

# GREEN VIOLENCE: RHINO POACHING AND THE WAR TO SAVE SOUTHERN AFRICA'S PEACE PARKS

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## ABSTRACT

Over a thousand rhinos were killed in 2013 and 2014 as the poaching crisis in Southern Africa reached massive proportions, with major consequences for conservation and other political dynamics in the region. The article documents these dynamics in the context of the ongoing development and establishment of “peace parks”: large conservation areas that cross international state boundaries. The rhino-poaching crisis has affected peace parks in the region, especially the flagship Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park between South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In order to save both peace parks and rhinos, key actors such as the South African government, the Peace Parks Foundation, and the general public responded to the poaching crisis with increasingly desperate measures, including the deployment of a variety of violent tactics and instruments. The article critically examines these methods of ‘green violence’ and places them within the broader historical and contemporary contexts of violence in the region and in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. It concludes that attempting to save peace parks through ‘green violence’ represents a contradiction, but that this contradiction is no longer recognized as such, given the historical positioning of peace parks in the region and popular discourses of placing poachers in a ‘space of exception’.

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THE RHINO-POACHING CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA became a major national and international drama in 2013 when the number of rhinos poached reached 1,004. It seemed to represent the crossing of a threshold, engendering feelings of rage, retribution, and a stream of calls to action by the public, conservation agencies, and many others. In turn, the poaching crisis

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severely changed general conservation efforts, with budgets being redirected to tackle what was increasingly referred to as the ‘war on poaching’.<sup>1</sup> This article places the ‘war on poaching’ in a broader political-economic and historical perspective in order to provide a deeper understanding of why many actors responded to the poaching crisis with what we call ‘green violence’: the deployment of violent instruments and tactics towards the protection of nature and various ideas and aspirations related to nature conservation.

In doing so, we pay particular attention to efforts to promote “peace parks” in the Southern African region. Peace parks are large conservation areas that cross international state boundaries and are intended to save biodiversity, enable community development, and lead to international cooperation and peace as a result of countries working together in joint institutions. Since the mid-1990s, peace parks have been at the centre of regional conservation efforts, and a massive amount of international and national funding has gone into making them a success.<sup>2</sup> Following the cessation of interest in and funding for community-based conservation by donor agencies, peace parks have been portrayed as the ‘telos’ of conservation: conservation the way it ideally should be.<sup>3</sup> One of the staunchest supporters of and fundraisers for peace parks, the NGO Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), even refers to them as ‘the global solution’.<sup>4</sup> It is this ‘global solution’ or ‘telos’ of conservation that is now under severe pressure because of the rhino-poaching crisis. According to the PPF,

Southern Africa’s competitive advantage in ecotourism is its wildlife, with a very large number of livelihoods dependent on the industry. Wildlife crime has now reached a level where it is threatening the continued existence of the region’s transfrontier conservation areas.<sup>5</sup>

The rhino-poaching crisis is particularly painful for the PPF. The Foundation has been at the centre of efforts to establish and implement

1. Interview, senior Kruger Park official, Skukuza, 13 February 2014; Interview, director of private anti-poaching company, Hoedspruit, 11 February 2014; Participatory observation on trip with field rangers, March 2014. This is not a new phenomenon. Rosaleen Duffy, *Killing for conservation: Wildlife policy in Zimbabwe* (James Currey, Oxford, 2000) and Roderick Neumann, ‘Moral and discursive geographies in the war for biodiversity in Africa’, *Political Geography* 23 (2004), pp. 813–37, describe similar processes as they took place in the 1980s and 1990s.

2. Maano Ramutsindela, *Transfrontier conservation in Africa: At the confluence of capital, politics and nature* (CABI, Wallingford, 2007); Bram Büscher, *Transforming the frontier: Peace parks and the politics of neoliberal conservation in Southern Africa* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2013).

3. Bram Büscher, ‘Seeking telos in the “transfrontier”: Neoliberalism and the transcending of community conservation in Southern Africa’, *Environment and Planning A* 42, 3 (2010), pp. 644–60.

4. Peace Parks Foundation, ‘Peace Parks Foundation website’, <[www.peaceparks.org](http://www.peaceparks.org)> (18 November 2014).

5. The PPF concedes that ‘emergency interventions to combat wildlife crime overshadowed’ their activities in 2014. Peace Parks Foundation, ‘Message from the chairman and the CEO’ (Peace Parks Foundation Annual Review, 2012), pp. 1–2.

peace parks across Southern Africa. We argue that much of PPF's work has been undone by the poaching crisis – not just at the seams, but at the core of the concept itself.<sup>6</sup> We show that saving Southern Africa's peace parks is becoming, ironically, an increasingly violent affair. Extending the concept of 'green militarization'<sup>7</sup> into a broader concept of 'green violence', our analysis builds on longer histories of violence and militarization in the region and its conservation areas. As the PPF, the South African government, and a vocal public that appears to be mostly white fear that the poaching crisis will decimate an iconic species and undo the peace parks project, we show that all three groups of actors engage in activities that go against the ideas of peace and harmony that peace parks are supposed to embody. Moreover, we argue that two factors help to legitimize and encourage this green violence. The first is the historical positioning of peace parks in the region as the 'telos' of conservation, with little consideration of the region's violent past, while the second is popular discourses that place poachers in a 'space of exception' where their right to life no longer applies.<sup>8</sup> As a result of these two factors, the contradiction of using green violence to save peace parks is not recognized by many actors.

