1. Conservation and violence in Africa

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019 news of the Baka people in the rainforests of the Congo Basin broke out with one key message: the Baka people were being abused by armed guards sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in pursuit of the goal of creating the Messok Dja protected area, and the Government of the Republic of Congo was complicit in the violence against its citizens. The news spread widely after the investigation of the complaints by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Survival International 2020; The Guardian 2020). The investigation was triggered by complaints of Survival International (SI). In 2018 SI submitted complaints to the UNDP on behalf of the Baka people living in the Congo and Cameroon about two protected area projects¹ funded by the Global Environment Facility and administered by the UNDP that would adversely impact the Baka people.

Both the UNDP and WWF responded to the complaints, albeit from different positions. The UNDP used its Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU), which ‘evaluates whether UNDP has complied with its obligations, whether any non-compliance has caused harm to the complainant, and how UNDP can correct the non-compliance’ (UNDP 2014, p.54). Specifically, SECU ‘investigates alleged non-compliance with UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards² and screening procedures from project-affected stakeholders and recommends measures to address findings of non-compliance’ (UNDP 2020). SECU found that the UNDP’s overarching commitment to human rights, which also constitutes Principle 1 of the Social and Environmental Standards (SES), was not adhered to with respect to the rights of indigenous people.

Of relevance to the theme of this chapter, and the volume, is that the eco-guards employed by the Government of the Republic of Congo’s Ministry of Forest Economy, Sustainable Development and Environment engaged in ‘violence and threats of violence against the indigenous Baka people in the Messok Dja area’ and that the ‘violence and threats [led] to trauma and

suffering in the Baka communities' (UNDP 2020, p.7). The violence included beatings, the burning down of homes, arrests and torture, and the shameful humiliation of women. SECU also found that such violence was preventing the Baka from pursuing their customary livelihoods, thereby contributing to further marginalizing and impoverishing them. The report recommended that the UNDP branch in the Republic of Congo 'must ensure zero tolerance of all acts of violence against Baka communities' (UNDP 2020, p.7). While the UNDP took a stance against the abuses of the Baka, WWF was defensive. On 7 February 2020 it posted its statement expressed in public relations language for damage control. Each of the five paragraphs of the statement and the additional background material provided amount to a defence peppered with an excuse of working in a complex environment. WWF states that allegations of abuse are outdated and ignore the reforms that the organization has made, and that there are inaccuracies in the UNDP draft report on the complaints about abuses (WWF 2020).

The forests of the Congo Basin are a highly contested space among powerful players – the state, agribusiness, logging companies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the World Bank, and the conservation lobby. At stake for the conservation lobby is the protection of the forests in the Sangha Tri-National landscape across three African states, namely, Cameroon, Central African Republic, and the Republic of Congo. The pressing threats to the forests of Cameroon and the Republic of Congo are said to be the expansion of agro-industrial plantation, subsistence agriculture³ and wood extraction (Tegegne et al. 2016). The question that arises is why are indigenous people singled out as a threat to the forests? Studies show that about 60 million local people in the Congo Basin directly depend on the forests and that indigenous people desire for a future landscape with rich and diverse forests (FAO 2011; Boedhihartono et al. 2015). However, these aspirations do not fit into the vision of conservationists in which the Sangha Tri-National landscape should be devoid of people. It is this enduring environmental rationality that underpins much of the violence in conservation spaces that we interrogate in this chapter and the volume.

The acts of violence against the Baka in the world's second largest rainforest reveal the structure and rationalities of violence in nature conservation. More importantly, they draw attention to the involvement of the state, extraterritorial agencies, and organizations in conservation-related violence. Thus, conservation violence constitutes a matrix of society-nature relations, the monopoly of power used in policing these relations, and the environmental rationalities deployed in existing and planned sites of conservation. The rationalities in turn appeal to the state, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), international and local institutions, and the donor community that act in a coordinated way to achieve the objective of conservation through various forms of

violence. Such violence is underpinned by an ideology that objectifies certain groups of people and their way of life as inimical to the health of the planet and the future of humanity on the planet. Ironically, the future of the planet and of humanity is created or protected by denying the humanity of others, especially that of non-Western societies. It is this denial of the humanity of others that accounts for abuses of local people in areas designated for the protection of nature. The violation of their humanity is predicated on the assumption that they are subhuman.

