpretation of others' sentiments and expressions. However, Aubrey's insight and explanation of the subtleties of relationships and dynamics of the region were a great help to my understanding of the larger picture. This study, though, is only a snapshot of life in Kgalagadi. I cannot claim to have comprehensively covered the dynamics surrounding the Ae!Hai Agreement, or race, discourse, and conservation in post-apartheid South Africa²². Nevertheless, I am confident that with the combination of my nine-month stay and one month of field work a year later, this study is a fair representation of the complex social dynamics of the Park.

A note on terminology

Throughout the thesis I refer to 'Kgalagadi', 'KTP' (Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park) or simply 'the Park'. These are the names commonly used for the South African portion of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. This is the portion of the Park managed by South African National Parks and comprises approximately one-third of the entire Transfrontier Park. The acronym SANParks or SANP stands for South African National Parks (formerly the Parks Board) but when spoken is often mistaken to mean parks that belong to the San people (i.e. San Parks –which do not exist). I use the title of the organization (SANParks or SANP) to underline work done under the auspices of South African National Parks the organization, rather than individuals, most often at the behest of the Head Office in Pretoria.

The 'Khomani San Community' and 'Mier Community' are the official titles of the land claimants and beneficiaries of the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement. However,

²² This would require further study of the dynamics outside the Park. Studies of the Khomani San and Mier Communities in relation to the Ae!Hai Agreement, charting the process of developing the Agreement, the dissonance between policies and legislation set in Pretoria and administered on the ground elsewhere, and a more in-depth investigation of the various conceptualizations of the history of the region would complement to this thesis.

'community' is a difficult term to define, thus throughout the thesis I use the term 'local residents'. While South African National Parks, and the Agreement use the word community to connote a cohesive group ('local communities' or the 'Khomani San Community') experience has shown that not only do purported members of those 'communities' not feel part of a cohesive group but it is also only from *outside* that any of these 'groups' appears to constitute a whole. Therefore, the people who live outside the Park boundaries are here referred to as local residents. This avoids having to distinguish between residents of Welkom or Askham, small-scale farmers or large-scale farmers, young and old, etc. Different residents outside the Park will inevitably have particular experiences with and feelings towards the Park. However, generally residents outside the Park have the same *types* of encounters with and exposure to Kgalagadi. Thus, using 'local residents' sums up the experiences of a large segment of the population living adjacent to the park. I do, however, differentiate between Mier and Khomani San local residents. These are differences that are adhered to by locals. Mier and Khomani San have very different histories, relations to the Park, and lifestyles, and these constitute what are considered two distinctly different 'ethnic' groups²³.

Conceptual tools

Various threads have been drawn out of the complex weave of interrelated concepts and experiences that constitute life in Kgalagadi. Several are repeated throughout the thesis, in particular a notion of the past actively brought to bear in the present, described in Chapter Three, and the conceptual tool 'discourse'.

The term 'discourse' is used frequently throughout this thesis and therefore I need to outline how I use this ambiguous and multi-veiled concept. 'Discourse', as I use it here, is the "formulaic way in which speech accompanies everyday social interaction" (Rapport 1987:17 in Rapport and Overing 2000:118). This definition combines two different uses or meanings of the term as it is commonly used in anthropology. I employ

²³ The reference to 'local residents' also excludes the white farmers of the region. I did not have access to white farmers, many of whom live at further distances from the park and do not seem to be as affected or concerned by park activities.

both of these meanings of the term as they are intertwined and difficult to separate. The first uses the term as a set of conditions that regulate how knowledge may be used or exchanged, thus indicating the times and types of speech that are permissible within a situation. In this way discourse maintains “regularity, conventionality, propriety” (Rapport and Overing 2000:117). Discourse thus controls knowledge by limiting communication to what is ‘conventional’. The second use of the term refers to the particular language that is used, rather than the circumstances of its usage. Here ‘discourse’ consists of specific phrases and representations such as “nothing changes” which I suggest in Chapter Five is a ‘dominant representation’ in Kgalagadi, representing unsaid, but not unimportant, ideas. To reiterate, motivations and conditions of discourse are unseen but take shape in everyday speech. Discourse refers to the ways that people speak and what is spoken of *and* shapes ways of knowing.

‘Discourse’ was popularized by the influential French theorist Michel Foucault in his writings on language and power²⁴. He proposed that power and knowledge are implicit in forms of communication. Foucault argued that what is spoken about and ways of speaking, ‘cultural discourses’, maintain both conventional ways of knowing the world and a network of power relations amongst those who do the knowing (Rapport and Overing 2000:120). In this case, the link between conventional (accepted) forms of communication, power relations, and knowledge is clear, as well as embedded, in a formal bureaucratic structure such as the SANP’s organizational hierarchy in Kgalagadi (see Figure 1). Therefore, rather than being the spontaneous creation of disparate people, discourse comes to dominate people’s lives. Individuals are socialized through discourse and become, for Foucault, nothing more than ‘discursive subjects’, the mere ‘effects’ of expression (Rapport and Overing 2000:120). Later theorists, such as Henrietta Moore, argued that this approach does not allow for individual agency and choice and taken to the extreme does not allow for social change. My use of ‘discourse’ straddles these two theories and argues that while discourse is both powerful and authoritative, different groups (and therefore individuals) impute different meanings when using a discourse, such as the dominant representation “nothing changes”. While the actual words seem to

²⁴ Mainly in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969.

convey the meaning –both groups intend to refer to stasis and ‘the past’—the connotations of ‘the past’ are quite different for the two groups (see Chapter Five). It is through personal and even communal meanings that this discourse persists and is kept contemporary and relevant. (Rapport and Overing 2000:124).

Chapter outline

Contemporary experiences and ideas stem from historical experiences and constructions of meaning that have developed over time. The history of the people of the region and the influence of apartheid are integral to understanding daily experience in the Park and region. Chapter Three focuses on history and its effects on the current circumstances of life in Kgalagadi. Applying ideas developed by Maurice Bloch (1977) and expanded on by Arjun Appadurai (1981), I demonstrate that the past is articulated in ways that are meaningful, political, and powerful for each group. I also propose that time in the Kalahari is felt and internalized in particular ways by Park staff. As a result, history and ‘the past’ are not divorced from the present but are entrenched in daily experience, in ways that are specific to the region. ‘The past’ emerges as a strong dynamic for residents of the park and region.

Chapter Four contextualizes the contemporary reality of the Ae!Hai Agreement including the pressures on Kgalagadi from outside the Park. Illustrated through the example of a particular Khomani San leader, divergent and complex interests in the Park and their effects on fieldwork and ethnography are considered.

Returning to the Park, I then theorize the foundation and effects of racial divisions in the Park in Chapter Five. I argue that the emphasis on racial difference in Kgalagadi restricts social change. Using Henrietta Moore’s (1994) notion of the subject-position, I demonstrate that a multiplicity of different subject-positions is denied the residents of Kgalagadi who relate to each other as different through ‘race’. While group boundaries and identification may be useful in many ways in social life (for support, a shared sense of identity, etc), using race as the boundaries of group identification is shown to be persistent but disadvantageous to all residents of the region. Consequently, while

residents assert their unhappiness with current relations within the Park, changing this would require the application of different forms of personal and group identification beyond race.

The unawareness of most staff towards the Ae!Hai Agreement and the notion of Heritage Lands led me to explore flows of communication in the park, and how these flows affect access to and dispersion of knowledge within and across groups. Chapter Six focuses on flows of discourse in Kgalagadi and how they limit the types of knowledge available to different groups while supporting power differentials. Referring to Michel Foucault's (1969) theories of discourse, knowledge, and power as well as Henrietta Moore's ideas of dominant representations, I focus on the ubiquitous phrase "nothing changes". This phrase has acquired the status of a dominant discourse and is both self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating. The phrase also represents how staff of Kgalagadi feel little responsibility or accountability for implementing change but that change must be generated from elsewhere (SANP Head Office, provincial government, national government, or the municipality).

I have drawn distinctions between various aspects of life in the Park to aid my analysis. However, these concepts – race, discourse, difference, community, space and landscape, the past and the present, and heritage – are interrelated facets of daily life. Each has a direct effect on daily practice and while they may be written of here as independent influences, they are actually interdependent and interconnected in ways that make it difficult to isolate one from the other. Consequently, developing concrete solutions to problems in the Park is challenging. Chapter Seven draws together the ideas presented in the thesis and demonstrates that SANP Kgalagadi has many unresolved issues to address in order to comply with the Agreement and with its own organizational policies of co-operation.

Chapter Three

“The past would just come back”’: history, time, and recollection in Kgalagadi

1. National Parks, Kalahari Gemsbok Park and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century South Africa, white opinion was divided on the subject of protected areas. White hunters, the landed and wealthy classes, and urban and rural whites all had different conceptions of game and land use (Carruthers, 1989). Game was considered by hunters and rural whites as a resource to be exploited through hunting while for the landed, wealthy, and the urban protecting it was considered a scientific necessity. Access to land was also a divisive issue with mining and agricultural interests vying with those of early conservationists and hunters. In the late 1880s, as a response to plummeting wildlife numbers and several species neared extinction from over-hunting, the Transvaal was first to place restrictions on hunting and to establish game reserves which forbade human habitation or visitation (the quagga never recovered, but animals like hippo and lion rebounded over the decades). With the establishment of the Union in 1910, the national government was particularly focused on economic development and modernization, granting burgeoning mining and agricultural interests more prerogative to expand. In fact, after the First World War, many game reserves were deproclaimed. However, a new model of national parks emanating from the United States was influencing white public sentiment and, combined with a growing nationalism and changing attitudes towards land and game, the concept of a *national* park was gaining purchase among white South Africans. By 1919, writes Carruthers, it was considered “shameful not to have established such institutions” (1989:207).

During the 1920s, Voortrekker leaders became seen as national heroes combined with the recognition of Afrikaans as an official language in 1925 created a “national mythology” of the early colonization of southern Africa (Carruthers, 1989:208). A desire to preserve landscapes as the Voortrekkers had seen them coincided with the emerging notion of the

national park. In the mid-1920s a National Parks Act was circulated in national government and the Minister of Lands, Deneys Reitz saw it as a chance to realize “Paul Kruger’s dream”, a century after the former president’s birth, and create a ‘volkspark’ (Carruthers 1989:208).

Corresponding with the renewed Afrikaner interest in pre-settler landscapes, popular attitudes towards game had also shifted. A vision of game as ‘wildlife’ emerged, where wildlife should be observed and studied as an object of science rather than only hunted. Wildlife habitat was then conceived as an aesthetic and recreational resource and source of revenue. National parks could both protect this resource for posterity and access revenue generated from tourism.

Theodore Roosevelt is credited with promoting the concept of the national park at the turn of the twentieth century with the first national park, Yellowstone. It was James Stevenson-Hamilton, an English-speaking South African and friend of Teddy Roosevelt’s, who imported the concept of state-controlled, protected land to South Africa. Stevenson-Hamilton was warden of the large Sabi Game Reserve in northern Transvaal and one of the most influential figures advocating for a national parks act. For many years the Act was mired in controversy over land use but in 1926 the National Parks Act was passed and the Sabi and Singwetsi Game Reserves were combined to create the Kruger National Park, only the second national park in the world. National parks achieved the protection of land for recreational purposes, salvaged wildlife populations and would benefit science. Carruthers writes that the establishment of Kruger National Park in the late 1920s effectively changed environmental thinking in South Africa (1989:214).

The establishment of the first South African national park had another, less explicit, outcome. Kruger National Park combined the vision of the Afrikaner Paul Kruger and the acumen of English-speaking Stevenson-Hamilton. National parks were able to give Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking South Africans common ground (Carruthers, 1989).

While the concept of conservation may have united white South Africans in the 1920s, white and black attitudes towards game and land were polarized. Land that had been deemed unfit for (white) agriculture was often inhabited by non-whites. However, it was often this land that was, in subsequent years, considered valuable as wildlife habitat and forced the removal of many communities to make way for game reserves and national parks. Such was the case with Kruger National Park (and the Sabi and Singwetsi Game Reserves before that) and with the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. National legislation paralleled these land restrictions. The 1913 Natives' Land Act restricted black residents, who constituted seventy percent of the national population, to thirteen percent of the land in South Africa. Tensions were, and often continue to be, high over white and non-white land tenure. Africans on the outskirts of the game reserves resented being controlled and restricted from hunting for food and frequently had hostile relations with the whites managing the reserves. This legacy of hostility between black and white over land bled over to national parks which also employ this exclusionary model. As Cock and Fig note, "dispossession was the other side of conservation" (2000:23).

The South African National Parks Board was founded against this background of land dispossession. National parks, with their emphasis on game viewing and recreation for white South Africans and foreign tourists, reflected the racial divisions, power, and privilege that were –and still are –evident throughout South African society. Cock and Fig (2000:23) report that most of the board members of the Parks Board, SANP's predecessor, were closely aligned with Afrikaner nationalism and the National Party as it rose to power in 1948. Soon after 1948, acts enforcing apartheid ideology were passed. The Group Areas Act in 1950, required forced removals of many communities nationwide so that areas could be declared "white". For those dispossessed South Africans and those knowledgeable about history, national parks represent the impositions and inequity of apartheid. In their exclusion of non-whites, national parks formed "yet another strand in the consolidation of white interests over black, and in the struggle between black and white over land and labour" (Carruthers, 1989:189). The creation of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park was no exception to this process.

The Kalahari Gemsbok Park

The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park was proclaimed in 1931 to protect the majestic gemsbok antelope from regional extinction. On the heels of the National Parks Act and the founding of the first national park, the Minister of Land Affairs, Piet Grobler, lobbied for a national park in the Kalahari after returning from a hunting trip on the Nossob River empty-handed (Knight and Joyce, 1997:28). The land was inhabited by a few coloured and white farmers, and was often traversed by trophy hunters, soldiers from earlier military campaigns, and at least one band of Bushmen. All the inhabitants moved to farms outside the park or elsewhere, but the San were allowed to remain in the Park with the Park Warden, Johannes le Riche, a local white trader, designated as their legal guardian. Johannes and his assistant, Gert Jannewarie, patrolled the 9,600 square kilometers of park lands with a donkey-cart, several horses, and a few rifles. In what had been an essentially lawless area, both were tasked with monitoring the game and defending it from poachers. Both men died of malaria three years later and Johannes' brother Joep took over management of the Park. Until 1994, men of the le Riche family were park wardens of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

Prior to 1931, the triangle of South Africa that jutted north between South-West Africa (present-day Namibia) to the west and the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland (present-day Botswana) (see Map 1) to the east had witnessed only a few decades of colonial encroachment. It was not until 1897 that the region was incorporated into the Cape Colony and was then subdivided into farms and made available to white settlers. A few years later, when many of the white settlers found the dry and sandy land too difficult to inhabit, their farms were offered to coloured families. Most farms in the area kept cattle and sheep and were located in the southern section of what is now park in what was called the Mier Settlement, the majority are along the dry Auob and Nossob riverbeds where the water table is close to the surface and most of the large shade trees and vegetation grow. Remains of these farms can still be found in the park and many water holes retain the farm names (Auchterlonie, Munroe, Twee Rivieren, among others, see Map 3).

Meanwhile, in South West Africa at the turn of the century, the Nama and Herero were rebelling against the German incursion, and both Nama refugees and German troops were present in the north of the park (near Grootkolk and Union's End). At the start of World War I, Louis Botha's government planned an invasion into German territory and dug bore holes along the Aoub River border to supply Union troops with water. The invasion never happened, and white families living rent-free as borehole caretakers were soon forgotten by the government. These families, along with hunters and stock farmers soon denuded the region of game and by the 1920s several species were nearing regional extinction (Knight and Joyce, 1997:28).

The Khomani San/Mier land claim is testament to the post-apartheid attempts to redress this struggle between white conservationists and non-white residents in the Kalahari. For Mier farmers who had lived on land that became the Kalahari Gemsbok Park "life was made difficult" after 1931 and all the Mier families had left within a few years²⁵. The San inhabitants were allowed to remain inside the Park at its proclamation. However Cock and Fig (2000:26) note that from 1937 onwards there were repeated efforts to expel the San. About thirty San were later moved to Twee Rivieren where several were employed as domestic laborers for park staff and were provided with food²⁶ to discourage hunting in the Park which was considered 'poaching' under Park rules. Later, under apartheid, the San were declared "coloured" and by the mid-1970s, were removed to a farm called "Welkom" on the outskirts of the Park. This group that had actually lived in the Park was the initiators of the land claim. Currently they and their descendents form only a small part of the larger Khomani San Community that now number 1,500²⁷.

Shifts in the conservation agenda

Conservation thinking has undergone many shifts in the century since the concept of the national park took hold. During the 1920s and 1930s in southern Africa, national parks

²⁵ Department of Land Affairs Memoranda on the Agreements, 2.3, Annex F to Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Bundle

²⁶ Elias le Riche, personal communication.

²⁷ Estimates of the size of the Khomani San Community vary greatly. This figure is from Roger Chennells (2002a), the lawyer for the land claim.

evolved out of the game reserve mold²⁸. Recently, however, conservation science has shifted its focus to conserving *biodiversity* rather than specific species. The entire *ecosystem* was then emphasized and in this way conservation enlarged its purview, so that people, and their role in an ecosystem, start to figure into conservation thinking.