Our argument is based on interviews carried out in South Africa from January to May 2014, as well as research carried out on and in relation to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) between South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe over the last ten to fifteen years by both authors.<sup>9</sup> The GLTP is at the centre of both the rhino-poaching crisis and the peace parks agenda. The Kruger National Park, as one of the main parks comprising the GLTP, holds the largest rhino population globally and has therefore become the main target of poachers. The majority of foreign nationals involved in rhino poaching are said to be Mozambicans,<sup>10</sup> and Elizabeth Lunstrum observed that some of the areas from which several Mozambican communities were displaced during the creation of the GLTP

6. This was already happening; see William Wolmer, 'Transboundary conservation: The politics of ecological integrity in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, 1 (2003), pp. 261–78; Rosaleen Duffy, 'The potential and pitfalls of global environmental governance: The politics of transfrontier conservation areas in southern Africa', *Political Geography* 25 (2006), pp. 89–112; Büscher, 'Seeking telos'; Jessica Milgroom and Marja Spierenburg, 'Induced volition: Resettlement from the Limpopo National Park, Mozambique', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26, 4 (2008), pp. 435–48; Büscher, 'Transforming the frontier'.

7. Elizabeth Lunstrum, 'Green militarization: Anti-poaching efforts and the spatial contours of Kruger National Park', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, 4 (2014), pp. 816–32.

8. Giorgio Agamben, *State of exception* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 2005).

9. This includes eight months of field research by Bram Büscher between January 2012 and May 2014 and ongoing research by Maano Ramutsindela.

10. South African Department of Environmental Affairs, 'South Africa and Mozambique agree to improved cooperation on combating rhino poaching within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area', media release (15 June 2013), Pretoria.

'have become important sites for recruiting poachers'.<sup>11</sup> According to retired South African Defence Force Major General Johan Jooste, who leads anti-poaching operations in the Kruger National Park, 77 poachers were 'neutralized' in Mozambique in 2014.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the GLTP has always been the flagship peace park. Therefore, rhino poaching and its consequences not only threaten the GLTP but also potentially the entire peace parks project in the region, as peace parks are sliding into 'war parks'.

The first section of the article presents a brief discussion of the history of conservation and violence in the region, followed by a reinterpretation of the origins of peace parks, which emphasizes how the South African government and proponents of peace parks have avoided engaging with this violent history. The article then analyses three dimensions of green violence employed in the defence of peace parks: material, social, and discursive green violence.

### *Conservation and violence in Southern Africa*

The ongoing militarization of the Kruger National Park and the war against poachers in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park should be understood in the broader context of the genealogy of violence in Southern Africa, particularly the violence associated with liberation struggles and ideologically divisive Cold War politics. Pretoria's counter-revolutionary strategy and the consequent militarization of the struggle in Southern Africa sidelined socio-economic change and immersed South Africa and Rhodesia in the 'international defence and intelligence community'.<sup>13</sup> The consequent hardships that the region experienced in the 1980s were, according to John Daniel, among 'the greatest crimes of the twentieth century'.<sup>14</sup> We briefly recount this history in order to situate the connections between political violence, wildlife conservation, and the emergence of peace parks.

The so-called war against communism in Southern Africa had important links with nature conservation. In the 1980s, anti-poaching measures brought the relationship between conservation organizations and agencies and militarization in the region into public scrutiny focusing on Operation

11. Lunstrum, 'Green militarization', p. 821; see also Milgroom and Spierenburg, 'Induced volition'; Jessica Milgroom, *Elephants of democracy: An unfolding process of resettlement in the Limpopo National Park* (Wageningen University, unpublished PhD thesis, 2012); Elizabeth Lunstrum, 'Articulated sovereignty: Extending Mozambican state power through the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park', *Political Geography* 36 (2013), pp. 1–11.

12. Johan Jooste, 'KNP anti-poaching status' (Seminar on wildlife in crisis, University of Cape Town, 18 May 2015).

13. Sue Onslow, 'The cold war in Southern Africa: white power, black liberation and external intervention', in Sue Onslow (ed.), *Cold War in Southern Africa: White power, black liberation* (Routledge, London, 2009), p. 13.

14. John Daniel, 'Racism, the Cold War and South Africa's regional security strategies, 1948–1990', in Sue Onslow (ed.), *Cold War in Southern Africa*, p. 50.