Our argument in this chapter is that violence is a permanent feature of conservation in Africa because of four main conditions.⁴ The first relates to the hierarchical ordering between 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. We conceptualize the violence of conservation in Africa as an outcome of the contradictions inherent in the pursuit of global green agendas under conditions of poverty, inequality, and reliance on natural resources. In other words, African states commit violence in conservation spaces to demonstrate their political commitment to global environmental agendas through which they gain international recognition and access to a whole range of other services and benefits. This condition is linked to the third one, namely, the inability of the African state to regain resource sovereignty and to resolve the colonial architecture of resource regimes for the benefit of ordinary citizens. The fourth condition is the neoliberalization of conservation, which is a global phenomenon with its own sting in Africa, where state resistance against well-resourced conservation groups is weak. These conditions are entangled but we treat them separately in this chapter for analytical clarity.

We begin the chapter by presenting the stereotyping of black people and indigenous groups in conservation spaces to account for why they have been – and continue to be – treated as subhuman. This is followed by a discussion of the role of global green agendas in conservation violence. The focus is on how these agendas create demands that require the state to use violence to meet them. The discussion helps us to understand the links between global environmental blueprints and conservation violence at the domestic level. Next, we pay attention to the role of resource sovereignty and land tenure regimes in conservation violence in Africa. We then discuss how this condition is exploited by business interests in conservation on the continent. These interests are best understood through the lens of neoliberal conservation. Our focus on neoliberal conservation is on how it creates conditions for violence.

THE DEHUMANIZATION OF BLACK PEOPLE AND INDIGENOUS GROUPS IN NATURE CONSERVATION

Ali Mazrui (1980) has argued that slavery rendered Africans the most humiliated people in the world as that exploitative system depreciated the value of their being. The end of formal slavery did not stop this depreciation, mainly because the humanness of blacks was and continues to be questioned in the (post)modern world. In other words, blacks are dehumanized because they are seen to be lacking certain attributes of humanness. Psychologists alert us to two forms of dehumanization, namely, *infrahumanization* and *superhumanization*. Whereas *infrahumanization* reduces people to subhuman in the form of mechanistic objects or animals, *superhumanization* ‘involves depriving others of human character and attributes’ (Waytz et al. 2015, p.352). In practice, people are depicted as subhuman when they seemingly do not meet some sort of a “human standard” and as superhuman when their lives are deemed to be “above that standard”. The superhuman is not the superior human being but one that appears magical and extraordinary and therefore exhibiting some form of abnormality. In the depiction of the subhuman or superhuman, black pain does not matter! Brutalities against black people everywhere are often, if not always underpinned by these forms of dehumanization. In nature conservation, dehumanization takes place through the category of the subhuman through which they are treated like animals that do not make it to the tables of conservation priorities. We argue that this dehumanization is a condition that makes violence against blacks a permanent feature of conservation on the continent. Conservation creates “white spaces” from which black bodies are expelled or are controlled through violence. Below we discuss the depreciation of black lives through their animalization in conservation spaces to account for the violence of conservation.

Game Reserves, Native Reserves

The notion of a reserve is used in different contexts to denote the qualities of a space. A game reserve is commonly known as a place put aside for animals for protection or hunting or both. Many game reserves in Africa and elsewhere were created as hunting grounds. What does it mean when the term reserve is used to describe spaces occupied by humans? And who are these humans? Fanon (1967, p.33) provides a useful lead to these questions when he comments that the settler ‘speaks of the yellow man’s reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations’. The naming of blacks and the spaces in which they live has been part of colonial toponymy in which settlers used zoological names for

Africans (Fanon 1967). In conservation, this toponymy blurs the boundary between wildlife and natives by assigning them similar spaces.

The construction of such shared spaces chimes with the hierarchical ordering of black people in colonial times, where Europeans regarded them as part of the fauna (Schroeder 1999). In that construction, blacks were considered part of the natural landscape and were allowed to co-exist with wildlife on the basis that they were closer to nature than their European counterparts (Ramutsindela 2004). In this context, the co-existence of black people and wildlife was not the affirmation of black people's capacity to look after nature in their own way, nor was it the mode of conservation that cultural activists and some conservationists aspire to in the face of the global environmental crisis. Rather, it was the depiction of blacks as not human enough. Accordingly, wildlife and black people were administered under the same state agencies (Ramutsindela 2004). The association of black people with wildlife meant that they could be treated in the same way as wildlife as evident in hunting.

