Preface

This volume is a product of many academic meetings and a search for answers by individuals and groups of people whose contributions made this volume possible. Graduate students and their professors in the Centre for Environmental Humanities South and the Departmental of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town grappled with questions related to the militarization of conservation, the state in Africa, and the contribution social science should make to environmental challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century. The gathering of graduate students, academics, and civil society at a public benefit organization, Soil for Life in Tokai, Cape Town, lived up to the name of the organization: it was a fertile ground for thoughts. The venue provided the much-needed free space to think and share ideas away from walled venues with their usual rhythm of life. The idea of a book developed through several activities, including dedicated research and academic debates on environmental questions in Africa and the world.

We tried to expand the scope of the book to cover as many regions of Africa as possible, but this proved challenging. We are satisfied that the experiences and themes covered in this volume resonate with the ways in which conservation has been experienced in many parts of the continent. *The Violence of Conservation in Africa* is not intended to collapse or universalize the disparate histories and experiences of conservation on the continent into one narrative. Rather, it provides the frame for weaving together research findings into a coherent discussion of various forms of violence that black people and indigenous populations experience in Africa's conservation spaces. Such a discussion unmask conservation and its associated patterns of violence on the continent and enables us to see many dimensions of conservation.

The appearance of violence in overt and covert forms and in various contexts, and how it is presented in theory and manifests in practice complicates attempts to arrive at a common definition of violence. Despite these challenges, expressions of violence provide critical insights into power relations and their varied impact on human interactions. Violence in its various forms and expressions have drawn the attention of researchers, activists, and ordinary people mainly because of its devastating effects and the need to create conditions for a peaceful (non-violent) environment. In this volume we locate nature conservation into this spectrum of violence and non-violence with one goal in mind: to understand the nature and forms of violence in conservation and to

imagine pathways for non-violent conservation in Africa and elsewhere. This goal challenges us to conceptualize both violence and non-violence in relation to conservation.

The violence of conservation broadly refers to the adverse material and non-material consequences of the ideas of nature and conservation whose contestation on the ground necessitates the use of overt and covert power by the state and other actors to enforce, manage, and police prescribed relations between people and the environment. These actions disregard the world-views and cultures of people whose life is anchored in land and other natural resources. The material forms of the violence of conservation include the use of military weapons, tactics, and strategies to create and protect conservation spaces against ordinary people and those involved in wildlife crime of one kind or another; the deprivation of access to livelihoods, infrastructure, and services; and the distributive, procedural, and restorative environmental (in) justice. Some of these material forms are captured in the concepts of green violence and green militarization used in the various chapters of this volume. The non-material form of violence denotes the negative impacts of conservation ideas and practices on the image and sense of worth/wholeness of people and the places they inhabit. Such violence results in, for example, psychological harm. In this volume, we use the non-material form of violence to capture the dehumanization of black people and indigenous groups.

In this volume, we emphasize two main dimensions of the violence of conservation. First, the violence of conservation is rooted in the institutionalized idea of conservation that separates humans from nonhumans. It is this institutionalization that makes conservation inherently violent in that the establishment of conservation areas and the management of resources in the enclosures often demand and rely on the use of force or some form of coercion. Second, the violence of conservation reveals racial hierarchies at a global scale, which gives it a demographic character.

We identify four conditions that make such violence a permanent feature of conservation on the continent. The first relates to the hierarchical ordering of humans and nonhumans and the enduring stereotypes and perceptions of black people and indigenous groups. The second condition is the introduction of global environmental agendas on the continent which African states pursue through various strategies and means, including the violence against their own citizens. The third relates to the inability of the African state to regain resource sovereignty and to resolve the colonial architecture of resource regimes for their nations. The fourth condition is the neoliberalization of conservation, which enables extractivism.

Our volume is not only about the violence of conservation, but we also aim to contribute towards non-violence in conservation, using Africa as our base. We draw a distinction between resolving ongoing violence in conservation

and the move towards non-violent conservation. The distinction is pertinent because non-violent conservation is not about stopping the violence in one way or another but broadly refers to laying the foundation for various ways of caring for and living with nonhuman nature. Our view is that stopping violence, particularly against wildlife, does not constitute pathways for non-violent conservation practices. Thinking about non-violence in the context of nature conservation requires closer attention to and engaging vocabularies and concepts that shape our understanding of human-environment relations.

Our attention to both violence and non-violence is not an affirmation of the violence/non-violence duality – we in fact reject this duality as a conceptual frame. We instead consider non-violence as a set of conditions that not only prevent the use of force that leads to harm but that also render its use an irrational approach to human interactions and relations. These conditions include deconcentrating the power of the state and conservation actors over natural resources, redefining nature conservation, and placing human rights at the centre of conservation projects. We are confident that non-violence in nature conservation is good for both humans and nonhumans, and that it offers possibilities for a better world we all want to live in.

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