Lock – a codename for undercover operations by a British private military company, KAS Enterprise. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the first president of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International, and John Hanks<sup>15</sup> were instrumental in organizing Operation Lock.<sup>16</sup> KAS activities were financed by private money that was channelled through the Southern African Nature Foundation, a local arm of WWF.<sup>17</sup> Using its base in the suburb of Hatfield (Pretoria), Operation Lock gathered intelligence while training, equipping, and working with the anti-poaching units of conservation agencies in Southern Africa in an effort to combat the illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn.<sup>18</sup> Prior to this operation, the apartheid state was giving military support to ‘anti-government insurrectionary forces, namely, the Uniao Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in Angola and the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO)’ in Mozambique as part of South Africa’s strategy to destabilize the region.<sup>19</sup> In pursuit of that strategy the South African Military Intelligence Division was involved in smuggling ivory and rhino horn to support UNITA’s operations.<sup>20</sup> The involvement of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in this illicit trade ‘was sanctioned by General Magnus Malan, at that time the Commander-in-Chief of the SADF’.<sup>21</sup> Members of the Military Intelligence Division were also involved in Operation Lock.<sup>22</sup> Our point here is that poaching and anti-poaching were integral to South Africa’s regional destabilization programme.<sup>23</sup>

Significantly, the war against communism, the regional spread of conservation efforts, and the involvement of conservation groups in that war interwove poaching and liberation struggles, with game rangers often conflating liberation armies and poachers in order to maintain conservation areas as white territories. For example, take the famous conservationist Nick Steele, who networked ‘with all kinds of security-related organizations and security-oriented like-minded people inside and outside South Africa, who all used

15. John Hanks became the first Chief Executive Officer of the PPF in 1997.

16. John Hanks, *Operation Lock and the war on rhino poaching* (Penguin Random House, Cape Town, 2015).

17. John Hanks, *Operation Lock*.

18. Hanks, *Operation Lock*; Stephen Ellis, ‘Of elephants and men: Politics and nature conservation in South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, 1 (1994), pp. 53–69.

19. Ellis, ‘Of elephants and men’, p. 56.

20. Kumleben Commission, *Report of the Chairman, M. E. Kumleben, commission of inquiry into the alleged smuggling of and illegal trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn in South Africa* (Kumleben Commission, Durban, 1996). This one-person commission was established by President Nelson Mandela. See also Raymond Bonner, *At the hand of man: Peril and hope for Africa’s wildlife* (Vintage Books, New York, NY, 1993); Marja Spierenburg and Harry Wels, ‘Conservative philanthropists, royalty and business elites in nature conservation in Southern Africa’, *Antipode* 42, 3 (2010), pp. 647–70.

21. Kumleben Commission, ‘Report of the chairman’, p. 102.

22. Hanks, *Operation Lock*.

23. See Rosaleen Duffy, *Killing for conservation*.

the discourse of the need for military-style conservation and preservation of Africa's wildlife, and particularly the rhino and elephant'.<sup>24</sup> This conflation mirrored apartheid's stereotypes about blacks as poachers, which was itself rooted in colonialists' encounters and competition with black hunters.<sup>25</sup>

In brief, Cold War politics created conditions for the militarization of the region as the Western and Eastern blocs competed for control and influence over Southern African nations and liberation movements. At the same time there was increased militarization of conservation, through Operation Lock and other initiatives. In post-apartheid Southern Africa, rhino poaching provides the rationale for the militarization of conservation, and this process is magnified in the GLTP, as we show below. First, however, it is important to situate peace parks in this historical context.

*Peace without redress: peace parks in Southern Africa re-examined*

While little was done to deal with the war crimes against humanity in the region,<sup>26</sup> South African society tried to come to terms with apartheid atrocities through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission brought into an open dialogue victims of gross human rights violations, perpetrators on both sides of the conflict, and collaborators with the apartheid state or the liberation movements.<sup>27</sup> The merits and weaknesses of this model of reconciliation have been discussed elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> In terms of our focus, the need for reconciliation and peace building in South Africa was embodied in Nelson Mandela's actions. He threw his weight behind Southern African peace parks at a time when there was a deafening silence about dealing with regional atrocities committed by apartheid South Africa.<sup>29</sup> We argue that peace parks stepped into this political vacuum created by the absence of a politically driven healing process between South Africa and its neighbours. At the end of apartheid, peace parks were proposed as an instrument for fostering a peaceful coexistence of Southern African states, but this proposal did not include action to redress the lasting impact of South Africa's apartheid past in the region. Peace parks instead focused on and

24. Maano Ramutsindela, Marja Spierenburg, and Harry Wels, *Sponsoring nature: Environmental philanthropy for conservation* (Routledge, London, 2011), p. 53.

25. Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A social and political history* (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1995).