Hunters and the Hunted

Natural scientists and circles of hunters were influential in the development of hunting regulations, which influenced conservation around the world. Cioc (2009) concluded that twentieth-century conservation treaties were in essence hunting treaties in that they were more concerned with preserving hunting grounds and certain species of animals than with conserving wildlife. The role of hunters in promoting or obstructing conservation efforts in Africa is well documented (Anderson and Grove 1987). What needs emphasis though is how hunting, in its historical and contemporary form, reveals the dark side of conservation in relation to black people. It is worth recounting that hunting by Europeans served many purposes: it facilitated commercial trade in wildlife, it was an act of conquering nature, and served as the rite of passage. Rotberg (1988) claims that the British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes aimed to use a hunting licence to obtain lands anywhere in Africa.

The objectives of hunting are relevant to the theme of the violence of conservation. For example, commercial trade in wildlife and its products flourished at the cost of subsistence hunting. Blacks who had earlier assisted whites in understanding the distribution and movement of wildlife, and in acquiring the necessary hunting skills (Carruthers 1995) were later categorized as criminals (i.e., poachers) to legitimate the harsh treatment by settlers. This categorization has continued in Africa into the twenty-first century, where subsistence hunting is depicted as an anti-conservation ethic. It has been given a new name of bushmeat to describe its uncivilized character but also to highlight the supposed threat it poses to conservation. Ripple et al. (2016) concluded that bush hunting for food and medicinal products threaten mammal species with

extinction. They identify Southeast Asia and Africa as regions where most species are threatened by bushmeat hunting. We do not suggest for a moment that this anthropogenic mammalian extirpation should be allowed to continue in Africa. Rather we want to draw attention to the historical and current categorization of subsistence hunting on the continent and to understand the violence it engenders. In conservation regulations, bushmeat hunting is synonymous with poaching; a term whose meanings have developed alongside nature conservation policy.

In the main, poaching in Africa is associated with blacks and the corruption of independent African governments, and their participation and complicity in networks of illicit wildlife trade. While there are examples to corroborate claims of officials and African governments' involvement in poaching syndicates, there is also a historical salient point that cannot be ignored with respect to hunting. Europeans have dehumanized blacks by hunting them like animals. In colonial Zimbabwe, settlers tested their hunting prowess on blacks, who were considered part of what might be termed the "beasts for the chase" (Peck 1993). This fascination with "beasts of a humankind" accounts for the issuing of permits to hunt the Kalahari San in Southern Africa until 1935 (South African History Online 2021).

GLOBAL GREEN AGENDAS, NON-STATE ACTORS, AND EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE

South Africa hosted two major global environment-related meetings, namely, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002 and the World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003. Since it was the first time these meetings took place on African soil, South Africa claimed to host them on behalf of the continent. Critics viewed the WSSD as a commodification agenda and as 'a site of potential global pollution/poverty clean-up' (Bond 2002, p.81). Others viewed South Africa's hosting of these events as a demonstration of the country's soft power (Ndlovu 2010). While we appreciate these perspectives, our view is that the green agenda cannot be fully understood through the prism of soft power alone. Global environmental agendas are drawn by a circle of networks of scientists, business, NGOs, states, donors, and institutions, and mainstreamed into domestic policies by national governments.

The elevation of these agendas to global platforms means that they carry the aspirations and interests of powerful actors that often clash with local realities and needs. This clash is made visible at the site of implementation, where local people try to resist the imposition of government policies that negatively impact on their lives. Our argument here is that global environmental agendas create conditions for these clashes. In Africa, the clash between the African

state and local people over environment-related issues are managed through violence by a range of actors. We locate this experience in nature conservation spaces to further argue that the framing of global environmental crises places Africa as one of the critical regions in which conservation strategies and approaches are rigorously pursued with huge consequences for the state and its citizens.

As the opening story of forest conservation in the Republic of Congo discussed above illustrates, non-state actors are powerful drivers of conservation policy at the state and regional levels. Most of the headquarters of foreign ENGOs are based in Africa (Brockington and Scholfield 2008), where they can keep a watchful eye on the state and mediate the relationship between the state and its citizens through nature conservation projects. Regional conservation projects such as peace parks provide a clear example of how conservation agendas set by NGOs become the responsibility of the state to implement and police (Büscher and Ramutsindela 2016). Take the creation of the Great Limpopo peace park whose map was initially proposed by the Peace Parks Foundation but required the creation of Limpopo National Park in Mozambique as a necessary condition for the participation of Mozambique in the project. The Mozambican state used violent measures such as forced resettlement to create this park even though it did not initiate the peace park project. Local people responded to these measures by poaching, which in turn produced local heroes (Vundla, this volume).