The turn to democracy in South Africa in 1994 and international trends in conservation, prompted the Parks Board to advocate working with communities who inhabit the lands around parks²⁹. Programs like CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources) in Zimbabwe were very influential by giving communities the ability to control their own natural resources by managing the allocation of hunting rights and the revenues from it. ‘Community-based’ programs and ‘sustainable development’ were the buzzwords of the 1990s as international development agencies prompted participation from previously aloof conservation authorities. These ideas parallel the development discourse on “participatory development” and the emphasis on working at the ‘grass-roots’ level. The UN Summit on Sustainable Development in 1992 (Rio Summit) epitomized this new direction in the development arena. The Rio +10 Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 reviewed progress (of which most representatives agreed there had been little) and reiterated the need for nations to work from ‘the bottom up’. More directly related to protected areas, the World Parks Congress which convened one year later in Durban addressed the theme of “Benefits Beyond Boundaries”³⁰.

These ideas took tangible shape in South African National Parks in 1994 with the creation of a Social Ecology Unit designed to reach out to local communities and involve them in conservation. This would accomplish two goals: promoting parks to the communities surrounding them and thereby ensuring the parks’ sustainability, and secondly, work as a form of redress for past exclusionary policies. Social Ecology has

²⁸ In this model predator species like lion or leopard were considered ‘vermin’ and were often shot, while large protected areas focused on saving specific species such as: elephant, rhino, gemsbok (Knight, 1997:157). This was part of the justification for the expansive size of the Kalahari Gemsbok Park.

²⁹ The shift in conservation thinking led South Africa to develop new legislation concerning National Parks. See Appendix 3 for extracts on the definition of a National Park from the National Parks Act of 1976 and the new National Environmental Management Act: Protected Areas Amendment Bill of 2004.

³⁰ In fact, Vet Piet Kleinman and a few other Khomani San representatives attended the Congress in addition to (and separately from) SANP Kgalagadi staff.

undergone significant revamping and reorganizing since its inception in 1994 (at that time many critics commented that the unit was simply window-dressing and not supported substantially by the organization or staff in parks) and is currently titled People and Conservation. Nonetheless, this shift is, as Cock and Fig note, “a transformation of the SANP from an institution of colonial conservation which served white minority interests to a community based model of conservation” (2000:34). This ‘transition’ is difficult and, as this thesis will demonstrate, elusive. A “community based model of conservation”, while an admirable notion, is complex to administer particularly a conservation body used to having sole authority over a protected area. Diverging interests test the definition of ‘community’ and representing these interests fairly and equitably is another obstacle. Mainly however, it is the lack of a common goal between parks and the people living around them that makes a ‘community-based model of conservation’ so elusive.

Invoking a local model of conservation, a model that promotes involving local people in decision-making processes and activities, does not always overlap with conservation managers’ understanding of their work. Instead, for conservation practitioners (park staff and managers), the perception continues that protected areas are created and managed for wildlife and biodiversity protection, to the exclusion of local people (whether they had lived on that land or not)³¹. For example, one evening a junior employee, Jan, and Alex who had worked and lived in the Park a few years earlier were discussing the change that Kalahari Gemsbok had undergone to Transfrontier status in 1999. The former employee said: “Hey, remember Alex?” addressing his friend, “What the old park manager said to us about going transfrontier? He warned us, ‘It is transfrontier for the animals, not the people’”. Alex and Jan both shook their heads and agreed that “That man did not care

³¹ This perception is unsurprising considering the training and education system for potential conservation managers in South Africa. In the new streamlined South African tertiary education system, Technikons have merged to form Technical Universities. However, the Nature Conservation diploma, Bachelor’s degree, and Master’s degree courses focus on: Plant Science, Biology, Mammal Physiology, Park Management, etc. (taken from Tshwane Technikon website: www.tshwane.ac.za and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology course outline for Nature Conservation at www.cput.ac.za). No courses in sociology, anthropology, history, global issues, development, or tourism are required for these degrees.

about people here”. This perception of the senior staff of Kgalagadi is shared by local residents and junior staff.

Transfrontier

In 1999, Kalahari Gemsbok National Park officially became Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park at a signing ceremony attended by then-Deputy President Thabo Mbeki³². This agreement was more ceremonial than revolutionary. There had never been fences between the South African Kalahari Gemsbok Park and Botswana’s Gemsbok Park, proclaimed in 1938, on the opposite side of the Nossob River. In 1948 both countries had agreed to manage the land as one unit. Kgalagadi now encompasses 38,000 square kilometers of land. The Transfrontier Park is managed jointly by South African National Parks and the Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks, which meet monthly to discuss shared issues. Kgalagadi was heralded as the first ‘Peace Park’ in Africa and represents the new model of transboundary conservation. This emphasizes protecting vast tracts of land on the premise that wildlife does not follow political boundaries³³. The theory is that migratory routes will be opened up and will allow wildlife to return to migratory patterns that existed before colonial disturbance—the most detrimental of which was the construction of fences³⁴. A consequence of this extension of conservation areas is that the transboundary model, as David Hughes remarks, ends up replicating the colonial model of expansion and exclusion (2003).

David Hughes suggests that the transboundary model popular in southern African is an exercise in “scale-making” (2003). Protecting land on such large scales does not, in practice and ideology, include the small-scale existence of local inhabitants (Hughes 2003). Hughes argues that contemporary conservationists have taken Cecil John Rhodes’ Cape to Cairo vision as a model for developing new protected areas, particularly in the form of transboundary mega-parks –“peace parks” –of which Kgalagadi is but a

³² When asking junior staff and local residents about the change to Transfrontier status, most did not know what it was. However, they all remembered that Thabo Mbeki had been at the Molopo Lodge in 1999 to sign something.

³³ The map in Appendix 2 shows other transboundary conservation areas in southern Africa. The Great Limpopo National Park, the most ambitious and well-known venture is not included on the map.

³⁴ For a more complete discussion of the tragic effects of fences on wildlife in southern Africa see Owens, Mark and Delia. 1984. *Cry of the Kalahari*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

precursor to the larger Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (the amalgamation of Kruger National Park and land in Mozambique and Zimbabwe)³⁵. The result is that the transboundary conservation model runs counter to notions of working with local people. The move towards transboundary and the parallel and conflicting emphasis on local involvement in parks, demonstrate the challenging and conflicting discourses entering conservation management in the twenty-first century. Increased involvement and pressure from the international arena (development, environment, and rights advocates) complicates the development of 'local' solutions.

However, in South Africa, the present and future of conservation suffer the added price of the past. A history of exclusion is not forgotten by the people who were subject to barriers, fences, and rules in the name of conservation. In addition, the strong links between apartheid and the development of national parks in South Africa leaves SANP with much to atone for.

2. The past and its uses: recollection, history, and memory

The past is a very felt reality for residents of Kgalagadi and in the region. There are two aspects of history's role in the present that are vital to an understanding of how the Park operates and relations within its boundaries; one is two different uses of the past and the other is a universally experienced slow passage of time.

In Kgalagadi 'colonial conservation' manifested in park officials who were not interested in local people, who they viewed as impediments to the work of conservation. As a result, tense relations between the Park and the Khomani San and Mier were prevalent. Specifically, it was the Khomani San in the early 1990s who confronted SANP managers, on many occasions including; by sitting under the Park Managers' desk and refusing to leave, by talking to tourists in Twee Rivieren, or on at least one occasion climbing the radio tower and shouting down that this land was theirs.

³⁵ 'Peace parks' have come under increased criticism (Duffy, 2001, Hughes 2003, and Draper, Speierenberg, and Wels, 2005 for example). The premise of such 'peace parks' is an idealistic (and some would argue naïve): "dream of experiencing Africa wild and free, where people can reap the benefits of nature and in turn support her" (www.peaceparks.org, Peace Parks Foundation website). The question becomes: who is experiencing this "wild and free" Africa and who reaps the benefits? Many critics answer that it is the tourist who benefits most.

Inside the Park strained relations are also manifest. Coloured employees are mainly local and whether Khomani San or, more commonly, Mier also share a sense of disenfranchisement. White senior staff members have been in the Park for at most eight years, since 1994, and did not personally experience events in the Kalahari. Thus noticeably different experiences during apartheid left their mark in different ways: the oppressed group continues to feel alienated as well as having a strong sense of entitlement and group cohesiveness, while the dominant group is often complacent and at ease with the previous status quo. The different experiences of the past for white park managers and coloured junior staff result in two different ways of employing the past.

For coloured residents there is a sense that past and present conditions are very much the same. For them, the past is an active part of the present. Tim Ingold describes this as the past being *generative* of present experience; this is what memory does (1996:202). For the white residents of the Park, the past is more impersonal. It is 'history' and is considered left behind, it is essentially alien to the present (Ingold, 1996). The difference between history and memory is one of impersonal and personal meaning, and alienation and origination to present experience. Both are, as Ingold states, "modes of apprehending the past" (1996:202). Arjun Appadurai, following Maurice Bloch, focuses on the inherent debatability of the past (1981). He suggests that there are sets of norms which govern how people bring the past into the present. Using these theories, I will elaborate in subsequent chapters how the history of Kgalagadi and apartheid are brought to bear in the present by park employees and how this affects the co-operative endeavors stipulated by the Ae!Hai Agreement.

"Kalahari Time"

As indicated above, experiences of the past are related to experiences of the present, and the two are linked by the ways in which time is *perceived* in Kgalagadi. The particular ways in which time is experienced by staff affect the process of recollecting the past and the conceptualization of the future. Anthropological theorists have moved from a strict culturally relativist view of time which states that *concepts* of time vary from society to

society, to a view that there are different ways of *experiencing* and *expressing* time, not of conceptualizing it. As Evans-Pritchard demonstrated in his seminal study of the Nuer, time was marked by pastoral and seasonal activities (in Jedrej, 2002:548) but it was still conceived of as linear, while it may sometimes appear static or cyclical (Bloch, 1977:282). In Kgalagadi, discourses of time are closely linked to the predominant feelings of isolation and remove from the rest of southern Africa³⁶ and a feeling that time passes more slowly here is expressed in the phrase “Kalahari Time”.

For inhabitants of the Park, there is a palpable sense that the passage of time is slow. Days pass repeating the same activities and are unmarked by great change (even with the coming and going of tourists, for no relationships are formed with them). Holidays are celebrated minimally. Even within a few days of Christmas, amongst white and coloured staff who attended Christian churches there was very little talk of the occasion. Easter passed in much the same unremarked way, as did public holidays. Events that do happen, a particularly special trip to town, a lively party, a vehicle breakdown that leaves staff stranded overnight, are remembered and spoken of for years. On several different occasions I was reminded by some junior staff members of a trip to Upington we had all taken more than a year earlier. They each remembered details of the event –gestures, jokes, exactly what different people had said. What had been a simple trip to town to replenish supplies was for these staff an unusual and exciting, and therefore memorable occasion. White staff, all of whom are non-local, acknowledge that there is a place-specific reality to the experience of time through the phrase “Kalahari Time”. Coloured residents of the park do not tend to use the phrase but do, at times, bemoan how boring life in Kgalagadi can be. Mostly, any discomfort coloured residents have with the slow passage of time relates to the frustration they feel with the lack of change in their lives since 1994. Both the slow passing of time and the crystallization of events in memory makes the past an active and felt contribution to the present for coloured staff.

³⁶ Residents of the region do not often relate to Botswana (which is mainly English-speaking) or Namibian residents (even if the two borders are only a few kilometers away); instead they see themselves as different because they are South African. The few people I did meet who lived in Botswana (literally on the other side of a low fence) were introduced to me as “from Botswana”; this was their primary identity on the South African side.

A sense that time passes slowly, that change is slow, and that the past is actively part of the present contribute to a sense of isolation and develop the feeling that “nothing changes”. As a phrase commonly used by all staff in the Park, it is both powerful and detrimental (see Chapter Six). “Nothing changes” exudes a sense of stasis which is difficult to escape. Time indeed passes but conditions seem to stay the same and awareness of this state of affairs is shared by all staff in the Park.

3. Conclusion

National parks were originally founded to save particular animal species from extinction. Later this model evolved to incorporate entire landscapes or ecosystems –conservation for conservation’s sake. In both models, local people were excluded. However, cordoning off an entire area for protection, and extending those areas with the transboundary model, is an ideology that has invariably created disputes. The values that were and are applied to the creation of protected areas have deep historical and political roots and are not universally shared. In South Africa, these values have been linked with Afrikaner nationalism and white authority. However, the original conception of national parks as protected ‘wilderness’ may be as elusive as the goal of community participation. After all, as Carruthers suggests:

It seems therefore to be true that in South Africa, as in other countries, national parks were used as fantasy worlds, enshrining the olden-day values of romantic nature by which society as a whole could no longer afford to live (1989:215).

For tourists such a “fantasy world” is possible. However the maintenance of this “fantasy” affects those who live and work in and outside of national parks. The concept of the national park, of the conservation of pristine wilderness, conceals a much harsher past and present reality.

Chapter Four

The Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement: a view from outside the Park and its consequences for fieldwork

While this research did not focus directly on the Khomani San Community, as outlined earlier, understanding the context of daily life for the Khomani San, as the primary beneficiaries of the Ae!Hai Agreement, and also the pressure they exert on the Park to urgently change circumstances is fundamental to an appreciation of the difficulties the Park experiences with implementation of the Ae!Hai Agreement. Therefore, on the last day of my stay in the Kalahari, Aubrey and I drove out of the Park south to Andriesvale (see Map 1) to visit Dawid Kruiper, the traditional leader of the Khomani San. Aubrey and several other junior staff members had encouraged me to talk to Dawid and I had been hesitant because of the sensitivity of this community to the land claim and their known inhospitality towards researchers³⁷. In addition, Dawid is a particularly political figure as one of the initiators of the claim and has been an active spokesperson for the Khomani San for many years. In recent years he has appeared in the media to demonstrate the poor conditions of his life since winning the claim. Aubrey and I arrived mid-morning on a Friday and found Dawid amidst a group:

All eight of the San men and women around us were drunk. Conversations were interspersed with shouting, people falling over, raucous laughter and angry fighting. Dawid looked me in the eye and demanded, in broken English, "What company you work for?". Aubrey told him, "No Oom [a term of respect for elders, meaning "uncle"] Dawid, she is here to do 'navorsing' [research], I just told you". Dawid asked if I was "polities" [political] or worked for the Park. I told him I had no association with the Park, that I was doing research and was independent. During the next two long, strenuous hours I repeated to Dawid that I was not political, did not work for a company, was not a lawyer, and was not reporting to the Park, as he continuously demanded to know what my purpose was. Aubrey asked Dawid if we could talk and he agreed, if we would drive him to his office.

In my rearview mirror I watched Oom Dawid, his petite wife and teenage daughter settle into my backseat. I had never imagined that I would have the traditional leader of the

³⁷ William Ellis, PhD candidate University of the Western Cape, personal communication.

Khomani San, his wife, and daughter in my car. That they were drunk and arguing was also not how I would have imagined this scenario. We drove onto the property of a nature reserve named "Erens" [Afrikaans: somewhere] and parked. We entered a wide garage lined with boxes (I was told there was a new computer in one), paint and other supplies, and a bed and mattress with sheets off to one side. A large desk and two chairs sat in the middle of the garage.

Aubrey and I were introduced to Sus ("It's what they call me", she said), Oom Dawid Kruiper's secretary. She had light brown skin and long straight black hair tied back in a low ponytail. She was dressed in trendy second-hand clothing one finds in a city. Strands of graying hair framed her face, but her skin looked young. She was from Cape Town and spoke both English and Afrikaans fluently. Dawid was animated, talking quickly in Afrikaans and simultaneously, Sus was asking me questions about where I was from and what I was doing there. I politely excused myself to get paper and a pen from the car, escaping from the chaos of Sus' many questions and Dawid's repeated admonishment to "write this down".

Dawid Kruiper

Dawid Kruiper is extremely aware of both the value of his knowledge and the vast array of parties interested in it. With the success of the land claim there had been a parade of NGOs, researchers, (mostly foreign) donors, and reporters come to his part of the Kalahari, drawn by the 'indigenous' Khomani San community with Dawid Kruiper as their traditional leader. Dawid, however, has a long history of activism for the Khomani San and is not new to media attention. In 1984 Dawid Kruiper played a Bushman in the movie "The Gods Must Be Crazy" (dir. Jamie Uys, 1984)³⁸. He has also been in at least one luxury car commercial filmed in the Kalahari³⁹. Previous to the years of advocating for the land claim, Dawid also represented the Khomani San at the United Nations First People's Conference and has been active in representing the community at national and international conferences for years.

As 'traditional leader', Dawid is considered the authority on the traditional Khomani San, passed down to him from his father Regopstaan Kruiper who died a few years before the

³⁸ A South African film released internationally in 1986, "The Gods Must Be Crazy" was a popular tongue-in-cheek portrayal of the supposed chasm between Western and traditional societies and has been lambasted by anthropologists for popularizing in film the notion of traditional hunter-gatherer societies frozen in time and space.