26. Daniel, 'Racism, the Cold War'.

27. Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Desmond Tutu, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (The Commission, Cape Town, 1998).

28. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela and Chris van der Merwe, *Memory, narrative and forgiveness: Perspectives on the unfinished journeys of the past* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009).

29. His precise reasons for doing so are discussed in Ramutsindela, 'Transfrontier conservation in Africa'.

actively marketed ideals of peace, cooperation, and harmony that were incontestable and anti-political.<sup>30</sup>

The creation of peace parks was led by South African billionaire and one-time member of the Afrikaner Broederbond, Anton Rupert, and his long-time friend Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup> These two people had led the Southern African Nature Foundation (SANF) and WWF International, respectively, since the 1960s.<sup>32</sup> Importantly, the SANF's nature conservation projects in South Africa and neighbouring countries formed the basis for peace parks. As such, the SANF provided the foundation for WWF-South Africa and the Peace Parks Foundation, formed in 1997 under Rupert's leadership. Nelson Mandela was made an honorary patron of the Peace Parks Foundation and gave 'this exciting initiative' his 'fullest support'.<sup>33</sup>

The trio of Bernhard, Mandela, and Rupert subsequently consolidated the project of peace parks as a feature of the region. After Rupert's passing in 2006, South African politicians, businesses, and the media presented peace parks as Rupert's biggest legacy to Africa.<sup>34</sup> While Mandela brought hope to South Africa through reconciliation and forgiveness, Rupert tried the same through peace parks. Both legacies did not necessarily correspond to underlying realities,<sup>35</sup> but they were largely maintained as ideals and out of respect for the individuals. While Mandela's legacy grew, the peace park legacy of hope and peaceful coexistence came under serious threat from poaching and the responses to it. Thus, we argue that poaching is not only a threat to wildlife, but also poses the greatest threat to the phenomenon of peace parks in the region.

Some observers saw this threat to wildlife coming before the current poaching crisis. In 2004, Gary Strydom wrote:

I do not believe that Mozambique or Zimbabwe have the resources or the political will to manage their parts of a super park. Open borders will lead to an increase in poaching, car theft rackets, firearm smuggling and drug smuggling. And in the long term it will be the wildlife that suffers in these unmanaged places.<sup>36</sup>

This sentiment was still evident in 2015 in a petition displayed on the website [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) that was signed by over 13,000 people. The petition states:

30. Büscher, *Transforming the frontier*.

31. Ellis, 'Of elephants and men'.

32. Ebbe Domisse in cooperation with Willie Esterhuyze, *Anton Rupert: A biography* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2005); Ramutsindela, 'Transfrontier conservation in Africa'.

33. Peace Parks Foundation, *Annual report* (Peace Parks Foundation, Stellenbosch, 1999), p. 3.

34. Ramutsindela, 'Transfrontier conservation in Africa'.

35. Adam Habib, *South Africa's suspended revolution: Hopes and prospects* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2013); Ramutsindela, 'Transfrontier conservation in Africa'; Büscher, 'Transforming the frontier'.

36. Gary Strydom, 'The big peace parks lie?' *Getaway* (January, 2004), pp. 13–14.

We all know that most of the poachers come from Mozambique and that they have increased the poaching since the border fences were taken down. The time has now come to put these fences up again and to increase the military in this area to bring the poaching under control.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the *SANParks Times* issue of March 2014, which carried news of a major grant awarded to the PPF to tackle rhino poaching (discussed below), also prominently printed a reader's letter entitled 'Please re-erect the fence in the Kruger'.<sup>38</sup> Sentiments such as these can be read as direct opposition to peace parks, especially when they involve countries such as Mozambique that many South Africans do not seem to trust or regard with confidence.<sup>39</sup> Crucially, they also need to be seen within the larger historical context of the political vacuum referred to above, namely that there was no redress for the damage and suffering caused by white minority governments in the region.

The popular legacies of the three founders of the Peace Parks Foundation further reinforced this dynamic. Mandela was a sovereign statesman and international icon who brought parties together and looked beyond reparations via forgiveness to a more harmonious future. Prince Bernhard was sovereign royalty, not politically accountable in the Dutch political system, and also carried an aura of standing above history, including his own rather ambiguous past.<sup>40</sup> Anton Rupert exuded a form of sovereignty based on his business success and accumulated wealth, whereby the question of how he had made his money in the past habitually gave way to how he used this wealth to support philanthropic ideals for the future. The (negative) histories of the founders of the PPF have often been de-emphasized *vis-à-vis* their role in supporting projects and discourses around idealistic futures. Similarly, the idea of peace parks was intended to transcend the painful past of the region and embed a focus on peace, harmony, and co-existence in regional space,<sup>41</sup> as we noted above.