We are concerned that the introduction of global environmental agendas on the continent opens African states to external influence and control that in turn create conditions for violence (Mogende and Ramutsindela, this volume). In conservation, such violence is linked to the geopolitics of protected areas, which ‘manifests in the representation of environmental problems in pursuit of the interests of states, in how environmental narratives privilege certain perspectives while marginalizing others, and in the way the environment constitutes a global platform on which international relations are forged or even broken’ (Ramutsindela et al. 2020, p.243). In practice, global superpowers have used conservation to exert or extend their influence in Africa through various means, including the militarization of conservation. A case in point is Russia and China in Africa.

Under President Vladimir Putin’s leadership ‘Moscow is engaged in an astonishing variety of well-publicized political, economic, and military pursuits, many of them centred in one way or another on Russian access to African minerals, oil and gas, and other raw materials’ (Marten 2019, p.155). Fortress Russia – which has been isolated by the European Union for its annexation of Crimea in 2014 – has tried to remain a dominant actor in Africa through its involvement in conflict resolution on the continent, which includes sending weapons to African countries. With the permission of the United Nations

Security Council in which it has veto power, Russia sent the first batch of weapons to the Central African Republic in 2018 supposedly to prevent a new round of armed conflict in that country. While these appear part of the peace mission, Russia has extended its operation into nature conservation. The *Moscow Times* (2019) reported that Russia's Defense Ministry has supplied small arms to Gabon to assist the country in combating poaching and protecting national parks.

China has a long history of engagement with Africa which dates from post-World War II through its involvement in Africa's liberation struggles. In the twenty-first century, China's interest in Africa shifted towards access to raw materials and new markets and its strategies for political influence on the continent. Of significance to the theme of this chapter is that China's approach to Africa is to seek support from individual states at the international level in exchange for foreign aid (mainly in the form of business transactions) and supporting African states in disputes and negotiations at other international forums and institutions. The rhino poaching crisis in Africa (as many call it) is also shaping China's engagement with Africa. Chinese nationals have been blamed for poaching and this poses reputational risks for China's relations with Africa.

China mitigates these risks in two main ways. First, it closed the domestic ivory market in 2017, banned the processing of commercial rhino horns and tiger bones, and tightened legislation on trading in endangered fauna and flora. Second, it supports conservation in Africa through funds, technologies, and joint law enforcement. China has been challenged to lead the fight against poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Africa but its genuineness in the fight against illegal wildlife is questioned. China has been involved in the trade in live animals. For example, ZimParks sold live elephants to China between 2016 and 2017. However, China presents itself as Africa's ally in the fight against poaching on the continent.

Chinese and Kenyan law enforcement officers jointly dismantled an ivory smuggling syndicate in 2014. It has been reported that China donated wildlife protection equipment worth US\$ 537,000 to Kenya Wildlife Service (WWF 2019). Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is known for its shoot-to-kill policy that became widely implemented in the country since the appointment of Richard Leakey as head of this parastatal agency for conserving and managing wildlife in 1989 (Gibson 1999). These external interventions raise a broader question of the extent to which African states can protect and manage their own wildlife. Do they even own the wildlife in their territories? The next section provides the context in which these questions should be approached.

RESOURCE SOVEREIGNTY AND TENURE REGIMES

In this section, we turn our focus on two challenges that lead to the eruption of violence in Africa, namely, lack of resource sovereignty and unchanging resource tenure regimes. First, the lack of resource sovereignty. Resource sovereignty is used here to refer to the right of people or populations to participate in and benefit from the exploitation of their natural resources in relation to their interests and fundamental human rights. This contrasts with those who argue for the permanent sovereignty of states as in the United Nations resolution of 1962 that confers states with jurisdiction over resources within their territory. In our view this jurisdiction must be exercised with due cognizance of the rights of ownership of local populations within states. Resources that we refer to are natural, including land, wildlife, forests and trees, fisheries, grasslands, rivers, and wetlands.