³⁹ European car companies often test their new vehicles on the straight paved highways and wide, flat salt pans in the region.

finalization of the land claim. This means that Dawid has a deep knowledge of the plants, wildlife, and region in general, often referred to as 'indigenous knowledge' a concept that is currently in vogue in development discourse. As a result, Dawid is a valuable conduit for various outside interests tapping into a discourse of what may qualify as authentically traditional. In this way, Dawid holds the possibility of the Khomani San leading a (theoretically) sustainable and traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle, an assertion that supported the entire land claim process, especially for the land in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Dawid Kruiper could be considered the key to the 'heritage land' in the Park. But at this moment, as I stood before him, Dawid bleary-eyed and angry, continued to ask what I was doing and what I wanted. He looked across the desk at Aubrey and me, tapped his head and said woefully that we were there to "steal his knowledge".

Dawid Kruiper and those Khomani San who advocate a traditional lifestyle, feel they have been mistreated since the claim settlement and that the farms the Community gained has been stolen from the Kruiper "clan" (Geldenhuys, 2004). Schisms have split the Khomani San community on several issues, mainly on land use, and the two main groups that developed were Dawid Kruiper and his 'clan' who advocated a 'traditional' lifestyle and another member of the Khomani San, Petrus Vaalbooi, Chairman of the Communal Property Association tasked with distributing the funds gained from the land and administering the use of Khomani San lands, and considered a "modern Bushman" (Robins, 2001), advocating livestock farming. Dawid Kruiper is thus a man caught between a series of competing interests. Local Kgalagadi employees who knew Dawid felt that he was too influenced by the outsiders that came to help him. As one junior employee stated, "Too many white people are mixing everything up for Oom Dawid". The "white people" are the dozens of foreigners, young and old South Africans, and organizations that (usually with the best intentions) try to learn from and help the Khomani San.

Alcoholism, Tuberculosis, AIDS, murder, rape, and various other associated social ills plague the Khomani San Community. After repeated requests from the community, the

South African Human Rights Commission held an inquiry in November 2004 in Andriesvale. This report is what Sus forcibly handed me now as she railed against the findings of the Commission. In the middle of the 34 page report, Sus pointed to one passage as an example of their “useless” conclusions and asked that I read it. The SAHRC had found that:

... it is alleged that the uncoordinated involvement of too many external people and organisations makes it difficult for the Khomani San community to develop a communal identity and manage group dynamics, and hampers the community’s ability to determine its own future (SAHRC Report, 2005:18).

Based on Dawid’s frustration with the “stealing of his knowledge” and the comment that Dawid was too influenced by outside parties (“white people”), this quote demonstrated to me that the SAHRC panel were adroit listeners to the community’s concerns. I did not comment and Sus continued to insist that they “need the outside people to help”. However, “they” could be Dawid and his clan or other members of the community; Dawid’s interests, concerns, and approaches do not always coincide with the community’s interests (evidenced by several remarks in the SAHRC Report, 2005:26).

The Agreement for the Khomani San

Dawid’s father, Regopstaan, famous as one of the last Bushman to have led a nomadic lifestyle within the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, once had a dream that led him to prophesy: *“When the strangers come, then will come the big rains. And the Little People will dance. And when the Little People in the Kalahari dance, then the Little People around the world shall dance too”* (Isaacson 2001:55). Regopstaan believed that “strangers” would help his people once again walk their land. The successful Khomani San land claim made this dream, in theory, a reality. However, the following years and the subsequent development of the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement have not produced the sort of resolution and closure for the Khomani San that Regopstaan had envisioned. The community is divided, has internal conflicts and has expressed a general dissatisfaction with the lack of immediate change to their lives post-land claim. Dawid Kruiper is the most vocal about this disaffection. His focus has turned to South African

National Parks and Kgalagadi and what Dawid and the Community and others (SAHRC Report, 2005:17) consider inadequate attention to the Ae!Hai Agreement.

The Khomani San express several complaints regarding Kgalagadi's response to the land claim. The late Vet Piet Kleinman, while attending the World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003, is quoted as saying:

Our rights are written in the documents, yet park authorities have the same attitude and tend to prescribe to us what we should do... There are a number of problems which need to be addressed, such as access to our sacred sites and graves as well as support of our active involvement in management (www.iucn/themes/wpc.html).

He often expressed that the Khomani San were especially insulted by the Park's policy that a ranger must accompany them as protection (as I had done when Vet Piet was training trackers)⁴⁰. I often heard Khomani San Community members say that they felt restricted by the Park's gate hours (see Map 3) and that they wished to come and go as they pleased. According to the Agreement however, without prior approval community members may not spend the night in the Park. The Khomani San were also insulted by their exclusion from Transfrontier negotiations with Botswana (Steenkamp and Grossman, 2001). Other issues include an incident in 2003 when a boma (fenced enclosure) for wildlife capture was constructed next to a Khomani San sacred site just outside Twee Rivieren, without consultation with the Khomani San Community⁴¹. The boma had been constructed to contain several lions captured in the Park to be sent to Addo National Park in the Cape, again the Khomani San were not informed. Vet Piet expressed his resentment: "When the Kgalagadi Park sold off lions, we saw it on the television. Our committee was not consulted. We love the lions, they're part of us. The park authorities should speak to us" (www.iucn/themes/wpc.html). The South African Human Rights Commission report reiterates that Khomani San feel they are not granted "free access" to the Park:

Allegations have also been made that SANP, as senior and capacitated partner in the Park Joint Management Board, has up to now not facilitated any initiatives to implement the provisions of the agreed upon Contract Park Management Plan. These relate to capacity

⁴⁰ This issue arose in my interview with Fytjie Kleinman (Vet Piet's widow) and was vehemently reiterated by her grandson Didi. This complaint is also mentioned in the SAHRC Report (2004:16).

⁴¹ The connection that this was a sacred site was first made soon after when a committee from UNESCO came to investigate the possibility of a World Heritage Site at that location.

building, small business development, and adequately maintained infrastructure (such as water supply) on the KTP land belonging to the Khomani San community. (SAHRC, 2005:16)

The farms outside the Park that were also gained in the land claim are in disrepair, with the majority of game, originally intended to be a source of revenue, hunted out. Three years after the finalization of the claim, the Heritage Land in Kgalagadi is considered, as Park employees commented, the Khomani San's "last chance" for this 'community' to be self-sufficient and regain some of the optimism and momentum that the successful land claim brought.

The 'San Heritage Land'

As shown on Map 2, a western portion of the Park is designated as the 'San Heritage Land'. This and the 'Mier Heritage Land' have been transferred in deed to the Khomani San and Mier Communities respectively. Each community has full ownership of that land, subject to the Agreement. The Agreement states that these lands are "contract parks" with SANP, who is responsible for "conservation management" of the land for a period of 99 years. A Joint Management Board (JMB) manages these 'contract parks', with representatives from the three parties and serves as a forum for informing one another of "actual or intended development" on the areas owned by the other parties (Agreement, 2002:sec.41). In the Agreement these heritage lands are explicitly intended for:

The purpose of activities pertaining to conservation and sustainable economic, symbolic and cultural use compatible with conservation (Agreement, 2002: sec 18.1)

This means that the Khomani San Community may "sustainably" use the flora and fauna, conduct "cultural activities" including gatherings, festivals, religious ceremonies, and other activities considered important to the Community. Regopstaan and the original claimants (including Dawid Kruiper) aspired to reside again on the land in the Park. However, in the Agreement, use must be "compatible with conservation" which states that the land may not be used for "residential", "agriculture" or "mining" purposes (Agreement, 2002:sec.18). The Khomani San may visit but not live on their land within Park boundaries.

Fieldwork

On my return to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in February of 2005, I wanted to see how the employees of the Park officially and unofficially understood the land claim settlement. Armed with the Afrikaans translation of Heritage Park, “Erfenispark”, I set out to gather information on how employees of a conservation organization interpreted an abstract notion like heritage land. This is an example of an early attempt:

Junior staff member: “Yes, the Oorgrenspark (Transfrontier Park). I know what it is.”

Me: “No, no, erfenispark. They did happen about the same time but are two different things. You know, the Khomani San land claim. Explain the difference to him Aubrey.”

Aubrey: “I don’t know the difference. I never heard of it before you told me about it.”

Junior staff member: “Hmmm. Bushmen land claim, I don’t know anything about it.”

This dialogue is representative of my experience with nearly all staff in Kgalagadi.

Junior staff were familiar with the successful land claim and admitted to hearing that the Khomani San were now allowed to access land within the Park. Senior staff were all, at least vaguely, familiar with the land claim process that had occurred and had seen the Agreement Bundle (the bound Afrikaans and English version) of which the Park has a few copies. Other than the three staff who serve on the Joint Management Board, however, most staff had little understanding of the Agreement’s composition and its ramifications for the Park of co-operative management and the inclusion of ‘heritage’.

Dawid Kruijer and the Khomani San in Andriesvale thus seem very distant to the people who live inside the Park. Dawid and the Khomani San Community look to the Park for answers, resolution, and action on their Heritage Land; however most employees of the Park are unconcerned by this gaze.

The Agreement for SANP Kgalagadi

For SANP Kgalagadi, there are several new responsibilities arising from the Agreement and sharing land with the Khomani San and Mier communities. The most important, and

most difficult, of these is the Joint Management Board (JMB). Frustrations expressed by a senior staff member include: the Khomani San are not good at attending meetings and being “efficient” in the meetings (Community representatives are often late or do not attend at all, even when they have been informed through letters and by word-of-mouth); when new representatives from the Khomani San Community attend the JMB meetings it requires new approaches from SANP; and as one senior employee who refused to continue attending the meetings (even though the Agreement requires him to) succinctly put it, “Nothing gets done”.

The Khomani San Community feel that the Park is not acting on the Agreement. For SANP Kgalagadi staff, however, it is not clear (as demonstrated by the above comments) what it is that they are *supposed* to do, some Agreement stipulations are straight forward while others require more interpretation. The Agreement states that the Park must manage what are now the Heritage Lands as it always has. It also states that there will be a “co-operative lodge” which is owned by the three parties jointly. Construction of this tourist lodge was recently completed on land that forms the border between the San and Mier Heritage Lands. Currently, the lodge awaits a concessionaire to operate it. SANP is also required to maintain an “institutional grant” of R50, 000 per year that is split between the San Heritage Land, Mier Heritage Land, and a JMB account. The Agreement also stipulates that SANP will provide assistance through training of field guides, and help with creating game enclosures with the possibility of raising species for trophy-hunting purposes (sec.30.4.2). To my knowledge, there have been no plans from either side to do this.

Beyond the basic requirements, SANP Kgalagadi has *not* changed how they operate to accommodate the Ae!Hai Agreement. It is one of many responsibilities that falls to the People and Conservation Officer and has not received any special attention. However, the Khomani San Community have rarely used their land in the Park. During my nine month stay, the Khomani San came onto their land on only four occasions. Consequently, this Agreement and the ‘heritage lands’ seem to have minimal impact on the work and lives of Kgalagadi staff.

However, as a landmark restitution case won by some of the last Bushmen of the Kalahari, this land claim garnered considerable media attention⁴² in South Africa and abroad. It was also considered social reconciliation between the Khomani San and SANP. As mentioned, the signing ceremony in 1999 was attended by Thabo Mbeki who stated: “We shall mend the broken strings of the distant past, so that our dreams can take root.” The difficulty is, as mentioned in the previous chapter, this past is not so “distant”.

Consequences for writing ethnography

Against this background, this thesis evolved into an exploration of why residents of Kgalagadi feel that “nothing” does change. What factors combine to create a sense that the conditions of living in Kgalagadi do not improve but are static, and essentialized under the rubric “nothing changes”? Stepping away from this mire of interests and disinterests, I offer a glimpse into how the staff that compose Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, as central actor in the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement, do or do not experience what should be a shift in the approach to conservation and what prohibits cooperative management with the Khomani San Community.

Consequently, this thesis focuses on factors in Kgalagadi that restrict meaningful social change, necessary for the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement to be implemented effectively. The factors outlined above are expanded on in the following two chapters. These factors and the chapter topics have been extricated for analytical purposes; none of the influences of race, space, or discourse can be isolated in daily practice, however all need to be acknowledged and addressed by South African National Parks, as the administrative body, in order to change how the Park operates with its neighbors and within its boundaries.

I began this chapter with Dawid Kruiper because Oom Dawid is representative of the divergent interests, political agendas, economic and emotional potency that have the

⁴² Articles in the *Mail & Guardian* (Siegfried, 2004), *Cape Times* (Gosling, 2004, Geldenhuys, 2004), and *Cape Argus* (Horler, 2004), to name a few.

power to divide groups, and ultimately the frustration and inertia that make this land claim settlement so complex and divisive. He is, in effect, an individual embodiment of the difficulties and complexities of social change in this region. That is exactly what the Ae!Hai Agreement is: an exercise in social change. The Agreement is an act of restitution of past mistreatment by the government and local authorities (including park authorities) and requires a shift of power and relationships. This is a process of change that searches for an ideal balance between the Khomani San (and the Mier) and Kgalagadi. Dawid is also a demonstration of the contradictions of the Kalahari: a remote, isolated, and harsh environment that is both in the public eye and simultaneously often ignored. Kgalagadi is not on most tourist itineraries, it is far from cities and other tourism epicenters. Generally, South Africans have not heard of the Park (Kruger being vastly more popular). Geographically it is tucked in a spit of South African land between Namibia and Botswana. However, Kgalagadi is a remarkable place, containing a spectacular diversity of wildlife and birdlife in a near-desert ecosystem. In addition, this land was once inhabited by Bushmen, the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. The Kalahari is a land of dreams and mystery, as demonstrated by the popularity of writings such as Laurens van der Post's romantic The Lost World of the Kalahari (1958).

The incongruity of focused interest in the Southern Kalahari and, more frequently, disinterest is not lost on Dawid Kruiper. He has also been a spectacle of media and public attention, only to feel neglected and dismissed (SAHRC Report, 2005:26). This is a sentiment most inhabitants of the region and Park share. Park employees would often express frustration that friends and relatives living elsewhere in South Africa neglected to stay in contact with them. Upon my return to the Park for fieldwork, a staff member said that it was so nice to see me back, to know I had not forgotten them and cared enough to return. Residents of the region are very aware of their isolation from the rest of South Africa and the sense of neglect that isolation carries is potent.

Dawid Kruiper works hard, however, to focus media attention on his plight and to exert pressure on the park to be more inclusive of the Khomani San Community. He is one, if

not the key, role player in the formation of the Ae!Hai Agreement⁴³. His frustrations and insights on park co-management with the Khomani San and the Agreement are valuable; however it is the dynamics *inside* the Park which have limited the effectiveness of co-operative management efforts. Dawid Kruiper served as a finale to my research to confirm the difficulties both the Khomani San and Kgalagadi employees face in working to change their relationship to each other and to the land within park boundaries.

⁴³ This was why it was so important that I talk to Dawid. However, I only did so at the end of fieldwork because Dawid is an outsider to the inner workings of the Park, the focus of my research.

Chapter Five

'Difference' in Kgalagadi: subject-positions and group boundaries

One fortuitous day in 1940 in the Twee Rivieren rest camp of Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, two baby boys were born. Elias le Riche was the son of the white Park Warden, Josef le Riche who had helped to create the Park and had been its warden since proclamation in 1931. The second boy was Karel Kleinman, son to “Bushman” workers in the Park. One can only imagine the vastly different circumstances of the two births. Karel, who would later gain the name Vet (fat) Piet for his tendency as a young boy to consume large quantities of lard, was considered “Elias’ Bushman”⁴⁴. Vet Piet and Elias’ lives intersected but followed very different paths. Elias le Riche became Park Warden at Nossob camp in 1963 and was Park Manager from 1980 to 1995. Vet Piet became a ranger and developed into a renowned Master Tracker,⁴⁵ an honorary designation held by a select and dwindling few. Vet Piet, along with Dawid Kruiper, was one of the most ardent advocates of a Bushman land claim within the Park. Under duress, he retired, but continued to live in the Park, after Elias’ departure in 1995.⁴⁶

The substantial differences between the lives of these two boys born on the same day in the same place are representative of the structural role of racial and socio-political differences in Kgalagadi at the time. The emphasis on, and the hierarchy implicit in, racialized difference still have a strong influence in Kgalagadi today. The Park is scored by these differences. While all residents share a common language, Afrikaans, as well as the mutual experience of living in the Park, racial difference presides over these

⁴⁴ This phrase was told to me by a respondent who had spent years in the Park and was an intimate friend of Vet Piet Kleinman. Elias le Riche himself, did not use this terminology in discussion with me.

⁴⁵ He was called on by researchers to track wildlife and was featured in the documentary “Little Tracker”.

⁴⁶ In 2004 Vet Piet died tragically in a car accident on the highway near Kgalagadi. His death has had a lasting effect on the implementation of the Ae!Hai Agreement. He was one of its proponents and had a vision for how the Khomani San should use the resources gained in the land claim. Several people noted that without him it has been difficult to organize and compel the Khomani San Community to advocate conservation and use the resources they have gained sustainably and wisely.

Elias le Riche divides his time between his farm near the Park and a home in Upington. His affiliation with the Park has long since ceased but he keeps up-to-date on the activities of the Khomani San community.

similarities. The exclusionary model of conservation discussed in Chapter Three combined with the forty-year dominance of apartheid created a solid foundation for 'race' to become a defining feature, entrenched in the minds and lived experiences of the residents of the southern Kalahari.