37. Sabine Anderson, 'Re-erect the fence along the border of the Kruger Park and Mozambique and bring in the military to guard our borders against poachers!', n.d., <<http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/president-jacob-zuma-re-erect-the-fence-along-the-border-of-the-kruger-park-and-mozambique-and-bring-in-the-military-to-guard-our-borders>> (26 July 2015). The petition is evidence of a lingering perception that poaching in the GLTP is related to the removal of the fence. We do not go into the merit of this perception here. Relevant ministries in Mozambique and South Africa also recommended erecting an effective fence around the GLTP 'in order to halt human incursions into the conservation area and as a means of curbing poaching'; see South African Department of Environmental Affairs, 'South Africa and Mozambique agree', p. 2.

38. *SANParks Times*, March edition (SANParks, Pretoria, 2014), pp. 3–4.

39. Strydom, 'The big peace parks lie?'. Mozambican citizens were killed in both the 2008 and 2015 xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

40. This includes his membership of the Nazi movement and his involvement in the 'Lockheed Affair'. See Annejet van der Zijl, *Bernhard: Een verborgen geschiedenis* (Querido, Amsterdam, 2010).

41. Cf. Achilles Mbembe, 'At the edge of the world: Boundaries, territoriality, and sovereignty in Africa', *Public Culture* 12, 1 (2000), p. 260.

Against this backdrop, the rhino-poaching crisis has torn open old wounds, anxieties, and distrust that have not yet been addressed, particularly between a (mostly) white public in South Africa and (mostly) ‘black poachers’ from Mozambique. These categorizations, it is important to note, are rather blunt, as public anxiety is not restricted to whites and poaching is not restricted to blacks. It is also difficult to gain precise numbers in what is a very fluid and public debate. However, ‘green violence’ cannot be understood without taking into account historical and contemporary racial dynamics. Significantly, it has been difficult for the peace parks idea to address old wounds because of the way it was operationalized as the telos of conservation, with a focus on idealized, dream-like futures. As David Hughes and Stephen Ellis have shown, the emergence of peace parks at the end of apartheid was an attempt by white South Africans to hold onto parts of Africa as their own.<sup>42</sup> Thus the peace parks story, because of its location within the regional context, means that the impact of the rhino crisis represents not just a crisis of a species but also a crisis of the dreams of white belonging in and to Africa.

#### *Rhino poaching and green violence*

The above history of peace parks within the regional political economy is not often mentioned in conservation discourses, yet it is crucial to understanding the current green violence going on in the Kruger National Park and the GLTP. Our concept of ‘green violence’ builds on Lunstrum’s idea of green militarization, which she describes as ‘the use of military and paramilitary personnel, training, technologies, and partnerships in the pursuit of conservation efforts’.<sup>43</sup> While acknowledging that green militarization has a long history, Lunstrum shows that it is taking on new forms, particularly in the Kruger National Park as a response to the rhino-poaching crisis:

The militarization of conservation practice in Kruger, and the subsequent militarization of the park itself, is striking in several respects. It is characterized by multiple layers of militarization, from the ground to the skies, and enabled by a range of actors, including rangers, soldiers, military leaders, and military firms, both public and private. It also emerges from what is essentially an arms race between poachers and anti-poaching forces; as each side becomes more sophisticated and potentially lethal via militarized methods and technologies, the other follows suit to keep up. The resulting state-side militarization in particular has proven lethal, with over 300 suspected poachers killed over the last five years.<sup>44</sup>

We believe that the concept of green militarization is appropriate, but we aim to go a step further to talk more generally about ‘green violence’. We

42. David M. Hughes, ‘Third nature: Making space and time in the Great Limpopo Conservation Area’, *Cultural Anthropology* 20, 2 (2000), pp. 157–84; Stephen Ellis, ‘Of elephants and men’.

43. Lunstrum, ‘Green militarization’, p. 817.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 818.

argue that it is not only the militarization of conservation around Kruger National Park and the GLTP that is striking, but also the broader range of violent practices engendered by the rhino-poaching crisis and the concomitant drive to save Southern African peace parks. We conceptualize green violence as the deployment of violent instruments and tactics towards the protection of nature and ideas and aspirations related to nature conservation. Green violence denotes material and non-material aspects of violence and the manner in which violence takes social and linguistic form. Importantly, this also moves our concept of green violence beyond green criminological perspectives that narrowly focus on ‘harm against environments, humanity and other animals’<sup>45</sup> and their often singular attention to perpetrators of crime (in our case, local poachers and the international criminal syndicates they collude with), their operations, and social and environmental harms associated with the exploitation of natural resources.<sup>46</sup> As is clear from the above discussions, green violence can only be understood by explicitly and openly acknowledging the broader social, political, and economic contexts within which violence is perpetrated.

While recognizing that green violence entails many different forms, we argue that three types of such practices were especially prominent in saving (peace) parks: material, social, and discursive violence. These three forms of green violence, which we will discuss in turn, differ quite radically. This, however, is precisely the point: they help us understand the wide range of violent tactics employed in the defence of rhinos and peace parks, and in the process say something about the broader Southern African political condition.