The Challenge of Resource Sovereignty

Two factors impinge on resource sovereignty, namely, the legacy of colonialism and state hegemony over resources. The legacy of colonialism hinders resource sovereignty in that it has carved up Africa for resource extraction and exploitation. Africa has been essentially earmarked to support the industrialization of the Global North since the nineteenth century (Rodney 2018). Mitman (2017) has shown the link between the growth of the plantationocene in Liberia and Firestone with the exploitation of Liberian rubber to service America's automobile industry; leaving behind disease, environmental degradation, and poverty.

There is much continuity in this pattern of resource flows from Africa. African states are caught up in the dilemma of the United Nations Charter (1962) of permanent sovereignty of states over their natural resources for nations while at the same time expecting states to respect the rights of populations from which resources are exploited. Here, creating national wealth from natural resources works against the rights of people in the vicinity of natural resources from which that wealth is derived. Populations across the continent are still engaged in contestations of various forms to reassert control over resources that have been lost since the advent of colonization. Resource control is located within enclaves (Ferguson 2006) of global power in alliance with African states. This results in both resources' material, and other benefit streams moving from Africa to global centres of power. Global powers do this through capital flows upon which African states are dependent. Such flows are also associated with knowledge flows embedded in the science of resource management. African populations in the periphery where the resources

are found are marginalized and denied opportunities to benefit from these resources as witnessed in our opening story.

The second factor that impinges on resource sovereignty is state hegemony over resources. Arguably, states must exercise their power over all their territories as part of their make-up (Jessop 2016). Following on from the colonial patterns of resource flows, state hegemony over enclaves of value, that is, spaces with highly valued resources, has never been relinquished. Remnants of such enclaves are visible today in the form of various protected areas such as national parks, state forests, reserves of all kinds and other designations providing exclusive state oversight over resources and populations in those spaces. Many populations are left wondering what has changed from colonial states and administrations as sovereignty has not accompanied declarations of independence.

Populations expected states to grant them rights over resources in their vicinity that they had lost through colonialism. As frustrations over the denial of such rights continue this ultimately results in eruption of violence. States then enforce the perpetuation of hegemony over the resources, often in ways described in our opening story but populations in some cases may also indulge or resort to use of violence to regain those rights. State hegemony is not only an impingement on resource sovereignty by its continuity in enclaves or specific territories, but also through the nature of governance in these spaces (Mogende and Ramutsindela; Matose, this volume). Our observation is that state hegemony in these spaces or enclaves hinders populations' sovereignty over resources. We see different levels of sovereignty over resources. The first level would be where local populations have full rights over their resources with the state playing the role of recognition. The second is where populations have some rights or partial sovereignty with the state playing a larger role of oversight over the control and benefits from resources. Finally, there is a third level where there are very limited rights because of the state exercising greater hegemony or jurisdiction over resources within local populations. Understanding these levels is crucial for analyses of violence in spaces where these resources are protected. As we show in the next discussion, resource sovereignty is exercised through tenure regimes that in turn play a critical role in conservation violence. In other words, tenure regimes determine who is authorized to control or use natural resources.

The Challenge of Tenure Regimes

Historical resource tenure regimes that are not aligned with the needs and practices of local African populations are a source of violence. This is because attributes of tenure regimes left behind by colonialism – such as a dual tenure system that divides, say, private and national forests – have paralyzed attempts

by newly independent states to reclaim authority over natural resources. African states struggle to regain authority over privately owned resources. Such tenure regimes are a continuation of colonial control and practice inherited by independent states in Africa. Instead of transforming the inherited tenure regimes, African states merely undertook cosmetic changes to property relations embedded within these regimes. Who owns resources in Africa? How are the benefits from resources distributed? These are the key challenges that lead to lack of resource sovereignty and it is worth extrapolating them. Ownership patterns set in motion through the scramble and conquest of Africa in the nineteenth century have dominated the resource landscape. Resources were privatized to provide property to the colonists, who scrambled for Africa. Thus, resources provided new sets of benefit streams for those in search of new property to create wealth. Thus wildlife, in the form of ivory especially, and land set the processes of privatization and plunder of African commons.