During fieldwork I tried to theorize why Kgalagadi, more than ten years after democracy, continues to be so divided along racial lines. After fieldwork I found myself asking several more important questions: why do such strict racial divisions persist when the emphasis on certain kinds of differences (particularly racial) seems to serve no purpose and, in truth, are considered by residents as a source of strife and dysfunction? Why does this emphasis on racial difference persist when it is also clearly counter-productive to SANP goals of improved participation and co-operation? Using the work of anthropologist Henrietta Moore, I argue that how people are positioned in relation to each other, their subject-position is constructed through discourses of race, transformation, and post-apartheid restitution. Discourses of an apartheid past—'the Past'—reinforce, legitimate, and simultaneously are used in disapproval of, the contemporary relations between people in Kgalagadi and between Kgalagadi management and people outside the Park. The resulting tension creates conflict, significant discontent, and reinforces group allegiances, identity, and subject positioning that follow racial lines. In turn these tensions between racialized groups, this emphasis on difference in Kgalagadi, create a dysfunctional system for the Park.

Subject positions

Difference is a matter of context. In particular circumstances, particular differences come to the fore. When two coloured staff members interact the most felt, dominant, difference between them may be gender or age. When a coloured staff member interacts with a white staff member the dominant difference may be race or rank. However, within these interactions there are multiple differences at play. For Henrietta Moore individuals are "multiply constituted subjects" that take up multiple subject positions based on the range of discourses and social practices available (1994:55). In *A Passion for Difference*, Moore draws on several theorists and their approaches to language and social experience

to develop a theory of the positioned subject and the role of difference. Starting with Pierre Bourdieu, Moore draws on notions of bodily praxis and broadens out to Michel Foucault's emphasis on the power of discourse⁴⁷. While Moore focuses specifically on gender differences, she emphasizes the role difference plays in discourse and 'practice' and thus 'subject positions'.

Positionality is often attributed to the obvious location of a body in space. Moore instead emphasizes that the body is much more involved in the appropriation of positions through its use in particular circumstances of interaction and the interpretation made by others on it. Accordingly, positions are relational; they are formed through social interaction with others and develop through this experience. Moore posits that experience—social exchange—is thus a form of “embodied intersubjectivity” (1994:3). She emphasizes that the embodied subject experiences social interactions in a more complete way than simple linguistic and cognitive experience. Moore is critiquing the common and reductive notion of experience as purely individual experience and/or representation—“I have been there and therefore I know” (1994:2). If a person is positioned simply through experience, then the differences and categories really felt by people (race, class, gender, and ethnicity) are reduced to singularity. A person can then only be different in one way, race or class or gender, etc. However, the reality of experience demonstrates that we never experience one singular form of difference. She is also arguing against the Foucauldian notion that individuals are mere ‘discursive subjects’ (Foucault, 1969), the products of discourse. Instead, Moore’s post-structuralist approach posits that the individual is an agent, *choosing* subject positions made available through dominant discourses. The subject position notion contends that there is a constant processual relationship between the construction of experience—subjectivity—and positions, and positioning.

Moore’s subject position notion, of the individual actively and discursively positioned and subjectively knowing experience, allows us to eliminate the validity of social

⁴⁷ Jacques Lacan’s notions of the subject constituted in language and Louis Althusser’s focus on language as a form of domination also influenced Moore.

categories of difference⁴⁸. Individuals are constantly in a process of inhabiting a subject-position based on social experience, that experience dictates what kind(s) of difference comes to the fore. Positionality and therefore difference are relational; they are formed in social engagement with another. As such, racial (or any other) difference has no substance as a universal and constant difference. Instead, a particular difference, such as race, arises in particular circumstances of social experience. As Richard Jenkins states, “although ethnicity [or race] can be understood as a primary social identity, its salience, strength and manipulability are situationally contingent” (1996:813). As will be elaborated below, remnants of apartheid, the SANP hierarchy, and uses of the past create the circumstances, the ‘situations’, that reinforce racial difference.

Group boundaries

Employees and their families in Kgalagadi are clearly divided physically, by job rank, and socially to such an extent that there are two distinct groups that are identified by Park residents themselves. While individuals inevitably differ from one another in various and substantial ways (gender, age, experience, travels, jobs, families, etc), all residents of Kgalagadi agree that with few exceptions the Park is divided into two main categories of people along racial lines – ‘white’ and ‘coloured’⁴⁹. Of the 39 staff members in Twee Rivieren, seven of eight senior staff are white and 30 junior staff are coloured (two are black). This situation is not unique in South Africa; prior to the 1990s, opportunities were limited by apartheid categorization⁵⁰. The people now considered “previously disadvantaged”⁵¹ grew up with less educational opportunity than most whites and are now restricted by lower possible incomes. The historical context of South Africa is clearly present in Kgalagadi and has created two distinct groups who are perceived as

⁴⁸ While Foucault or Bourdieu would differentiate between ‘subjects’, ‘individuals’, and ‘persons’, Moore does not clearly delineate these concepts in *A Passion for Difference*.

⁴⁹ I use the apartheid terminology “coloured” and “white” because the residents of Kgalagadi refer to themselves and others using these terms. Perhaps my use of these terms reinforces an oversimplified racial taxonomy; however, I choose to use language and categories that are meaningful to Kgalagadi residents and relevant to this thesis.

⁵⁰ These categories were: White, Coloured, Indian, and Bantu (Black), based on the Population Registration Act of 1950.

⁵¹ Current terminology in South Africa for people who were not classified as white and were negatively discriminated against during apartheid.

different through race. Apartheid was able to achieve, as John Western called it “the power of definition” (quoted in Mitchell, 2000:250).

Apartheid was based on the notion of “apart-ness” (apartheid in Afrikaans). Using spatial strategies, “‘race’ was *created* and *maintained* through the geography of apartheid” (Mitchell, 2000:255, emphasis in original). Restrictions on black and coloured ownership of land predated apartheid however; the Natives’ Land Act of 1913 followed by the Natives’ Trust and Land Bill in 1936 began an association of land tenure with race. During apartheid, the Group Areas Act of 1950 forced removals of non-whites to allow for the creation of exclusively White, Black, Coloured, and Indian areas respectively in towns and cities. Non-whites were, by design, limited in their movement by lack of transport and transportation routes. In 1960 ‘pass laws’ were enacted mandating that non-whites could only be in particular areas with specific permission. Over time these separate, racialized spaces and restrictions on movement made ‘race’ seem very real “on-the-ground” (Mitchell, 2000:250). ‘Race’ is not a biological difference, not a natural fact, however it was made to feel real for South Africans through spatial strategies and restrictions on the movement of non-whites.

The design of Kgalagadi staff quarters echoes this emphasis on separation. At Twee Rivieren, senior staff and their families live in well-maintained one-storey, several bedroomed houses with fences surrounding the house and yard, within view of the tourist accommodation. 19 people, including children, live here. These houses line a sand and gravel road that leads into the tourist section of the restcamp and out to the Park beyond. A second road leads back to a large dune ridge and is crossed by a high metal fence. Where the fence crosses this road there is an opening wide enough for one person to walk through, and a gate for vehicles which is locked with a thick chain and padlock. Only a few people have keys to this gate –all senior staff and a select few junior staff (because of or as a consequence of this, disappearance of keys is a recurrent problem). Beyond the gate, the road winds over the dune and down towards the junior staff quarters. The road ends at a smaller metal gate with another padlock that is a back exit out of the Park (used after hours by all staff). Next to this gate is an empty building which was at one time a

staff shop and a house and marks the beginning of the junior staff quarters that run along the inside of the border fence of the Park.

This 'staff village' is often referred to by the white staff as "over the dune" as it is hidden from view of the camp by the tall dune ridge. The houses here have one or two bedrooms, low roofs, concrete floors and a little porch extending beyond the front door. In the hot summer months this is where most people congregate and socialize. Old bed frames and sometimes mattresses and chairs are moved outside to sit in the evenings. A few families have potted plants or little gardens struggling outside their front door. Many of the houses have broken windows and paint is flaking off the exteriors. A few meters of sand and dust separate each house and there are no clearly defined roads through the rows of houses. Approximately 65 people live here including, mostly young, children. This residence pattern is replicated at the other two restcamps (Nossob and Mata Mata) with variations in the condition and ages of houses.

In Twee Rivieren, junior staff travel about 500 meters to work, crossing over the dune and down into the tourist camp or to the Technical Services building or Rangers station situated near the senior staff houses. This travel over the dune mirrors bell hooks' description of 'crossing the tracks' from a black neighborhood to the intellectual space of a university that is "part of the unmarked category 'white'" (bell hooks, 1991 in Moore, 1994:80-1). She describes how difference is felt in different spaces, traveling from a space that is 'safe' and comfortable (home) to one where race becomes identity. As Moore states, "the multiple nature of subjectivity is experienced physically, through practices which can be simultaneously physical and discursive" (1994:81). Passing from a space that is lived in by local coloured staff to one that is inhabited by white senior staff and predominantly white tourists is a passage to a space characterized by racial difference.

Along with segregated spaces and housing, socializing also follows racial cues. White and coloured staff interact in the workplace only and not outside of it. After work, employees return to their homes. White employees may, and often do, socialize at a club

adjacent to the senior staff housing, with a tennis court, swimming pool, small bar and braai (barbecue) area. Membership of the club is open to all employees; however, only a handful of junior employees belong (the fee is nominal) and on only one occasion during both the internship and fieldwork did I see them at the club⁵². Junior staff, on the other hand, have no such communal gathering spot. Evenings in the junior staff quarters are filled with talk and laughter and children playing. Night falls and as the heat of the day lingers on most staff relax outside their homes and interact with passers-by and neighbors.

The separation of coloured junior staff and white senior staff is not considered negative by residents of Kgalagadi. Rather it is the *conditions* of this division that are the source of discontent and conflict amongst the residents of Kgalagadi. The separation and division between coloured and white employees is one of unequal treatment and access to resources, of dominant and dominated, with power always at issue between the two groups. Hierarchy is inscribed in the bureaucratic hierarchy and, more potently, in race. As one junior staff member exclaimed as he and others discussed several new rules, “these four white managers rule the lives of 40 people!”⁵³.

Junior coloured staff are subject to policies and procedures that control their movement and activities. There are strict rules concerning who may have keys to the gates and club, and new rules are imposed after incidents deemed inappropriate by one of the Park managers. Most recently, after several junior staff members were seen at the shop, intoxicated and in boxer shorts when tourists were there, a new rule was created requiring all junior staff to obtain a permit to use the shop at Twee Rivieren, the only shop for at least 10 kilometers. Another recently set policy required that all local residents who visit

⁵² Most junior staff joined the club because the alcohol and soft drinks at the bar are sold at wholesale prices and are significantly cheaper than at the shop. However, this bar is locked with a padlock. If a junior staff member who has paid his fees wishes to access the bar he must borrow the key from a senior staff member. This means going to a particular senior staff member's house and knocking on his door, borrowing the key and returning it soon after as he did not like to be disturbed after 9pm.

⁵³ In the Park, Twee Rivieren is known as the most political and stratified of the three camps. Residents of Nossob and Mata Mata speak of how “stressful” it is for them to even visit Twee Rivieren. They feel that Managers are looking over their shoulders and that the atmosphere is tense. As a junior staff member of Nossob said, Nossob and Mata Mata are “baie rustig”, very relaxed.

the Park obtain a permit upon entering (the same policy is in place for tourists). These visitors were required to enter through the main gate and sign in to visit the shop, petrol station, or junior staff, a permit had to be arranged for an overnight stay. This policy affected not only the local residents visiting the Park, but also coloured junior staff whose relatives or friends were visiting them. Race is perceived by junior staff as the reason for these rules (as the above quote demonstrates) while senior staff consider the rules as an appropriate way of administering life in the Park, “they can’t just walk around in their boxer shorts near tourists!” one white staff member stated. A resident outside the Park, who was aware of the new policies and was very frustrated by his inability to freely visit family and friends working in Twee Rivieren stated, “If things are doing like this, then we are still in a way where people differs from each other [because of race]”.

Residents of Kgalagadi share little. Several factors have combined to create the sense amongst staff that the divisions in place are, at their core, about race. As mentioned, socializing and space is separate and jobs are also allocated on what appears as racial lines—senior staff are white, junior staff are coloured. Staff are also different by virtue of being local or non-local (see Figure 1)—nearly all junior staff are from the region while no senior staff are. In addition, as will be elaborated below, different experiences and uses of ‘the past’ divide the two groups. As a result, many inter-linked differences coincide with ‘race’ and divisions along racial lines are embedded enough to feel ‘natural’ to Park staff. This echoes Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus*, in which a dominant model (in this case of racial difference) subsumes all other models and creates a world that appears uncontested, as “natural” (Bourdieu 1977:165). However, coloured and white residents of Kgalagadi *feel* very different from each other, and in the ways that they socialize, talk, eat, dress, and perceive their lives there are indeed substantial differences (discussed in Chapter Six). Ironically, what they *do* share is a belief that these substantial differences are based on race rather than on socio-political and historical circumstances. Apartheid achieved the reification of ‘race’, discourse and daily experience reinforce that it is the *primary* difference between staff. Returning to Moore’s subject position notion, the racialized subject is in a process of positioning and being positioned through racial difference.

As stated earlier, individuals do not experience one form of difference but many differences in any given circumstance. Amongst junior staff, coloured (Mier) are considered very different to Khomani San (of which there are three), while senior staff differentiate between Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and English-speaking South Africans. In addition, while there may be many differences between a coloured staff member and a white staff member—differences of rank, economics, locality of origin, socio-historical difference, not to mention age, gender, etc—race both masks these differences and is perceived as *the* singular form of difference in such an interaction. Thus, the racialized subject is the solidification of “social, historical, and cultural systems of signification” (Moore, 1994:44). What is perceived as simply race is a combination of many differences that *coincide* with racial distinctions.

To junior staff and local residents, Park management perceives them as different in only one way. A resident outside the Park explained in indignation that there have not been changes since 1994, because for Park management, “workers are still workers. There is only one level for them”. Basing this statement on junior staff’s “poor treatment” from management, he was saying that Park managers only perceive junior staff (“workers”) in one particular way. By referring to post-1994, the “one level” or one difference in which white senior staff position coloured junior staff is race. However, as the statement about white managers ruling the lives of coloured junior staff demonstrates, coloured staff also position senior staff as racially different. Both groups are actively in a process of ‘othering’, of self and other positioning within discourses of race tied to power and authority and discourses of conventional behavior. On numerous occasions white senior staff expressed bewilderment with the behavior of coloured junior staff. Often white staff would say they did not understand why “those coloureds”, drank so much, or littered, or dressed a certain way. The behavior of one individual was considered representative of the entire group. In this perception lie both boundary making and also a latent form of oppression.

Group boundaries, writes Fredrik Barth, are the result of “a two-way process that takes place across the boundary between us and them” (1969:16). To explain the co-existence

of distinct 'ethnic groups', Barth suggests that there are both criteria and signals of identification and a structuring of interaction which allow differences to persist (1969:16). The physical and experienced (felt) separation between coloured and white staff is, as discussed, based on divisions of local and non-local, education, economics, rank, and historical differences, these are perceived as manifest in the visual differences between coloured and white people.

Group identification is, thus, based on a process of being defined by others and by the self; a dialectic between internal and external identification (Jenkins, 1994:201). Jenkins suggests that a 'group' is internally defined while a 'category' is externally defined, however, he concludes that collective identity is a combination of both processes. Moore's notion of positioning through experience and discourse is much the same as this internal/external, self/other dialectic. Coloured junior staff share similar histories, experiences, and live and work together. They are also defined by white staff as "coloureds". White staff, on the other hand, are not as internally defined. While white senior staff live in close proximity and work for the same organization, they do not generally consider themselves part of a group or even particularly similar. A lack of socialization between senior staff families and individuals attests to this. In addition, white senior staff do not refer to themselves on the basis of race or refer to themselves as a group, however they are sometimes referred to as "white Park managers" or "those whites" by junior staff. Coloured junior staff however, are a well-defined group, as much as they may resist being a 'category'.

The following captures one example of how difference is articulated and perceived by one resident of the region and former employee of the Park, but echoed by many. In the town of Welkom, 10 kilometers outside the Park gates at Twee Rivieren, live Belinda Kruiper and her husband Vetkat Kruiper. Vetkat is a famous San artist who, with his wife as his marketer and public relations advocate, has traveled to Europe and the United States. Belinda is a coloured woman from Cape Town who lived and worked in the Park for several years. She has now lived in the region for eight years and is vocal and passionate about the Kalahari and its residents. Belinda is known for her assiduous

awareness of what is happening in the region, in the Park, Welkom, and among the Khomani San who are her in-laws (Vetkat is Dawid Kruiper's younger brother). However, she considers herself very different from the other residents of the region (mainly because of her outlook, she is well-traveled, outspoken and critical of the conditions of living in the region). She said: "These people cannot see beyond the past and try to change things. They have to let it go and help themselves, fight for themselves. I am done helping them... I now side with the white people here. It's a tough life, and this is a tough community."

I use this example because without attachment to the Park or dependence on local people, Belinda feels the freedom and confidence to speak about what she thinks. This statement demonstrates several important points. By saying "I now side with the white people", Belinda acknowledges that white and coloured are in contradistinction to one another as distinct groups and that there are very real tensions between the two groups. She also refers to the apartheid past in her statement "they have to let it go". As will be discussed later, Belinda is suggesting that this past should not be such a real presence in the contemporary experience of coloured staff. Lastly, Belinda refers to the difficulties of life in Kgalagadi, the isolation, harsh environment and socio-historical dynamics have created a "tough community".