### *Material violence*

Material green violence includes but is more than green militarization. Lunstrum uses green militarization to emphasize how spatial qualities of protected areas intersect with conservation values and ideas about national sovereignty to legitimize the use of military force.<sup>47</sup> In our view, however, the emphasis on militarization limits the wide range of material violent practices observed in the defence of conservation, both presently and

45. Damián Zaitch, Tim Boekhout van Solinge, and Gudrun Müller, ‘Harms, crimes and natural resource exploitation: A green criminological and human rights perspective on land-use change’, in Maarten Bavinck, Lorenzo Pellegrini, and Erik Mostert (eds), *Conflicts over natural resources in the global south – Conceptual approaches* (CRC Press, London, 2014), pp. 91–108.

46. Rob White (ed.), *Global environmental harm: Criminological perspectives* (Willan, Milton, 2010).

47. Lunstrum, ‘Green militarization’.

historically.<sup>48</sup> While Lunstrum points towards a wider range of practices, she stops short of truly integrating and emphasizing the links between militarization and several other important aspects of material violence such as the link between anti-poaching measures and a broader security complex, the way that practices of material violence directly and indirectly affect people and nature, and how violence becomes a method of choice.

At a broader security level, the rhino and general wildlife poaching crisis, to which green militarization responds, is increasingly seen as being linked to the security-terrorist complex. Whether this is true is debatable,<sup>49</sup> but the claim that profits from poaching are funding terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, and the Lord's Resistance Movement had wider implications for the ways in which 'wildlife wars' are conducted.<sup>50</sup> These wars became entangled with issues of national security, thereby blurring the boundaries between military operations, poaching, and anti-poaching strategies. For example, Varun Vira and Thomas Ewing claim that 'al-Shabaab and Somali criminal networks are profiting off Kenyan elephants killed by poachers using weapons leaked from local security forces'.<sup>51</sup> The link between anti-poaching and terrorism places conservation organizations in an awkward position in terms of fundraising for conservation, as the case of Operation Lock has shown. Reminiscent of the Southern African region during the Cold War, a partnership between the defence and conservation communities, as suggested at the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade of February 2014,<sup>52</sup> is having unintended consequences for the conservation enterprise. Such a partnership implies that rangers who never joined the army nor signed up for 'war' are all of a sudden finding themselves in a situation where they might be killed in gunfights. The International Union for Conservation of Nature estimates that 'more than 1,000 rangers have been killed worldwide and many more

48. See Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts, *Violent environments* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2001); Roderick Neumann, 'Moral and discursive geographies'; Rosaleen Duffy, *Nature crime: How we're getting conservation wrong* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2010); Wolfram Dressler and Eulalio Guieb III, 'Violent enclosures, violated livelihoods: Environmental and military territoriality in a Philippine frontier', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42, 2 (2015), pp. 323–45.

49. Rosaleen Duffy, Freya St John, Bram Büscher, and Dan Brockington, 'The militarization of anti-poaching: Undermining long term goals', *Environmental Conservation* (in press).

50. Johan Bergenas and Monica Medina, 'Break the link between terrorism funding and poaching', 31 January 2014, <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/break-the-link-between-terrorism-funding-and-poaching/2014/01/31/6c03780e-83b5-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9\\_story.html?tid=hpModule\\_6c539b02-b270-11e2-bbf2-a6f9e9d79e19](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/break-the-link-between-terrorism-funding-and-poaching/2014/01/31/6c03780e-83b5-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html?tid=hpModule_6c539b02-b270-11e2-bbf2-a6f9e9d79e19)> (19 June 2014).

51. Verun Vira and Thomas Ewing, 'Ivory's curse: The militarization and professionalization of poaching in Africa', April 2014, <[http://www.bornfreeusa.org/a9\\_ivorys\\_curse.php](http://www.bornfreeusa.org/a9_ivorys_curse.php)> (18 June 2015).

52. Government of the United Kingdom, 'London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade 2014', 12–13 February 2014, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/illegal-wildlife-trade-2014>> (19 June 2014).

injured over the last 10 years'.<sup>53</sup> According to Chris Galliers of the Game Rangers Association of Africa, 60 percent of the rangers killed in 2013 were African.<sup>54</sup> This makes the profession unattractive to many potential new recruits.<sup>55</sup> As a result of the way things have evolved, the ranger has become a 'quasi-military sovereignty protector'.<sup>56</sup>

Obviously, warfare techniques do not only render violence visible but also have other direct and indirect material effects on nature and people. Warfare can violate *and* conserve nature, both of which outcomes often have major impacts on the livelihoods and security of people close to or inhabiting conservation spaces.<sup>57</sup> For example, the militarization of the GLTP affects Community-Based Natural Resources Management initiatives that, despite their own problems, hold better prospects for park–people relations than warfare: recently agreed schemes for local people to access resources in the park were undermined and halted by the rhino-poaching crisis.<sup>58</sup>