Tenure regimes and property relations embedded in them lead to loss of sovereignty and eruption of violence in four main ways. First, the creation and maintenance of enclaves, spaces or special territories within African states, as discussed earlier, leads to the imposition of institutions, rules and regulations that marginalize and disrupt livelihood activities and even movement of populations in such spaces. Resource ownership is lost to the state and there are very rare examples of rights being returned to local people to regain full sovereignty. Loss of ownership is mostly associated with vehement contestation by people who lost such rights and are also historically situated in struggles against colonial states. Post-independence, many populations around protected enclaves in Africa continue to strive to regain ownership of resources lost to colonial states. Often associated with the loss of rights is the accompanying loss of access to resources for livelihood activities for many local populations around protected spaces. Where such access is provided it is very paternalistic, leaving many populations at the whims of state officials and other actors in those spaces.

Second, one of the most enduring legacies of colonial practices of resource tenure lies in the disruption of commons and the provision systems embedded within that. Despite attempts to privatize most commons in Africa, commons and communal forms of tenure are still prevalent and resilient (Matose et al. 2019). There are many examples including the Baka story in this chapter of populations resisting the privatization of communal tenure regimes. The state has continued to treat rural populations in paternalistic ways and intrude in the management and control of resources.

Third, most African communal areas are *de jure* state lands or property which gives states oversight over resources in those spaces especially where high value resources are found. Even for communal spaces, where the value of resources changes, such as rangelands in the case of the Maasai in Kenya

and Basarwa in Botswana, it often leads to the marginalization of indigenous people in those areas. In turn, such marginalization usurps the sovereignty that such populations would have enjoyed over generations, thereby resulting in the manifestation of violence. Violence erupts from populations attempting to regain access to resources they lost to the state and multinational companies (such as the Herakles Farms Company's oil palm plantation project in south west Cameroon). The AmaDiba case in the Eastern Cape (South Africa) also illustrates the violence of international companies against local populations, in this case an Australian titanium mining company against the rights to land for eco-tourism-based development (De Wet 2011).

Fourth, the imposition of resource tenure regimes in Africa leads to the eruption of violence. This is partly related to state hegemony in spaces and areas with resources of value to the state such that power is exercised through hegemony rather than through negotiation. Rarely are spaces or territory ever found in Africa that were uninhabited or accessed for complex provision systems such as have been retained by hunter-gatherer, Baka, Maasai, Touareg. There is a long history of misunderstanding dating back to colonial conquest of these complex resource ownership and provision systems amongst these populations, for example.

In both these four challenges of tenure regimes, violence develops as states in Africa continue with practices that have not transformed the resource landscape in ways that allow for the provisioning of populations that align with practices that have been tried over generations. Instead, there is continued imposition of resource tenure regimes that are a vestige of colonial practice. Neoliberalism has reinforced these regimes as a condition for maximizing profit in conservation spaces.

THE AFRICAN STATE AND THE NEOLIBERALIZATION OF CONSERVATION

Violence in conservation has also persisted in Africa through neoliberal conservation. We can best understand relations between neoliberalism, conservation, and violence through the lens of policy changes in conservation from fortress to community-based natural resources management (CBNRM), and back. Fortress conservation was introduced in the US and Europe based on the model of managing nature reserves as wilderness areas (Hutton et al. 2005). But, when the concept landed on the shores of Africa, it was tied with the exploitation of resources, colonial capital, and the violent treatment of people residing in resource-rich areas. Such violence involved evictions and the criminalization of consumptive resource users (Brockington et al. 2008; Kwashirai 2009). Local people contested violence and the exclusion of their rights from the beginning; making it increasingly difficult to manage as large parts of

Africa obtained their independence from colonial rule (Hutton et al. 2005). Gradually, fortress conservation was replaced by CBNRM, which, since the 1990s, has focused on addressing the human costs of violent exclusionary policies embodied in fortress conservation (Dressler et al. 2010). The turn to CBNRM coincided with existing interests in neoliberalism, an economic philosophy and policy direction towards market mechanisms as an alternative to state regulation (Ahebwa et al. 2012).

The logics of neoliberalism were again produced and packaged outside the shores of Africa. Foreign as it was, neoliberalism was ostensibly meant to “strengthen” CBNRM, on the basis that local people were more likely motivated to look after resources only if they obtained some kind of economic benefit from conservation (Dressler and Roth 2011). In theory, this double dividend principle would ensure that in return for their management roles, local people would benefit through their direct involvement in eco-tourism such as was envisaged in Zimbabwe’s Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) (Hulme and Murphree 2001), or indirectly through employment opportunities. Architects of neoliberalism envisioned a win-win outcome that would augment CBNRM in replacing command and control resource governance regimes, while benefiting conservation and people’s development (Dressler and Roth 2011).