However, I also use Belinda's statement here to demonstrate that in Kgalagadi subject positioning does not have to be racially based. Belinda is not part of either white or coloured group but instead positions herself through discourses and experiences other than race, as a consequence she finds herself aligned more closely with white staff. It is the group boundaries and collective identification, in which Belinda does not position herself, that racial subject positions are solidified. Subject-positions frame our relation to the 'other'. As discursive and actively embodied subjects, we inhabit subject positions collectively and singularly. We practice daily life from these subject positions. As such, social exchange and relationships are formed by the meeting of subject-positions. A subject's employment of a position in relation to particular discourses and intersubjective experience create the conditions of possibility for social interaction.

Frantz Fanon, the anti-colonial philosopher wrote that anonymity was a form of colonial oppression (in Gordon, 1995:43) used on the black African. This is not anonymity as namelessness but rather a state of being made anonymous by omission or by being overlooked. In Kgalagadi, a particular white senior employee spoke to a coloured junior employee that has worked with him for several years with the same level of familiarity with which he spoke to a local coloured resident that he was speaking with for the first time. While in speaking to several white staff members, it became apparent that they did not know any of the local people who live outside the Park gates, and did not know that many of these people were close relatives of junior staff members. By the same token, a junior coloured staff member is unlikely to greet a white staff member with anything other than a cursory hello. Most often the two walk past each other without acknowledgement. Just as senior staff are bewildered by the behavior of “those coloureds”, there is a lack of specificity and individualization in these actions; in this is anonymity. “Subject-positionality allows us to see the individual speakers and hearers behind the conventional roles allotted to them” (Rapport and Overing, 2000:125). However, this anonymity is the opposite of positionality, no position is offered to the ‘other’ as long as they are not acknowledged. As a result, these experiences do not offer the ‘other’ to be anything but just that.

We have established that experience shapes positioning along racial lines in Kgalagadi, however the role of discourse has yet to be explored. As shown, the remnants of apartheid—social, spatial, and employment divisions—are substantive enough to reiterate and reinforce racial difference in the Park, this does not mean, however, that these discourses of ‘white’ in opposition to ‘coloured’ are passively accepted. This resistance exists but still does not eliminate these discourses because, as Moore states, the subject (in post-structuralist thinking) “is composed of, or exists as, a set of multiple and contradictory positionings and subjectivities” (1994:55). Junior staff of Kgalagadi object to being treated a particular way for being ‘coloured’ while concurrently using this as an identifying characteristic which creates group boundaries based on race—“us coloureds”—as mentioned, collective identity is a combination of internal and external

identification. Discourses are, as Rapport and Overing state (200:125), kept relevant through personal meaning. Interpretation allows subjects to mold and personalize the intent of discourses.

Even as individuals and groups may reject a discourse and utilize it with personal meaning, *outwardly* this behavior appears to fit within the discourse; so it seems that coloured staff do little to resist the emphasis on their race over other differences. By positioning oneself within a dominant discourse, it is maintained as dominant language. As Moore states, “the enactment of subject positions based on gender provides the conditions for the experience of gender and of gender difference, even as these positions may be resisted or rejected” (1994:56). Replacing ‘gender’ with ‘race’ demonstrates the trap that racial positioning creates for staff in Kgalagadi.

Frustrations with life in the Park were almost always framed in a discourse of white versus coloured. Discourses of race, apartheid, post-apartheid transformation and reconciliation are contemporary and popular discourses in South Africa and tend to focus on linear time—‘the past’ ending in 1994, through to a present engaged in ‘Transformation’⁵⁴. Transformation is a concept that carries promises of a better quality of life for the people disadvantaged by apartheid policies. These promises have yet to be fulfilled for most poor in South Africa, poor that are no longer silent but speak through radio and television broadcasts of their unhappiness with lack of delivery from the national and regional governments. These broadcasts have their effect on the audience of Kgalagadi.

Every evening in the junior staff quarters of Twee Rivieren (and when possible, at the other two camps) people congregate in the few houses with television sets. About half of the junior staff houses have a television set. At 18:30 the Afrikaans show “7de Laan” airs. It is a drama-comedy about residents of a fictitious neighborhood in Pretoria. The show follows their loves, problems, conversations, gossip, and arguments mainly focused

⁵⁴ ‘Transformation’ is the term used by the South African government to describe the period of transition from the apartheid government to democracy. While this transitional phase began in 1994 it has an indeterminate endpoint having lasted for more than a decade.

around two coffee shops. The national news in Afrikaans follows immediately afterwards most residents watch it. This news reports on accidents, events, and politics. It seems that the nightly news has a strong effect on coloured staff's perception of rights and post-apartheid restitution. Kgalagadi is extremely isolated from national events and politics. The Park receives no newspapers, has extremely limited access to the Internet, and few people have cell phones or telephones. Local people thus receive much of their information via the televised news broadcasts.

Exposure to the popular discourse of restitution on television affects how junior staff perceive their own lives. A sense of unfairness and frustration is supported by this popular discourse. The way the apartheid past is used in South Africa to contextualize but also explicitly rectify previous discrimination is also how the past is being used in Kgalagadi. When coloured residents bring up "the past" they are actually using The Past, the collective apartheid past rather than a specific and personal experience of history. However, race is not the only difference between people in Kgalagadi, nor are negative social experiences of persecution and racism a complete representation of the past. The ways that memory is used and the past made relevant in the present, concurrently reinforces racial difference. Memory accomplishes this by positioning both coloured and white people within a discourse about apartheid. This mirrors Foucault's notion that bodies are imprinted by history (1969) and inseparable from histories whether personally experienced or not.

Uses of the past

Discourses of the past permeate everyday discussion amongst both white and coloured residents of Kgalagadi. While few people felt comfortable about using the word apartheid, most people refer to the time before democracy in South Africa (1994) as 'The Past'. This 'past' is brought to bear on the present through memory. Tim Ingold discusses how memory is embodied by subjects, that memory is history transported to the present *through* a subject (1996:202). As one white senior staff member bemoaned, with one of his junior staff in particular there were incidents when "the past would just come back". His intention in this comment was that the junior staff member would talk about

past injustices associated with apartheid. He felt this was an unfair and unwarranted personal attack. He stated that *he* had not created those situations (or inequality). In this comment is also the implication that the past should not come to bear on daily life, as stated in Chapter Three the past for white staff is impersonal and considered 'history'. I would argue that, as Ingold suggests, memory can generate present experience. Relationships, social experience, are influenced and often dictated by past conditions and the use of those conditions through memory.

When speaking of "the past", the emphasis by junior staff on and persistence of negative apartheid-era conditions of relations demonstrates the selectivity of memory. Many coloured informants stated that in some ways life had been easier under Elias le Riche during apartheid, that there were positive experiences from this time. While Mr. le Riche had been a strict Park Manager, I was told by a former junior staff member, that he had taken personal interest in all of his staff. Elias would visit the staff camp frequently and go from door to door chatting with people about their families, concerns, etc. This former staff member maintained that the Park was a more pleasant place to live and work in at that time. Elias le Riche was Park Manager from 1980 to 1995. His father before him was also spoken of as a fair manager by former coloured staff members. Indeed, several informants who had worked in the Park since before 1995 stated that living conditions during apartheid had in fact been "better".

As stated earlier, most junior staff have never traveled far from the Kalahari. Their experience of apartheid was limited to their immediate surroundings. So why is it that coloured staff frequently used apartheid to demonstrate that "nothing has changed", if in fact the types of unfairness and inequity coloured staff currently experience is a recent phenomena? I suggest that the past, as it is used by junior staff is 'The Past', the collective apartheid past experienced by non-whites throughout South Africa and its details communicated to them through contemporary media programs. It is both a shared history and understanding of the present. Coloured staff speak to each other of "the past", older staff often tell younger staff how the Park "used to be", this knowledge is often used when confronting contemporary struggles, just as in the instances the white

senior staff member referred to with the comment “the past would just come back”. This past also works to define what it is to be ‘coloured’, defined in opposition to the ‘white’ other. Uses of ‘The Past’ contribute to racialized boundary making and position coloured and white through race. The oppression of this particular group, coloured junior staff, results in the strengthening of collective identification and group boundaries. Bringing this particular past of oppression and insecurity into and related to the present strengthens the collective identification and group boundaries of coloured junior staff, re-establishing the difference of race.

Conclusion

Racial categories are no longer legal definitions. Instead, in Kgalagadi, race is recreated and reconstructed as a dominant cultural construction everyday through experience and discourse. Meaning is created through engagement with the material world (Moore, 1994:105) and a subject cannot be separated from those “material conditions of existence” (Moore, 1994:80). Junior coloured staff feel different through spatial experience and traveling between spaces in Twee Rivieren, through restrictive rules designed to maintain rank but also control movement, through a perception and use of ‘The Past’, and through well-defined group boundaries. However “the organization of the material world . . . is never complete or finished” (Moore, 1994:82). Here is space for the constant reconstruction of race as a meaningful difference.

Groups that follow racial distinctions persist amongst tension, frustration, and distrust between coloured junior and white senior employees. ‘Us’ and ‘them’ is realized as ‘us’ versus ‘them’. In this state, SANP Kgalagadi functions with disharmony among the people that constitute it, it is a dysfunctional system. Not only do these tensions bleed over to daily functions in the workplace, especially in the form of stifled communication (see Chapter Six), but this tension also works against a move towards community participation and involvement. Tension and distrust also carry over to relations between Kgalagadi and people outside of the Park. The availability of possible subject positions, and the acknowledgement of multiple differences beyond race is also limited in Park management’s interaction with community parties.

In the case of the Ae!Hai Agreement, senior white Park staff must interact with the Khomani San and Mier in new situations, in particular through the Joint Management Board (JMB). SANP is called upon by the Agreement to convene and lead these meetings and is therefore still the administering authority in these interactions. Thus senior staff occupy the same positions in relation to Khomani San or Mier residents that existed previous to the Agreement. The JMB meeting that I attended took place at the Molopo Lodge near Andriesvale (see Map 1), about 60 kilometers south of the Park. This is a location convenient to all three parties. Most of the Khomani San Community live on land adjacent to the Lodge, however few, if any, are employed at the lodge. Mostly Khomani San are on the property because it is the location of the local liquor store. At this particular meeting the Park Manager (and only official SANP employee in attendance besides an employee taking minutes) occupied the head of a long rectangular table with two Mier Community representatives and four Khomani San representatives sitting along the length of the table. During the meeting the agenda was run through with little comment from any party, afterwards a few inconsequential questions were asked by various representatives and the meeting adjourned. Of more interest was that before the meeting, as all participants waited for the table to be set up, the Khomani San members remained aloof as the Park staff and Mier representatives spoke casually. After the meeting, lunch was served at the meeting table and members ate in virtual silence. In these interactions subject positions were limited by the roles and discourses that were familiar, subject positions no different from those in past years.

Even with new situations there is still a lack of available subject positions. SANP continues to set the tone of these meetings and the Khomani San, Mier, and SANP representatives only perceive each other as representing different interests. Racial difference in particular continues to dominate interactions⁵⁵. Individuals are positioning themselves and being positioned as substantially different by virtue of many differences subsumed as 'race'.

⁵⁵ Mier and Khomani San people consider themselves different from each other. The Khomani San are not referred to as 'coloured' but as 'Bushmen' or 'San', 'San' could be considered a different 'ethnic' group, and well not 'racial', the same notions of positionality apply to ethnicity.

The subject in Kgalagadi is, as Moore would say, racialized. Discourses and experience have limited the availability of subject positions and, as a result, restricted ways of interacting between junior and senior staff. Fixed group boundaries mean that differences between junior coloured and senior white staff are reduced to singularity. Experience then reinforces the notion, for all staff, that “nothing changes”. Both groups feel that unjust treatment is meted to them by the other. Senior staff feel that they are implicitly considered responsible for past injustices to coloured staff. While to junior staff it appears, as one local resident stated, that “the way things are doing [in Kgalagadi], apartheid is still going”.

Chapter Six

“Nothing changes”: flows and forms of discourse and knowledge

1. “Nothing Changes”: a dominant discourse representing experience

“Nothing changes” is a phrase used by residents of Kgalagadi, in reference to virtually any topic and comes up in nearly any conversation concerning the Park, amongst junior and senior staff:

One day while chatting about my research with a senior staff member from another camp he asked me about the new tourist lodge being built in Kgalagadi, a joint venture between the two communities and SANParks. Who would manage it, he asked. I replied that I did not know but that I was sure SANParks had a plan. He leaned against his bakkie with a wry smile and replied, “Ha! Nothing changes in the Kalahari”. He did not believe that SANParks would actually be able to run the new lodge in addition to the facilities the organization currently operates.

One evening in the junior staff village as I sat with a few coloured employees who were discussing how the new rule of visitors’ passes would restrict their family members wanting to visit from the neighboring town of Welkom, one of their wives who was half-listening and playing with a baby piped up, “ja, well, nothing changes”. She meant that junior staff continue to be restricted by SANP.

My first night back at Twee Rivieren, a senior staff member came to visit me in the student accommodation, the same set of rooms and ablution facilities I had inhabited a year earlier. He asked me how it was to be back. I told him that everything seemed the same. I pointed out that a broom that a student had put in a tree a year earlier still hung from the branches and a floor mat that I had removed from a bakkie still lay on the brick stoep where I had left it. The staff member laughed and said “It is true. Nothing ever does change!”

“Nothing changes” repeated as often as it is in Kgalagadi, has power in its very utterance. Any frustration or disappointment can be summed up in this phrase and any new plan or idea is stifled when someone says that nothing will change. This phrase both refers to the past and suggests a lack of faith or even hope for the future. Simultaneously, the phrase implies that change is meant to, or should, occur. “Nothing changes” implies there is a negative condition of stasis and the implication is understood by those who use it and by those who hear it. Moreover, this phrase and its implications are both an expression of and constitutive of the difficulties that residents and staff of the Park experience in their daily lives.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, even in post-apartheid South Africa, for junior coloured staff in Kgalagadi, exclusion from decision-making and access to information, strict rules and policies restricting their movement, and formal hierarchies between themselves and white staff dominate their experience with the Park. Coloured staff find themselves in a frustrating trend of feeling dominated, oppressed, and powerless, whether or not this is actually the case. As mentioned in the previous chapter, on several occasions, junior staff indicated that their experiences today are not so different from their treatment in years past. The statement, “It’s like apartheid is still going”, is the crux of the phrase “nothing changes” as it is employed by junior staff.

For senior white staff, the phrase most often takes shape as “nothing changes *in the Kalahari*”. Senior staff are not (usually) local and have the ability to change parks and jobs every few years with SANP. For them the phrase emerges in response to frustrations with the place and its people and is local and particular to this park. Frustrations such as the bakkie that continuously breaks down after it has been ‘fixed’ by the Technical Services department, or the new picnic area structures that were built with slight flaws, mirroring the flaws of the recently constructed tented camp, target the actions of employees from the region (either contract workers or permanent park staff). The ever-present limitations of remoteness and isolation, and the mundane repetitiveness of daily life in the Kalahari, are considered particular to the place and contribute to a sense that stasis is the status quo.

There are two points that stand out in relation to this notion. The first is that “nothing changes” captures many of the experiences and feelings of staff in the Park. The second is that “nothing changes” is *the* overriding sentiment among staff in Kgalagadi, so much so that other discourses are not nearly as authoritative and have only minimal influence. It is tied up in the discourses of race, transformation, and restitution of ‘The Past’.

“Nothing changes” sanctions discourse on the negative correlations between the past and present, as for example, when coloured staff equate their relationship with and treatment from senior staff with that during apartheid. In this way “nothing changes” also eliminates space for alternate discourses on strategies for change or positive developments. When asking staff about the changes resulting from the Ae!Hai Heritage Park Agreement, most replied that there were none and as I asked about changes they might imagine, most respondents had difficulty visualizing any possible change. Through the employment of the phrase “nothing changes”, the possibility of change occurring is limited and the purview for static (and negative) experience expands. As such, the phrase is both an expression of a sense of frustration, unhappiness, and apathy that encompass both junior and senior staff in Kgalagadi, and a vehicle for the maintenance of this state.

These qualities of “nothing changes” make it a dominant discourse. Henrietta Moore might call it a “socially dominant representation” (Moore, 1986:166). Writing about gender, she offers the example of the common phrase ‘just like a woman’ which, she writes, “tells us nothing, but says everything” (1986:166). Condescension is implicit in the remark. In much the same way, saying “nothing changes” in post-apartheid South Africa has the very specific connotation that racial disharmony and inequity persist. “Nothing changes” implies that time has had little effect on the people or the place. Behind this phrase are other discourses; in other words the phrase encompasses discourses of racial difference, discourses of power and, to a lesser extent, discourses of time and space. As will be elaborated below, discourses of memory, history, and the past are also embedded in “nothing changes”. Discourses from outside the region, of

'heritage', conservation, and 'participation' are increasingly active in Kgalagadi and collide with the dominant notion that "nothing changes".