As a result, and in combination with ongoing anti-poaching campaigns in the GLTP, community–park relationships were being restructured in ways that integrated them into campaigns against rhino poaching. Both high officials in Kruger and the united private game reserves west of Kruger stated in interviews that they were 'massively' investing in informant networks, creating new types of internal surveillance within communities.<sup>59</sup> Communities therefore also form part of the Kruger National Park's grand strategy to counter rhino poaching.<sup>60</sup> The result was often a narrowing of livelihood options for communities living on or adjacent to areas considered crucial in the fight against rhino poachers. The war against poachers risks dividing local communities into 'good citizens' (informants) and 'bad citizens' (poachers and those working with poaching syndicates). This division does not augur well for community cohesion, while the war on poachers restrains access to natural resources by community members. Hence we consider this part of material green violence.

53. International Union for Conservation of Nature, 'Rising murder toll of park rangers calls for tougher laws', 29 July 2014, <<http://www.iucn.org/?17196/Rising-murder-toll-of-park-rangers-calls-for-tougher-laws>> (1 August 2015).

54. He also estimates that the number of poachers killed is likely to be two or three times this figure because many deaths are not reported. Chris Galliers, 'Presentation at the Outraged SA Citizens Against Poaching (OSCAP) International Conference on Rhino Poaching', April 2014, <<http://www.oscap.co.za/rhino-conference-2014/risks-legal-trade-rhino-horn>> (1 August 2015).

55. Wynand Uys, 'The militarization of game rangers', *South African Flyer*, July 2015, pp. 40–2.

56. Chris Galliers, 'Presentation', p. 70.

57. Duffy, *Wildlife crime*.

58. Participatory observation, 4 February 2014, Phalaborwa.

59. Interview, Kruger National Park staff, 6 February 2014; Participatory observation, 3 February 2014, Wits Rural Facility, and 4 February 2014, Skukuza, Kruger National Park; telephone conversation, GRU staff, 7 March 2014.

60. Jooste, 'KNP anti-poaching status'.

Finally, we deal with the question of how violence becomes a method of choice. Declarations of war rest on assumptions that avenues for peaceful settlement are either closed or absent, yet war is one choice among other options. Officials in the Kruger National Park presented violence as one of the main methods available to them, yet the strategies and tactics they used are a matter of choice. We argue that such a choice also helped the Peace Parks Foundation to defend the ideals of peace parks. The general hired to combat poaching by Kruger has, for instance, unveiled a combat plan that includes re-establishing ‘fortress Kruger’<sup>61</sup> and ‘a hot pursuit option’ by which the South African army and rangers could enter Mozambique in pursuit of poachers.<sup>62</sup> Hence, and in contrast to the 2002 Treaty of the GLTP that upholds state sovereignty, the South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and the Mozambican Minister of Tourism recommended a joint law enforcement operation in the GLTP that includes the ‘revival of cross-border hot pursuits’ in 2013.<sup>63</sup> Subsequently, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on biodiversity conservation and management on 17 April 2014. This was followed by the agreement to deal with wildlife crime signed by the Mozambican government, Joaquim Chissano Foundation, and the PPF on 29 October 2014.<sup>64</sup>

### *Social violence*

Social violence, according to Arthur Kleinman, relates to effects that ‘social orders – local, national, global – bring to bear on people’, for example through institutions that ‘protect some while exposing others to the brutal vectors of economic and political power’ but also through images and practices that do violence to the ‘moral order’.<sup>65</sup> This is a very broad conceptualization with many dimensions that we cannot go into here. What we focus on is the (ab)use of social power in pursuit of the protection of nature and ideas and aspirations related to nature conservation. This is, we argue, how we should understand the tactics of the Peace Parks Foundation when they

61. Meaning the establishment of an ‘Intensive Protection Zone’ in the south part of Kruger. Interview, KNP staff member, 6 February 2015.

62. Kim Helfrich, ‘Hot pursuit of rhino poachers happening’, 13 August 2014, <[http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35838:hot-pursuit-of-rhino-poachers-happening&catid=87:border-security](http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35838:hot-pursuit-of-rhino-poachers-happening&catid=87:border-security)> (10 May 2015).

63. South African Department of Environmental Affairs, ‘South Africa and Mozambique agree’, p. 2.

64. South African Department of Environmental Affairs, ‘South Africa Mozambique cooperation on combating rhino poaching’, <[https://www.environment.gov.za/safricamozambique\\_cooperation\\_oncombatingrhinopoaching](https://www.environment.gov.za/safricamozambique_cooperation_oncombatingrhinopoaching)> (19 June 2014); Mozambique News Agency, ‘AIM Reports, No. 494’, 31 October 2014, <http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/aim494.html#story6>> (31 October 2014).