How neoliberal conservation has operated in Africa, has, however, not been precisely according to its original script. Despite initial extravagant claims of successes of such neoliberal conservation interventions, increasingly such successes are being questioned. Even the so venerated CAMPFIRE programme fell short, and quite early, of achieving win-win goals (Dzingirai 1995). What neoliberal conservation has instead done is to return to the old colonial template of commodification of nature with dire consequences for local people. In particular, the market-based mechanism has seen the proliferation of dominant economic activity in conservation areas (Brockington et al. 2008; Ahebwa et al. 2012), specifically characterized by the creation of material spaces for economic investments (Brockington and Duffy 2011; Massé and Lunstrum 2016). By its nature, any kind of economic activity comes with competition and jostling amongst players seeking to be strategically placed and better positioned for profits. As in the past, on account of disproportionate power endowments amongst actors, such competition has favoured elitist interests. Rather than inviting the participation of people in conservation-based economic activities, what is unfolding in Africa’s resource-rich frontiers is a resurgence of exclusion politics. Resource politics rearranges power relations to ensure that powerful actors such as private organizations and NGOs, often fronted by the state, control how resources are conserved, extracted, and how profits are made and shared.

Such control is characterized by structural coercion, manipulation, tokenism, and extreme forms of direct violence. Using the case of the Maloti–Drakensberg transfrontier project in South Africa, Büscher and Dressler (2012) show how, in the production of economic landscapes, powerful business people backed by the state and international NGOs often use systematic threats to coerce people to enter into business partnerships whose transactions they will never be part of. In the worst cases, people are altogether not involved. Examples abound, but the economic significance of Mozambique’s Greater Lebombo Conservancy (GLC) is instructive. The GLC has created powerful networks of state and private actors with mutual interest in profiteering from wildlife tourism. These economic interests have been legitimized by logics of resource securitization, and achieved by violent exclusionary tactics involving the militarization of conservation (Massé and Lunstrum 2016). Something similar is unfolding in Tanzania where expatriate eco-tourism investors are appropriating land for capital accumulation and then using systematic business models to undermine existing local land rights (Bluwstein 2017).

The state’s role in the creation of new conservation spaces for capital investment deserves attention, as it is the state that grants operating permits and promotes economic investment. However, once granted operating leases, private investors are then partnering with the state to implement violent exclusionary conservation. For example, Elephant Eye Lodge, a subsidiary of South African-based Jenman Safaris operating in Zimbabwe’s Sikumi Forest Reserve, is partnering with the state in implementing militarized anti-poaching operations. The lodge management has donated military boots for forest guards, ammunition and incentives like poacher’s bonuses, in support of the state’s anti-poaching efforts. Such alliances have meant that resource-rich frontiers become an economic preserve for powerful actors and violence as a means of advancing and protecting such interests. What states are doing with respect to capital accumulation is to explore means of intensifying economic activity. Returning to the Zimbabwean example, amassing wealth from conservation was initially with biodiversity management in mind whereby proceeds were ploughed back to conservation initiatives (Matose 1997). The economic crisis in Zimbabwe has, however, seen state agents turning to resources for economic survival. With reduced or no funding coming from the treasury, selling conservation has become an economic activity the state undertakes as a matter of life and death. Violent resource management has in turn increased, legitimized by threats of poaching and wildlife trafficking, to create a space in which the state can make a profit (Mushonga 2018). Importantly, we see how neoliberal conservation is entangled with broader political economies in which violence then sits at the intersection of biodiversity conservation and the economic survival of state agents.

NGOs are also complicit in the use and sustenance of violence as a policy option to protect elitist interests in Africa. For ulterior motives to fundraise for conservation and their operations, NGOs opportunistically play the role of promoting neoliberal conservation and its concomitant violent traits. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Marijen (this volume) shows that the Virunga Foundation, a British NGO linked to the Belgian government, has, with financial support from the European Commission, taken over the control of Virunga National Park through a public-private partnership negotiated by the state body in 2015 and lasting until 2040. Marijen importantly highlights how such takeover has resulted in increased militarization of Virunga National Park. Another recent example is the WWF–Zimbabwe’s Hwange Sanyati Biological Corridor Project (HSBCP) implemented between 2015 and 2019, covering the Zimbabwean side of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation initiative. The project received US\$ 6.4 million from the Global Environment Fund (WWF 2021) to partner with three environmental state organizations in achieving a self-sustaining wildlife estate, and to promote community involvement in conservation (Government of Zimbabwe 2014). WWF led the project by supporting state-led coercive conservation, particularly the militarization of conservation (Mushonga 2018). It also began positioning state institutions to benefit from carbon markets by piloting REDD+ projects inside state protected areas, oddly where local communities are excluded by military means.