2. Communication: flows and forms of discourse

Communication flows, what people in Kgalagadi talk about, and the value placed on different forms of knowledge instruct power differentials and maintain the dominant sense, especially amongst junior employees that "nothing changes". One particular incident demonstrates this strikingly:

Residents of Welkom often struggled with their water supply (windmill pumps break, pipes leak, containers are inadequate, etc). In times of low water, I was told; the park had allowed residents to draw water from a tap attached to a house in the junior staff village, along the fence. The junior staff member telling me the story emphasized that these locals were drawing water for themselves and their families, not their animals. One day a white senior staff member saw this, marched over to the tap and removed it from the house. He said he had caught these people "red-handed" and they were not allowed to take water from the Park.

This incident occurred a few weeks before my arrival for fieldwork. It was particularly inflammatory for the local residents of Welkom who suffered both the restriction from access to water and the disdainful indifference of the Park towards their genuine suffering. The junior staff of Twee Rivieren, in turn, also felt the slight towards their friends and family members living in Welkom (some junior and temporary staff also live there) and were also incensed. To many of these people, as one junior staff member stated, the incident "proves that the Park does not care about the community". They directed their anger towards "the Park", synonymous with Park management but did not act on it. Instead, their passive resistance was as a resident of Welkom told me, in the future, whenever "the Park needs help with something" they could not expect the community to be cooperative.

Interestingly, this story was never mentioned by senior staff, regardless of the tremor the incident sent through the junior staff quarters. Even as I asked senior staff about Park interaction with local people, this incident did not come to the fore. There are two possible reasons for this; either senior staff had not heard of the incident or they did not consider it relevant or important. The comment by a Welkom resident that this would affect relations with the Park and inhibit cooperation between the Park and local people went unnoticed by Park management and will surely lead to further misunderstanding between the two groups. The incident drove the extant wedge between Kgalagadi management and residents outside the Park—and junior staff—even deeper. Each of the reasons for senior staff's omission of this story demonstrates the extent to which experiences and, especially, *communication* between junior and senior staff seldom overlap.

Flows of communication

The previous chapter established that the emphasis on racial difference limits the availability of multiple subject-positions, thereby maintaining apartheid-era relations between junior and senior staff. This chapter will demonstrate that the ways in which people in Kgalagadi *do* communicate have everyday consequences for relations of power and access to knowledge. I follow the Foucauldian notion that power and knowledge are tied up in discourse—both in ways of speaking and what is said. The ways in which staff in Kgalagadi talk and what they talk about reveal historically rooted social dynamics but also demonstrate what forms of knowledge are considered meaningful. In Kgalagadi, forms of discourse—communication—maintain differential access to knowledge and, as a consequence, contribute to an atmosphere of ambivalence and ambiguity among the employees of the Park as knowledge does not transfer between groups. Information concerning Park issues, personnel in the Park, and knowledge that has not been valued or sanctioned by different groups (e.g. senior staff not valuing local histories or junior staff having little interest in conservation matters), is therefore restricted in its dissemination. To use a cliché, in Kgalagadi it seems that “the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing”. I focus on these flows and forms of discourse because communication and information flows are integral to any movement towards the involvement of local

people and incorporating 'heritage' and 'cultural resources' in the management of Kgalagadi (as the Ae!Hai Agreement prescribes). Analyzing discourse in this way, allows us to see how current forms and flows of communication limit movement towards social change.

There are two daily arenas for communication in Kgalagadi. The first is the workplace amongst colleagues, a bi-racial atmosphere, and the second is at home or social events, of either coloured or white participants. As described in the previous chapter, because the junior staff housing is removed from the housing of senior staff, it is in around these houses that much junior staff social interaction occurs. In the evenings, the junior staff area is abuzz with conversation, music, and children playing. As my research was conducted in February, one of the hottest months in the region, most households would be sitting outside on their stoeps (porches) talking in the gathering darkness. These relationships, some of kin and long-time friends, were reinforced through living and interacting in close quarters. These relationships were also brought to the workplace. During the workday, junior staff socialized considerably and would 'visit' each other often. For example, I would frequently see women of the cleaning staff sitting and chatting in the office of a coloured staff member in the Administration building.

Senior staff tend to be more reserved and formal in the workplace. One staff member preferred to play a solitaire card game on her computer for hours rather than talk with other staff members in adjoining offices. Evenings in the senior staff quarters were markedly quieter. Families were usually in their houses, often with air conditioners turned on and perhaps television; here houses all had satellite television. In the warmer months, senior staff are at the 'club' playing tennis, swimming in the pool, and having drinks. This is the locus of social interaction for these staff, and not attending events at the club (every few weeks there is usually a braai—barbecue) was considered 'anti-social'.

The formal bureaucratic communication channels of Kgalagadi determine how employees learn information concerning the Park and what information they learn. These

channels of communication operate within a clear hierarchy that begins in Pretoria with Head Office where policy is formed and spreads to each National Park, ending with menial laborers within parks. Kgalagadi is headed by a Park Manager who passes information on to the five managers based in Twee Rivieren who in turn administer the staff in their departments (see Figure 1). As shown above, a racial and hierarchical division between senior and junior staff limits arenas for communication and the translatability of information. Information often does not move clearly from one level to the next in the workplace. Each department tends to work independently, often without consulting other departments. The offices of Tourism, Conservation, Finance, Technical Services, and People and Conservation are seen as separate entities. In particular, relations with local people are considered the responsibility of the People and Conservation Officer alone. The senior staff member who removed the tap from the staff house said that the concerns of local people are not his responsibility for “it is not my job to work with the community” he stated. A result of this lack of communication between departments and the social distance between senior managers and junior staff is that the ideals of Head Office do not often trickle down to the lower echelons of the Park hierarchy. The case of the Ae!Hai Agreement in Kgalagadi demonstrates this; at the Head Office level it is considered a key victory of parks and community cooperation, however at the Park level there is a distinct lack of knowledge and awareness concerning the outcome of the land claim. The formal communication channels alone are an ineffective medium for the exchange of information and knowledge.

The *informal* structure of communication in Kgalagadi, however, is more potent and follows relationships beyond the prescribed chain of command of the workplace. Such links connect the Park Manager to the Finance Manager as golf partners, or the Tourism Manager to the Human Resources Manager as husband and wife. Two of the rangers were good friends and would discuss events or information they had heard but not include a third ranger whom they did not trust. In the workplace, the two Section Rangers of the smaller camps, Nossob and Mata Mata, tended to report directly to the Section Ranger of Twee Rivieren who has been in the Park almost eight years. Thus, it is not through the formal organizational structure of SANP that most information flows.

Instead it is the informal, social lines of communication that are the more effective flows of discourse in Kgalagadi.

'Political' subject matter

Communication tends to stay within the racialized groups discussed earlier, both in and outside of the work place. This is as much a result of the group boundaries discussed earlier as it is of a history of political and sensitive subjects best avoided.

With SANP Kgalagadi there has been a history of exclusionary policies and also secrecy regarding SANP business. A few years earlier a senior coloured staff member was moved to a different park because, I was told, he questioned park policies on the San and local communities. Avoiding political topics and the retribution they often entailed has been a large part of junior staff's relationship with the Park through the years as recorded by travel writer Rupert Isaacson (2001) and journalist Sandy Gall (2001). This does not only have to do with work in SANParks however. Most junior staff, being from the area, are hesitant to speak negatively on any issue for fear of social retribution. One woman I interviewed asked me to be "gentle" with how I quoted her because, as she said, "I have to live here".

As in the rest of South Africa, issues of race, ethnicity, history, and land tenure (and entitlement) are disputed and delicate subjects. In Kgalagadi, this is manifest in the Khomani San land claim. As will be demonstrated later, much of the San history is disputed by local coloured residents and Park staff and provokes heated debate regarding descent and land entitlement. Junior staff and locals disagree about who is or is not Khomani San and what they do or do not deserve. As Appadurai states, "discourse concerning the past is an aspect of politics, involving competition, opposition, and debate" (1981:202). Thus, the Khomani San claim to land in the Park has always been one of the most sensitive topics for Park management and junior staff. Previous to arriving for fieldwork I was often asked about my research topic. Explaining that I would be looking at the current situation in Kgalagadi after the resolution of the Khomani San land claim, my most common responses from anyone familiar or associated with the Park were: a noticeable cringe, a rolling of the eyes, or a sigh and sarcastic "good luck".

These responses have as much to do with the complex problems within the Khomani San Community as the difficulties SANP Kgalagadi has in working with them and local residents⁵⁶.

Within the Park, staff choose to avoid conflict by avoiding discussion of delicate topics such as the land claim or Agreement. In each instance that these topics did arise in discussions amongst staff, it was only with close family or friends. On every occasion, either the speaker or a listener would look around to make sure no one outside the group was listening and conversation continued in hushed tones. Many junior staff still fear loss of their jobs if they argue or disagree with policies or fight against injustices to themselves or locals⁵⁷. Senior staff have been equally wary of discussing the land claim. Even with the claim now resolved with an agreement outlining how co-operation will proceed, staff in Kgalagadi are still wary to talk openly about the Agreement, as I found when asking questions of staff; hardly any staff had heard or knew much about the Agreement. I suggest that the ways in which staff *are* communicating, primarily gossip and complaint as well as silence, are coping strategies to avoid the possible repercussions of discussing these 'political' issues.

Forms of communication

As with most small communities, word-of-mouth is the most effective way to spread information in Kgalagadi. As demonstrated in Chapter One, most junior staff are from the region and members of their extended families live near the Park. The frequent contact between these kin and social networks is the primary means by which information circulates between the Park and local residents. While working with the Social Ecologist (now People and Conservation Officer) during my initial internship, I found that I acquired much vital information concerning upcoming events in the Park, park decisions and policies, and current events in Kgalagadi, simply by being present and not because I had been purposefully informed. What information is distributed depends

⁵⁶ As mentioned in Chapter One, the Khomani San Community suffers from rampant alcoholism, drug use, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, violence, etc.

⁵⁷ Because of this, some local residents and particularly the Khomani San view coloured employees of the park with disdain, distrust, and sometimes (as is the case with Dawid Kruijer) aversion, as traitors.

on what it is that people are concerned and therefore talking about. As mentioned earlier, Kgalagadi residents talk frequently and animatedly in forms of gossip and complaint.

My arrival in the Park for field work illustrates the predominant forms that discourse takes and how people convey information:

I had stopped at a petrol station in Askham to prepare for the 60 kilometer gravel road ahead, where I ran into a junior staff member from Twee Rivieren, putting petrol in his car. We exchanged greetings and I explained why I had returned. He then told me of the new rules in the Park, briefed me on who had left, and told me about his family. I drove on to the Park and at the student lodgings was greeted by three new white conservation students and a white staff member from another camp⁵⁸. As I sat down with them at a table in the shade to have a drink, without prompting, they each told me of all the business of Twee Rivieren—who had been disciplined for drinking, who was unhappy in his job, again the new rules, that a staff member at another camp was going on holiday, a new education project underway, and any other ‘news’ of the Park that they knew. Each gave their opinion of these events: two supported the new rules, and two were against them. In addition, during the course of the discussion, each expressed their own frustrations and unhappiness.

Thus within hours of arriving, and as a relative outsider, I knew of all the personal and work-related affairs of the Park considered ‘worth knowing’. This information took the shape of part news update, part complaint, and part gossip.

(i) Gossip

Exchanging stories about people, what happened in the past and what people are doing in the present is common. No event is too small to escape people’s attention, for example a staff member scratched a SANP truck and shortly thereafter the whole camp knew, but before he had told anyone. All staff experience similar exposure with any personal event.

⁵⁸ Every year three or four South African students studying at Technical universities for a diploma in Nature Conservation stay and work in the Park for a “practical year”, to gain experience in their field. These students are accepted as part of the staff but their primary identity as a group and as individuals is as “the students”. In addition, they move camps every few months and as a result, they have figured little in my discussions of the social dynamics of Kgalagadi.

Gossip in Kgalagadi occurs among the coloured staff *or* amongst the white staff but there are very few stories that travel between these groups, though there are exceptions⁵⁹. As a result, gossip helps to solidify the group boundaries of junior coloured and senior white staff. As a New York Times article illustrates, research on gossip has shown it is important in both “policing behavior in a group and defining group membership” (David Sloan Wilson quoted in Carey, 2005).

While gossip is a story told in the third person, not as personal lived experience but as heard or witnessed experience, this form of story-telling can reshape experiences to be that of the speaker or listener. In Kgalagadi individual experiences, particularly those that constitute a threat to an individual imposed from outside, are often appropriated into communal experience. The incident with the tap, for example, directly affected the residents of the house from which the tap was removed and those particular residents of Welkom. However, as this story was told and re-told throughout Twee Rivieren, it took on the character of an act against all coloured residents and employees of the park. In this way this particular type of gossip reinforces group identity and ‘us’ versus ‘them’ categories of junior staff at odds with senior staff. It is through gossip that much important and pertinent information is spread in Kgalagadi and knowledge of this type of information provides a certain agency and power for both the listener and teller.

The term for gossip in Kgalagadi, “skinder” (Afrikaans: gossip), carries a negative connotation. The people who start stories or who delight in sharing gossip or scrutinizing people’s ‘private’ affairs are negatively termed a “skinderbek” (literally gossip mouth). Obtaining information from a source considered a “skinderbek” causes that information to both lose credibility and be deemed inappropriately gossip-like. A junior staff member admonished another for telling him of a young woman’s supposed pregnancy, when that information was gained from a staff member known for gossiping and meddling in other

⁵⁹ One of these rare exceptions is the following example in which gossip both crosses color lines and ‘polices’ behavior: *A junior staff member was being ostracized among the coloured community within and outside the park for an extramarital affair. His adult children, wife, and other staff members all admonished him but he persisted in the affair. It was, needless to say, a hot topic. His white supervisor heard about it, saw that it was affecting his work and relationships with his colleagues and pulled him aside to discuss the issue. The affair ended soon thereafter, probably as a result of pressure from all sides.*

people's affairs. The term "skinder" is often used to reproach others from delving into people's personal affairs, as in "Stop skindering". The information I received from various sources on arrival would be considered 'skinder', however that did not restrain the speakers from talking freely and at length about those events and affairs of other staff. Instead, it was considered necessary for me to know such information upon my arrival. Regardless of the possibility of being castigated for "skindering", social disapproval is not noticeably effective in stemming the flow of gossip amongst staff.

I suggest that once 'political' issues, such as the land claim, have been deliberately eliminated from discussion in order to avoid conflict, what is considered appropriate to discuss is often other people's personal affairs, considered far less contentious subject matter. Thus gossip can be seen as a coping strategy to avoid the potential 'trouble' associated with talking of sensitive topics. Two anthropologists, Bourdillon and Shambare found in their research with Shona people that, "the advantage of gossip over open confrontation is that an individual does not have to take responsibility for what has been said" (2002:84). Consequently, for junior staff gossip has another outcome, it has not only sidestepped danger and solidified group boundaries between white and coloured staff but also allows speakers to avoid responsibility. Foucault's notion of discourse (1969) as that which governs what can be spoken of, that speakers speak within conventional forms of discourse, demonstrates here that talking in the form of gossip expresses what *can* be said, with multiple desirable outcomes.

(ii) Negativity and complaint

A complacent frustration commonly surfaces in conversation in the form of complaint or negativity. A focus on the negative aspects of life in the Park is common in conversation. During the time of fieldwork, complaints tended to focus on the recent rules about using the shop at Twee Rivieren or the new visitor policy, as mentioned in the previous chapter. However, 'complaint' is conventional enough to be a normal form of expression in nearly every conversation. In greeting the first exchange between staff often concerns grievances. After I greeted a staff member whom I had not seen for a week (he had been at a different camp) I asked how things were going. He replied that the drive on the sand

road had been terrible, that another staff member and friend was being disciplined for being drunk on the job, and that the new contractor working on some camp upgrades had left unexpectedly, leaving several workers without pay. This staff member was not particularly unhappy, instead this was his explanation of his day thus far, tinged as it was with negativity. Residents of Kgalagadi talk often and frequently about the difficulties of living in and working for the Park. In fact, the majority of verbal exchanges between residents of Kgalagadi focus on complaints about life in the Park.

The frustrations expressed through negativity or complaint stem from a sense amongst staff that they are subject to other sources of power and structures of authority, and a lack of control over the circumstances that surround them. Coloured junior staff often expressed that the Mier municipality neglects them with regard to services as well as not “informing us” of the Agreement. Senior white staff frequently express that Head Office does not care or understand what life is like in Kgalagadi. One senior staff member wrote letters year after year to Head Office to request air conditioning for his office which reached 40 degrees in the summer, regardless of the water cooler provided. The government must help the Khomani San, I was told by three different junior staff. Staff often pointed to these authorities when I asked why the Agreement did not seem to be working or who was responsible for the frustrations residents of the Park experienced.

I contend that in the Park there is a lack of accountability among residents and staff. There is a sense on the part of many people—coloured or white, staff, non-staff, Khomani San, Mier, etc. that someone else is to blame for whatever is wrong and should take responsibility for introducing change. During my time as a volunteer, it was usual that when a project failed, a vehicle broke down, or a water tank was empty there was always someone to blame but no one to take responsibility. Repairs or disaster management is often then administered by the Park Manager instead of the individual under whose authority the incident occurred. This way of thinking is echoed when the Khomani San or junior staff say that “SANParks” or “the Park” does not want to take responsibility for the Agreement or work with the community.

Like gossip, complaint also has the ability to unite speakers and listeners in a mutual bond of the experience of oppression, whether it is from senior staff, Head Office, or the government. These ways of talking are not only coping mechanisms to avoid difficulties associated with political topics, but are also ways to evade responsibility. Gossip allows a speaker to avoid direct responsibility for what is said and complaining about conditions of life in the Park demonstrates the non-accountability of the speaker to change those conditions.

‘Caring to Know’: Forms and Values of ‘Knowledge’

Foucault’s notion of discourse (1969) argues that knowledge and subsequently power are immanent in forms of discourse. However, this theory operates on the premise that more knowledge is both positive and empowering. As shown, speaking of certain topics is often avoided, but a simpler way to avoid this is by not knowing about them at all. What I mistook early in my research for ambivalence on the part of junior and senior staff may often be willful inattention to contentious and political issues such as the land claim and Agreement. As one senior staff member said: “people only care to know anything if it directly affects their lives”.

A vocal and active resident of Welkom asked me to put a footnote in my thesis stating that “for people here, pretending they don’t know is how they deal with difficult situations, it’s an easy way out”. I contend that it is more than an “easy way out”; rather, it is often the only agency people feel they have and this applies to both coloured and white staff. Purposeful ignorance of a topic or, alternatively, keeping silent on a topic is a way to avoid conflict.

On a few occasions respondents answered my queries on the Khomani San and their Heritage Land by denying any knowledge of it. To this Aubrey would respond that they did indeed know something and should not be afraid to speak up, after which most respondents answered more openly while some still professed to know nothing. Fytjie Kleinman is an extreme example of this. She is Vet Piet’s widow and is considered Khomani San, in her early 60s she has spent her life in Twee Rivieren. Sitting on her

stoep, Fytjie listened intently as Aubrey translated my questions for her. She replied that she did not know what the Heritage Park was, that she had only heard of it “here and there” from things Vet Piet would say. Throughout our interview Aubrey reassured her several times that I was not going to use the information for anything that would affect her negatively. Nonetheless, Fytjie answered questions minimally and did not relax until we were leaving. Afterwards Aubrey explained that she was nervous, she felt that “the white people still have control” and this makes her disinclined to talk.

Silence, like Fytjies’, gossip, and complaint are the most common forms of communication in the Park. They are strategies to avoid delicate subjects. While the information passed through gossip and complaint serves to inform other staff of important and relevant (and sometimes unimportant and irrelevant—what is negatively termed “skinder”) events and news, these forms do not encompass all that people talk about. These forms of discourse limit what may be expressed and therefore, what may be known. Talking in forms of gossip and complaint obscure the fact that talk of more ‘serious’ matters does happen. For, in actual fact, staff *do* talk about topics considered political and touchy and have very real opinions on these sensitive topics, as will be discussed below on the debatability of the past. My questions on the land claim, the Agreement, and notions of “heritage” cut straight to issues that people *do* talk about. However, talk of these issues is done carefully and mainly in privacy.

While the claim or Khomani San are not spoken about openly, the delicacy with which these topics are approached also demonstrates the meaningfulness of this knowledge. Knowledge of the history of the region is particularly valued by junior staff. When asking questions about the land claim, I was often referred to particular people who had grown up in the immediate area or in the Park, or had lived and worked in the Park for decades. Everyone in the junior staff quarters knew who these individuals were. They were considered the most knowledgeable about the Park and its activities, from the past, the present and for commentary on the future and were respected for this knowledge. Sometimes termed “indigenous knowledge”, this knowledge has gained currency in conservation discourse and is apparent in the Agreement with the emphasis on “cultural,

symbolic and heritage rights” and part of SANP’s Mission is to develop and manage the “heritage assets of South Africa” (SANP Mission Statement, 2005). However, senior staff demonstrate no interest in this localized knowledge and it does not secure any power within the organizational bureaucracy. The staff that are valued for their knowledge of the veldt, the region, and its history are employed in some of the most menial jobs within SANP Kgalagadi.

Inseparable from knowledge of the Khomani San, the land claim, or Agreement are also other forms of knowledge which are considered meaningful but are not represented in the dominant forms of discourse. In particular, all staff value veldt knowledge. Those staff members (junior or senior) who have a knowledge and understanding of the wildlife, plants, and weather are respected and admired for this knowledge. A receptionist was spoken of admiringly for her knowledge of the weather as she was responsible for gathering and interpreting measurements from a rain gauge, wind gauge, and other weather-related instruments at Twee Rivieren every morning. All rangers are admired for their knowledge of the Park, its geography, where specific lion prides are located, and the specificities of the Kalahari—the ability to spot a striped mouse as it dives in its hole or identify a martial eagle as it soars kilometers overhead. This type of knowledge fits both a discourse of ‘nature conservation’ valued by senior staff and discourses of local heritage and personal histories which are valued by junior staff.

Whether through gossip, complaint or silence “nothing changes” is the dominant sentiment expressed in the Park. In fact, these three forms of discourse ‘prove’ that ‘nothing has changed’; they are, as stated earlier, *constitutive* of the sentiment. Staff continue to employ strategies of communication that subvert accountability and responsibility for issues that have been and are still considered sensitive, political, and have possible detrimental repercussions to individuals. In addition, by limiting communication to these forms, residents of Kgalagadi are also limited in what they may know. In not “caring to know”, junior and senior staff talk of what they do know and what is considered ‘safe’ knowledge through the dominant forms of gossip and complaint. However, in doing so, there is no space for talking about other types of

knowledge that are valued such as veldt knowledge or knowledge of people's history on the land. Ways of speaking and what is spoken about limit what is known; this is what discourse is and does. Thus discourse constructs "the world of meaning" (Rapport and Overing, 2000:120) however it is not representative of what is considered meaningful knowledge (for either junior or senior staff). Instead discourses, ways of speaking, hide what is valued and hide what can be known. While Foucauldian, this is also a slight bent on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which posits that the structure of a language affects the way that speakers think (Barnard and Spencer, 2002:499). In the case of Kgalagadi, the way that people speak, by limiting what can be known, affects what can be conceptualized and the possibilities for change. Ways of speaking create a circular feedback, simultaneously preventing social change.

'Heritage Past': talking *about* as opposed to *within*

Talking about the past, Arjun Appadurai argues, is an "alternative mode of discourse" that allows for debate and division within a group (1981:218). For junior staff, the past provides this "alternative discourse". As shown in Chapter Three, the past is treated differently by junior and senior staff. For white staff the past exists as 'history' and not a personally experienced reality and is therefore not actively acknowledged or engaged with in daily life. It is for coloured residents of the park that the past is dynamic, complex, contested, and currently active in the present. As described in the previous chapter, this is a past tied up in oppression, frustration, and powerlessness, of coloured residents' lives after the advent of colonial dispossession and, especially, during apartheid. It seems to reflect circumstances imposed on them from outside and gives rise to a sense of entitlement.

I suggest that there is another past, separate, but linked, that is specific to junior staff. Beyond the racialized 'Past' of apartheid discussed in the previous chapter, this is a past that deals with coloured local people alone, not in opposition to whites. This past relates directly to the *land* of the park. It is an understanding of who lived on the land when and is connected to the veldt knowledge and historical knowledge that is valued by junior staff. In essence these are the stories of 'heritage', using the word in its simplest form.

This 'heritage past' is a contested history as coloured residents dispute Khomani San claims to land as well as which Mier families lived on which land at which times⁶⁰. These topics are debated and spoken about in specific circumstances and particular ways. It does not arise in casual conversation but instead is a serious matter of intense and private discussion, as demonstrated by Fytjie's silence and the particular care taken by other respondents who did speak on the topic but did so furtively. These are the alternative ways of talking to gossip and complaint. Arjun Appadurai writes that there is, with any group, an inherent debatability to the past (1981). Following Edmund Leach, Appadurai asserts that any past is tied up in a "language of argument" (1981:202).

The debatability of this "heritage" past makes it seem more abstract, while it addresses actual experiences of living on the land. It is not simply called into the present, as the apartheid past, but is *recalled* from story and personal experience. I was warned early on "Everyone has their own story" about the past. Each group and within that, families, and individuals have their own conceptions of the history of the region⁶¹. I heard that: "*Bushmen never lived on this land. Where is their proof of a Bushman village?*" (to which I explained that they did not make permanent settlements) and from another source, "*This has always been the land of the Bushman*". "*My father was a farmer in the Park until the 1970s*" and from another junior staff member, "*all residents were moved out of the Park in the 1930s*". There are also stories that most junior staff have heard and agree on: the Dutch man in the 1950s whose Land Rover broke down and who walked to find help but died of thirst in the north of the Park or the reasons for many of the place names, such as Kameelsleep: where the last giraffe was killed⁶².

Appadurai proposes that cultures have normative frameworks that govern how people speak of the past (1981). He argues that, "the past is a rule-governed, therefore finite,

⁶⁰ These two pasts do, of course, overlap. Much of the discourse of this territorially-based "heritage" past is debatable because people no longer live on park lands (because of a history of dispossession). Although this is a recent history—the first people were moved out of the Park upon its proclamation in 1931 and the last residents were removed in 1974—it is debated because non-white histories during apartheid were ignored or actively suppressed by the white government.

⁶¹ This is not dissimilar to Clifford Geertz's notion that 'culture' is the stories that people tell themselves about themselves.

⁶² Giraffes were reintroduced to the Park in the late 1990s.

cultural resource” (1981:218) that is used judiciously by groups in ways that accommodate their needs. For junior staff, speaking of the history of the Kalahari and the various people in it, allows them to deligitimate the present, in subtle ways that avoid ‘trouble’. Moreover, and more significantly, Appadurai demonstrates that this set of norms is “a code for societies to talk *about* themselves, and not only *within* themselves” (1981:218). It is the ability of the past to offer different ways of speaking, as mentioned above, that makes space for social change to occur in ways, as Appadurai points out that are often slow and “undramatic” (1981:218). Nonetheless, in Kgalagadi it is by talking within this reticent discourse of the ‘heritage past’ that junior staff may find how to enact social change. However, currently these ideas are not translated into action.

3. Social Change: its possibility and connection with “nothing changes”

Dominant representations, Foucault would argue, are inescapable. Even if individuals do not agree with a discourse, they may still employ it. Residents of Kgalagadi are aware that change on some level does happen, that it is inevitable. However stating that change does not happen, that it is nearly impossible, recreates a model of reality that no one approves of. All residents I spoke with wanted ‘change’ of some kind: coloured workers wanted more respect and freedom, white employees wanted to be free of the burden of the ‘past’ (to “move beyond the past”). Majid Rahnema, writing about the notion of participatory development, states that “macro-changes” are the “indirect result of millions of individual micro-changes” (1999:128). In this case, the few significant changes that have occurred have been on the ‘macro’ policy level, rather than ‘micro-changes’ in the Park itself: the new Transfrontier Park, a new South African National Parks (name, uniforms, and organizational structures were changed in the late 1990s), and finally the successful settlement of the land claim filed by the Khomani San and Mier peoples. As a result, these changes have not generated significant difference in the lives of Kgalagadi staff as nearly all staff told me that they had seen “no changes” since any of these events.

While residents and employees of the Park have a strong expressed desire for ‘change’ the particularities of that change remain elusive, and perhaps unknown even to the people themselves. What is sure is that Kgalagadi employees want their lives to be different

than current circumstances allow. Junior coloured staff desire different interaction with white senior staff, different treatment in the workplace, different housing conditions, fewer restrictive rules, and more pay, these changes would be considered progress. While senior white staff desire to “move beyond the past” and not be persecuted for wrongs they did not personally commit, and to be acknowledged by Head Office for the hard work and harsh living conditions of Kgalagadi. Achieving these changes is impossible without active and concerted effort, of which there is little. Without accountability and responsibility park staff, whether junior or senior, are unlikely to forge new ways of interacting or doing their jobs. With a dominant discourse that allows all staff to slip behind a concept that change is impossible or at least unlikely, accountability and responsibility will and have been left to initiatives conceived of and driven from outside.

The dominant discourses and their use thus construct people as anti-agents of the very changes they desire. The forms of knowledge that are valued are also the forms that are contentious and political and considered best avoided by senior and junior staff. What is spoken about limits what is known and what is not spoken about will not be known. Talk of the Khomani San land claim, of people outside the park, and now the Agreement, is still avoided. Knowledge and information tends to stay within departments and groups and is not freely shared, or requested. Staff still feel that they do not “care to know”. As a result, there is a sense from junior staff and other local people that secrecy and lack of transparency dominate within the Park. From this frustration, lack of trust, and lack of accountability and responsibility are reinforced in relations between coloured employees and white senior employees.

Discourse has limited the “conventional ways of knowing” (Rapport and Overing, 200:120) and has made social change a near impossibility by virtue of park residents’ inability to talk about what they want to change and how they expect this change to occur. Even with the evaluative ability to complain about contemporary conditions and consider them unacceptable, the limits of talking within groups have powerful consequences for a sense of accountability and responsibility for change. In addition,

although the ability to debate the 'heritage past' allows junior staff to talk *about* their group and not just *within*, this capacity is not shared by senior staff and is still subject to the dominant forms of discourse and dominant notion that "nothing changes".

Social change cannot be understood merely in terms of causal relationships which act independently of the *particular forms of discourse and the particular cultural representations* which must necessarily sustain such relationships (T. Asad, 1979 paraphrased in Moore 1986:191, emphasis added).

Talking in forms of gossip and complaint are the dominant forms of communication, just as "nothing changes" is a dominant "cultural representation". If these dominant forms are inescapable, as Foucault would claim, then working within them to identify what changes are desired and what the 'heritage past' says of the present may provide a move towards social change. Rapport and Overing isolate the link between Foucault and anthropology to:

Insofar as Foucauldian concerns have become anthropological ones, the key questions are whether it is true that formulaic limits to routine and conventional ways of speaking in a social milieu need be said similarly and necessarily to limit what is known (thought, experienced and imagined) by individual speakers. . . (2000:120).

Indeed, in this case, it appears that formulaic limits to "ways of speaking", do in turn limit "ways of knowing". However, Appadurai's "sets of norms" for discussing the past demonstrate that there are ways to talk *within* a dominant discourse while also talking *about* present circumstances. This practice exists already in Kgalagadi. Staff speak freely of what they are not happy with, through complaint and reference to "nothing changes". Now, the matter at hand is how to address the desire for change in Kgalagadi while acknowledging that the past is a "resource" that may be used to move beyond the silence.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Kgalagadi and the goal of common understanding

National parks in South Africa were conceived of in the early twentieth century as sites of recreation for white South Africans to the exclusion of non-white local people. In the ensuing century the aim of national parks has transformed into one that includes ‘all South Africans’⁶³. Today in post-apartheid democracy the emphasis is particularly on the integration of ‘heritage’ and ‘communities’ with parks. The Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park is a model for and representative of these very changes. ‘Contractual parks’ in the form of ‘heritage lands’ give the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park the ability to co-operate with the Khomani San and Mier communities within a comprehensive, formalized framework. However, current efforts at co-operative management between SANP Kgalagadi and these two communities have been criticized by many, including Dawid Kruiper, traditional leader of the Khomani San, the South African Human Rights Commission, and the media. From outside the Park there is a sense that SANP Kgalagadi is “doing nothing”.

Inside Kgalagadi, the Ae!Hai Agreement, and on a larger scale the concepts of community involvement and inclusion are distant to the everyday operations of the Park. This is because the social dynamics inside the Park are complex, intricate, and mired in the effects of history and isolation. These dynamics create, instead of address, issues of power imbalance, oppression, frustration, and apathy. Thus Park staff, both junior and senior, are absorbed in the issues that directly surround with little time or energy for communities living outside the Park. Consequently, Park operations are still to the exclusion of local people. Having lived in the Park for nine months followed by one

⁶³ Part of the new SANP Mission Statement which reads: *To develop and manage a system of national parks that represents the biodiversity, landscapes, and associated heritage assets of South Africa for the sustainable use and benefit of all.*

month of fieldwork a year later, several themes surfaced that create and exacerbate this situation, and are therefore relevant to the implementation of the Ae!Hai Agreement, they are: an emphasis on racial difference, discourses and ways of speaking limited by these group boundaries, and uses and interpretation of the past and its impact on the present.

Junior staff feel that “apartheid is still going”, while senior staff shy away from discussing or acknowledging ‘the past’. What may appear as apartheid-era racial divisions are a combination of spatial, rank, and local and non-local differences subsumed by the naturalized notion of ‘race’. Using Henrietta Moore’s conception of the subject position, the individual subject is emphasized and demonstrates that differences are both situational and relational. However, in Kgalagadi restrictive rules and policies aimed at junior staff, in addition to the divisions as mentioned between junior and senior staff, construct difference as solely racial. Other differences are moot. Discourses position the subject and the subject positions itself in an interior/exterior, self and other dialectic. In Kgalagadi, positionality is constructed through discourses of the past, particularly junior staff are ‘positioned’ through memory and recollection of ‘The Past’—a communal apartheid past. As a result, interactions between junior coloured staff and senior white staff are based on and contingent upon these racialized group boundaries. The possibility of multiple positionality is constrained by racialized subjectivity, thus relations between junior and senior staff continue to mirror apartheid-era relations.