Similar tactics have been picked up in the role played by the Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation area. The PPF’s strategy to achieve the ambitious vision of creating mega ecotourism-based economic zones and promoting regional peace through conservation has been criticized as an entirely egocentric and elitist act of green violence inconsistent with the very essence of peace that the Foundation ought to embody (Büscher and Ramutsindela 2016). So, the role of NGOs has been to act as a catalyst of state-led capitalist conservation. But we also do not overlook how NGOs become part of the complex web of conservation capital, and the overall effect this has on how conservation violence is perpetuated across Africa.

It is important that we also acknowledge local communities as an important constituency of the neoliberal conservation discourse. It is through the exclusion of these local people from meaningful economic gains that we understand the anatomy of violence and why such violence is a permanent feature of conservation in Africa. The chapters in this volume examine the composition of violence more closely. We acknowledge that although local communities are often perceived as weak within the power structures of neoliberal conservation, and the recipients of violence, they have the agency to fight back in subtle and direct ways. After Scott (1985) and Giddens (1984), we argue that the relationship between the powerful and weak is complex as the so-called

weak often have agency to extricate themselves from situations that threaten their livelihoods. We view the relationship between violence and resistance as a zero-sum product. Thus, an increase in violence triggers the concomitant rise in covert and overt resistance by local people. Such resistance can involve complicit alliances between local people and commercial poachers to fight the state and its conservation allies. Continuous violence then becomes a product of a complex power matrix, and access relationships fuelled by contestations over gains from conservation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We are mindful that African states are dissimilar in many ways, including resource endowment and capabilities. Nonetheless, approaches to conservation on the continent show similar traits of violence. These traits are uncovered by paying attention to at least three important aspects of violence on the continent. First, there is a need to understand the matrix of violence in colonial and post-independence contexts and to appropriately weigh each component of such matrix. Second, the role of the state in Africa in violent conservation should be understood from the vantage point of global environmental agendas and their consequences on the state and ordinary people. These roles are not unique to African states, but socio-political, economic, and environmental conditions affect them in particular ways. Third, violence against black bodies says something about being black in the world, including conservation spaces.

We concede that restoring the dignity of black people and indigenous groups in conservation spaces cannot be accomplished by African states alone as many conservation projects are conceived, directed, and funded by external actors. Our view is that conservation itself should be humanized; meaning human wellbeing should be placed at the centre of conservation policy and practice, and that the humanity of those involved in violence against others should be restored. Africa must, therefore, take the lead and use the common guiding principles of human values of *ubuntu* that continue to define people on the continent. Violence in conservation dehumanizes all the parties involved; the victim, the perpetrator, and the resources (involved), and this does not augur well for conservation in Africa. We return to this theme in Part IV of this book, where we suggest conditions for non-violent conservation. For now, we first explore the dimensions of conservation violence in the chapters that follow.

NOTES

1. The UNDP/Global Environment Facility (GEF) Integrated and Transboundary Conservation of Biodiversity in the Basins of the Republic of Cameroon Project (GEF ID number 9155) in relation to the Nki National Park in Cameroon and

- UNDP/GEF Integrated and Transboundary Conservation of Biodiversity in the Basins of the Republic of Congo Project (GEF ID number 9159) supporting the creation of a new protected area, Messok Dia in the Congo (UNDP 2019).
2. The Social and Environmental Standards came into effect on 1 January 2015 and aim to strengthen the social and environmental outcomes of UNDP projects; avoid adverse impacts on people and the environment affected by projects; minimize, mitigate, and manage adverse impacts where avoidance is not possible; strengthen UNDP and partner capacities for managing social and environmental risks; and ensure full and effective stakeholder engagement, including through a mechanism to respond to complaints from project-affected people (UNDP 2021).
 3. The threat of subsistence agriculture is associated with poverty and population growth, low access to agricultural inputs, absence of national land use plan, and the potential rise in food prices (Tegegne et al. 2016).
 4. We are aware there are many conditions that lead to conservation violence, but we selected these four as a starting point and to engage with the themes reflected in chapters presented in this volume.

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