This gives rise to the prevailing notion amongst all staff that “nothing changes”. This phrase is a dominant discourse that is both representative of and constitutive of the frustrations and difficulties of life and work in Kgalagadi. Michel Foucault’s conceptual tool ‘discourse’ demonstrates the links between power, knowledge, and forms of communication in the Park. Common ways of speaking—gossip, complaint—and avoiding speaking—silence—are strategies to avoid sensitive subject matter which have restricted both what is talked about and stilted flows of communication between junior and senior staff. These forms and flows of communication suppress discourse on how to actualize social change, to avert the sense that “nothing changes”. However, Arjun

Appadurai's notions of the past as a 'resource' which allows individuals to talk *about* as opposed to just *within*, could open avenues for discourse on social change in Kgalagadi. Senior Park staff who work with the Ae!Hai Agreement have difficulty and experience frustration with its implementation. Many of the stipulations of the Agreement are intangible and require conceptualizing the idea that the past should be part of current Kgalagadi operations; that is 'heritage' is incorporated in the land. Instead of "moving beyond the past" as one white senior staff member endorsed, or "letting it go" as Belinda advocated, the Park must move *within* the past. Several times in this thesis the importance of the past on life in Kgalagadi was discussed. Two different notions of the past, an apartheid past—'The Past'—and a heritage past as well as differing uses by coloured and white staff—as an active part of the present and as 'history' respectively. The notion of 'heritage' in the Ae!Hai Agreement, a concept integral to the entire land claim process, is based on a particular idea of the past in Kgalagadi. It requires acknowledging and even actively incorporating the past into present operations. Thus the ways in which junior staff bring the past to bear in the present is precisely the model the Agreement is advocating.

The interior politics of SANP Kgalagadi are often overlooked when people outside the Park (for example Dawid Kruiper), organizations (such as the SAHRC), or the media criticize what appears as "inaction" on the part of the Park. However, the employees of SANP Kgalagadi struggle to discredit the dominant discourses of race and inequity while operating within them and maintaining them through the dominant narrative that "nothing changes". In this framework, co-operation amongst coloured and white staff within the Park is just as unlikely as successful co-operation between white Park managers and local residents outside the Park. If SANP Kgalagadi does not work to address the concerns, grievances, and frustrations of their junior staff and implement a concerted change in the condition of these relations, they cannot achieve their own goals.

The ultimate goal necessary to successfully implement the Ae!Hai Agreement should be to reach a *common* understanding. All residents of the region, those responsible for managing the Park, those working in the Park, and those living outside the Park should

have a clear grasp of how Kgalagadi operates, what it aims to achieve, and why. The objectives and concept of national parks has changed significantly in the past century and Kgalagadi is no exception. Transfrontier status, new national legislation, SANP policies, and the Agreement compel Kgalagadi to be a co-operative authority. Local residents and park employees should understand the purpose and benefit of this transition. All local residents should feel they have the ability and the freedom to envision how they fit into this design and be able to actively and democratically express their desires for the Park. As it stands, differences rather than similarities are emphasized, spoken about, and acted upon⁶⁴.

Lastly, the Khomani San and Mier Communities respectively also have difficulty working with the Ae!Hai Agreement. Each community has its own problems and conflicts and members are also unsure how to proceed. SANP Kgalagadi however, is considered, by the Agreement, as the managing authority and both the Khomani San and Mier look to SANP to guide the co-management process.

James Ferguson, in his seminal book on 'development', states that regardless of the intentions of the developer, the complexities of each place and each people will influence outcomes in unforeseen ways:

Whatever interests may be at work, and whatever they may think they are doing, they can only operate through a complex set of social and cultural structures so deeply embedded and so ill-perceived that the outcome may be only a baroque and unrecognizable transformation of the original intention (Ferguson, 1990:17).

In Kgalagadi the outcome of the Agreement may not be baroque, but the Agreement is unrecognizable by virtue of its incorporation into a notion that "nothing changes" whereby "co-operative management" and using land within Park borders for "symbolic and cultural uses" as well as the concept of "community participation" linger as mere words on paper.

⁶⁴ For additional more pragmatic recommendations, see Appendix 4.

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APPENDIX 1



Photo: Marna Herbst

Gemsbok (Oryx) antelope, for which the Park was created in 1931.



Photo: Betsie Meyer

A field ranger at Nossob camp looks out over the dry Nossob riverbed in the northern section of the Park.



Photo: Piet Heymans

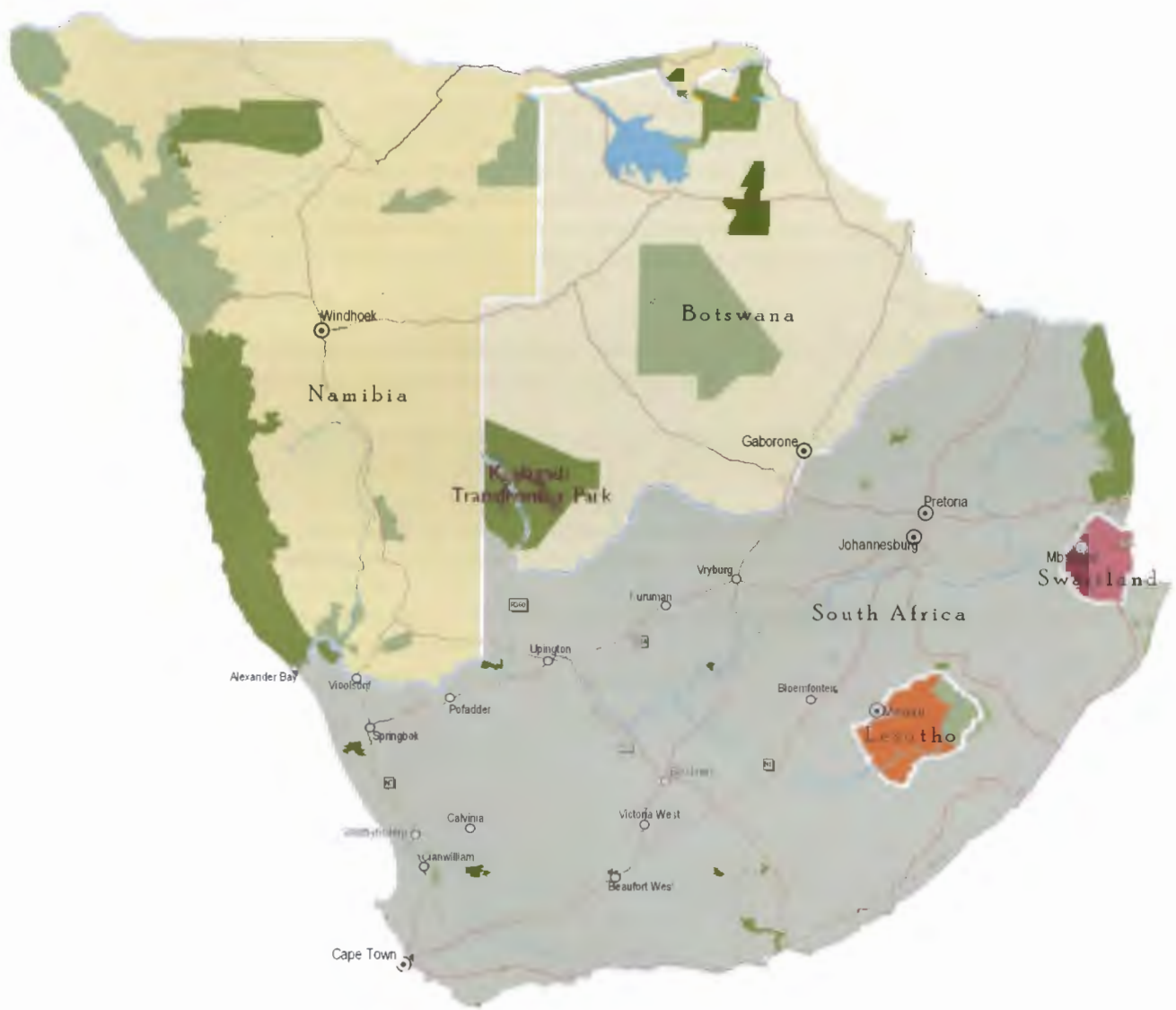
After a sand storm, a downpour in the dry Nossob riverbed. The river flows once every 50 years.



Photo: Marna Herbst

The Kalahari after seasonal rains. This southern area in the Park receives on average 150mm of rain per year, looking this way for a few weeks a year.

Appendix 2: Regional Map of Southern Africa with National Parks and Significant Game Reserves



Source: Peace Parks Foundation

Appendix 3

“Object” of a national park in the 1976 National Parks Act, Section 4:

The object of the constitution of a park is the establishment, preservation and study therein of wild animal, marine and plant life and objects of geological, archaeological, historical, ethnological, oceanographic, education and other scientific interest and objects relating to the said life or the first-mentioned objects or to events in or the history of the park, in such a manner that the area which constitutes the park shall, as far as may be and for the benefit and enjoyment of visitors, be retained in its natural state.

Grounds for declaration of national parks in the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Amendment Bill of 2004, Section 20 (2):

- (a) protect –
 - (i) the area if the area is of national or international biodiversity importance or is or contains a viable, representative sample of South Africa’s natural systems, scenic areas or cultural heritage sites; or
 - (ii) the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems in the area;
- (b) prevent exploitation or occupation inconsistent with the protection of the ecological integrity of the area;
- (c) provide spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and tourism opportunities which are environmentally compatible; and
- (d) contribute to economic development, where feasible.

Appendix 4: Additional Recommendations for SANP

The following are recommendations that have been sent to South African National Parks as an addendum to an earlier report on the Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park and Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and are included here to demonstrate other pragmatic, rather than theoretical, and necessary recommendations.

Conservation in the Park

As a conservation authority, SANP should pave the way for other organizations in South Africa through good stewardship and environmentally sensitive practices. There are several issues in particular that, with added resources, could and should be addressed in Kgalagadi for just this reason:

1. Recycling- while the possibility of recycling camp rubbish has been investigated, there is currently only one small can recycling initiative in KTP. Facilities do exist in Upington for paper, tin can, glass, and plastic recycling. Hurdles include the organized transportation of these materials to Upington and the separating of rubbish at the camps themselves.
2. Currently rubbish is incinerated. This means that *everything* that has been put in a bin is burned, including batteries, plastic and other toxic material. Exporting this rubbish can be part of the recycling initiative.
3. Electricity is used needlessly. In Twee Rivieren lights are left on at night in the camp, air conditioners are sometimes left running with windows open. In addition, generators are diesel-powered while solar power is barely used (with the exception of the new tented camps).
4. While environmental education for local schoolchildren has been very successful with the Kids in Kgalagadi program, this education does not happen at the staff level. All employees of SANParks should have a knowledge and understanding of the basic tenets of environmental awareness and the importance of conservation; recycling, saving electricity, reusing materials (“reduce, reuse, recycle”).

The isolated location of the Park and the harsh environment does sometimes restrict access to, and the success of, some services (recycling, solar power). The above are mentioned as possibilities for improvement.

People and Conservation

Most of the recommendations that I would make to SANP Kgalagadi in relation to People and Conservation are not new to the organization. On the contrary, these findings have been stated at People and Conservation Directorate meetings consistently. Thus I will simply restate what were recorded in the minutes from the annual People and Conservation meeting in 2004, as “reflections” from the previous year:

- In-house institutional challenges—staff lack support and capacity
- Low status of People and Conservation Officer in the Park
- Dysfunctional communication channels
- Inadequate budget

In addition, as explained in the thesis, relations with local people are considered the responsibility of the People and Conservation Officer rather than that of all staff. The notion of community co-management, participation, and inclusion is not yet part of the ethos of senior staff in Kgalagadi.

Staff Investment

Currently there is little to no staff training in Kgalagadi. However, the training that has occurred has been extremely well received and the staff very enthusiastic. As mentioned above, all staff should be trained and understand the importance of environmental conservation. In addition, junior staff (and reception staff in particular) should be exposed to the other camps and tourism activities of the Park. A comprehensive 3-4 day tour would accomplish this. A plan for such a tour, including a complete budget, was created in 2003 but was never used. Junior staff have expressed their enthusiasm to learn more about Park operations beyond their departments as well as the natural and cultural histories of the Park. This enthusiasm is testament to the latent energy and pride many staff have for the Park, however, the mundane repetitiveness of everyday tasks feeds an atmosphere of lethargy and sometimes apathy among many junior staff. Investment in all staff members and rewards for achievement and hard work are missing in Kgalagadi.

Tourism

Certain measures could be taken to attract more tourists and revenue to the Park.

1. Advertising and promotion of the Park are insufficient considering most South Africans have not heard of Kgalagadi¹.
2. Accessibility is an issue (as it will always be). Even as a Transfrontier Park the Botswana portion of the Park is only accessible by 4x4 vehicles. Where to acquire a 4x4 vehicle, with all the amenities necessary for camping, is not clear to foreigners (there are several companies in Upington)².
3. Accommodation in Kgalagadi is self-catering (while there is a restaurant in Twee Rivieren), a system unfamiliar to most foreign tourists. Food must be purchased in Upington, three hours south of the Park. The three shops in the Park have very high prices that both South African and foreign tourists balk at. Often foreign tourists (who pay high conservation fees and are a large source of revenue³) book to visit the Park through tour operators and travel agents, an unnecessary loss of funds for the Park. As a result, foreigners also often stay only a few days. Many foreign tourists expressed to me that if they had known more about the Park, they would have stayed longer. Information regarding how to get to the Park, the

¹ I base this on conversations I have had with South Africans in Cape Town and Johannesburg. I have spoken with several tour operators/travel companies who admit that they and most other South Africans are unaware of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

² In nearly a year of running the 4-day 4x4 trail in Kgalagadi, I only saw or heard of foreigners on the trips a three or four times.

³ A grievance I heard often from foreign tourists when I was a guide in the Park. These fees mean that wealthier foreigners can afford to visit the Park, however for the same price they can go to Kruger which is more accessible and has a wider variety of game. There should be incentives to come as far as Kgalagadi (beyond the draw of the place itself).

conditions of the roads, where and how to purchase food and supplies, and what to expect should be made available in promotional materials.

Shops

The three shops in the Park are operated by a concessionaire. As mentioned, the food prices are exceedingly high. In addition, most of the crafts and curios stocked by the shop are not local. Many of these crafts come from elsewhere in Africa. Outside the Park the Khomani San sell jewelry, beads, bags, ostrich eggs, bottles of sand and other items on the side of the road (and through the Sisen project located at Molopo Lodge). A former senior staff member and at least two other staff members, in addition to numerous tourists, suggested to me that this shop co-ordinate with the San and either have them making these crafts outside of the shop itself or at least stock these items.

Interpretation

Information on the Khomani San and the history of Bushmen and Mier people living in the Park is virtually nonexistent to visitors with the exception of a two-page spread in the tourist guide book on sale for R30. This information is interesting to both foreigners and South Africans, Bushmen and the mythology surrounding them is potent. I was frequently asked by tourists about the Bushmen and their history in the Park and contemporary circumstances. They were always disappointed that there was little to tell them⁴.

After completing a 'cultural resource' audit and gathering all possible information on people's histories in the Park, there are three types of interpretation Kgalagadi could use. Small unobtrusive informational signs made from natural materials could mark San sites throughout the Park. Alternatively, a brochure listing these sites and their locations could be produced for tourists⁵. Ideally however, a complete museum would present this information to visitors⁶.

Transfrontier

While Kgalagadi is managed as a transboundary park with Botswana, I have heard several complaints from senior staff, junior staff, and visiting researchers regarding this co-operation. Generally, these complaints are that there is still not enough cross-pollination and communication between the two countries. As mentioned above, how to travel from one side of the Park to the other is not clear for tourists. Finally, clearer guidelines should be set for researchers. The current system requires that researchers who wish to use both the Botswana and South Africa sides of the Park must request

⁴ With permanent guides in all the camps now, I know that this type of interpretation is being incorporated into their training so that they do have information to tell visitors to the Park about the San and Mier.

⁵ Currently, this responsibility falls to the People and Conservation Officer. With education projects constantly underway, meetings, co-ordination with local interests, etc. this staff member has little time for large projects such as museums or cultural 'interpretation' in the Park. Thus, hiring an outside historian or museum specialist to create a program, museum design, signage, etc would be a temporary expense for a long-term result. Perhaps, this is much the same as the work involved in creating a museum in Kruger at the Punda Maria gate.

⁶ I realize that a proposal for a museum is 'in the works' as part of a joint-gate with Botswana in the Nossob River bed at Twee Rivieren. As far as I know, this proposal has been tabled indefinitely.

permission from both South African National Parks and The Department of Wildlife and National Parks separately. Each organization uses different guidelines and approval from Botswana can take up to several months longer, discouraging potential researchers.

I feel qualified to make this commentary as I spent nine months as a Social Ecology volunteer, a guide, and a tourist to Kgalagadi. I am a foreigner but was also a resident, and colleague to the staff of the Park. I witnessed incompetence, apathy, frustration, confusion, and boredom on the part of park staff, both junior and senior. I believe that this Park, its history, ecosystem, the local people, and the staff are extremely important for South Africa. They are all players in an unraveling plot of post-apartheid, twenty-first century conservation, restitution, and co-operation. However, the subplot is that no one is taking on their role and creating or developing forms of change. The responsibility lies solely, whether desired or not, on the staff of South African National Parks, Kgalagadi.