65. Arthur Kleinman, ‘The violences of everyday life: The multiple forms and dynamics of social violence’, in Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds (eds), *Violence and subjectivity* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2000), p. 226.

opted for an ‘out-of-the-box’ solution to rhino poaching, namely rhino horn infusion.

Rhino horn infusion involves infusing horns with poison and dye in order to devalue horns and thus scare potential poachers and render the product unusable for end-market consumers. While not the inventors of the idea or method, rhino horn infusion seemed to provide an ideal approach for the PPF to help the South African government, SANParks, and other organizations get a grip on rampant rhino poaching and so help save peace parks. As the PPF started backing rhino horn infusion, a process of social violence ensued that consisted of both harming the public moral order<sup>66</sup> and the (ab)use of social power in pursuit of conservation-related ideas and aspirations. Here we focus on the publicity around the awarding of the Dutch Postcode Lottery’s ‘dreamfund’ of nearly 14.4 million euros to the PPF in early February 2014 for the ‘Rhino Rubicon’ project, which was based on questionable premises.<sup>67</sup> We also, very briefly, discuss the aftermath when this was subsequently pointed out in the media and the PPF reacted by trying to silence the (negative) debate surrounding the dreamfund money.

The awarding of the dreamfund is the highlight of the annual Dutch Postcode Lottery’s ‘Good Money Gala’. At the 2014 event, it was the Dutch prime minister who announced the dreamfund, stating:

in a recent trial, the Peace Parks Foundation treated rhino horns with chemicals, making them worthless. This approach has become so successful that it has become the key to stopping poachers and saving the rhino.<sup>68</sup>

The postcode lottery website similarly stated that the project’s objective is to ‘treat the majority of the still-living rhinos in nine African countries’,<sup>69</sup> while the Dutch PPF director Mr John Loudon stressed that the PPF will treat and render the ‘majority of all rhino horns across the globe’ ‘totally worthless’, and so ‘save at least one animal species’.<sup>70</sup> The success of the project, according to the PPF, seemed guaranteed. This is stated on the postcode lottery website, by the PPF itself,<sup>71</sup> and was also emphasized by

66. Here we refer to general moral principles and values in society around truth, honesty, and openness.

67. The Postcode Lottery, ‘Goed Geld Gala 2014’, n.d., <<http://www.postcodeloterij.nl/goede-doelen/goed-geld-gala-2014.htm>> (20 February 2014). The ‘dreamfund’ was also awarded to WWF but since they did not engage in horn infusion, we do not discuss the WWF here.

68. Peace Parks Foundation, ‘€15.4 million to combat wildlife crime’, 5 February 2014, <<http://www.peaceparks.org/news.php?pid=1365&mid=1380>> (20 February 2014).

69. Postcode lottery, ‘Goed Geld Gala 2014’, <<http://www.postcodeloterij.nl/goede-doelen/goed-geld-gala-2014.htm>> (20 February 2014).

70. RTL Entertainment, ‘Neushoorns zijn goud waard – KOFFIETIJD’, 7 February 2014, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIQ3twHKtQ>> (20 February 2014).

71. Peace Parks Foundation, ‘€15.4 million to combat wildlife crime’, 5 February 2014, <<http://www.peaceparks.org/news.php?pid=1365&mid=1380>> (20 February 2014).

Mr Loudon, who argued that in the area where they tested toxic infusion – Tembe and Ndumo reserves in KwaZulu Natal – not one single poacher had since entered the area.<sup>72</sup> Our research in South Africa from January to May 2014, including interviews with many key involved players, indicated that three central statements around the rewarding of the dreamfund did not add up.

The first statement that rhino horn infusion renders horns ‘totally worthless’ is heavily contested, and most of the available evidence points in the opposite direction.<sup>73</sup> SANParks and KZN Wildlife scientific staff, for example, concluded that horn infusion has not been shown to penetrate horns and that it ‘is not a poaching deterrent, but an unnecessary deception’.<sup>74</sup> Even the Rhino Rescue Project, the original inventors of the method, agreed that scientific evidence is disputed and that it cannot be said that infusion will render a horn ‘totally worthless’.<sup>75</sup>

The second statement, that the PPF will ‘treat the majority of the still-living rhinos in nine African countries’,<sup>76</sup> is highly improbable for two reasons. First, the many key actors needed to achieve this were not convinced by rhino horn infusion, or would not cooperate for other reasons, and second, it is practically impossible. Most importantly, key personnel at the Kruger National Park refused to partake in any horn infusion treatments and strongly believe that it does not work.<sup>77</sup> Considering that of the approximately 25,000 rhinos currently in Africa around 8,000 to 10,000 live in the Kruger National Park, this makes it unfeasible to treat ‘the majority of all rhinos on the planet’.<sup>78</sup>

Many South African private rhino owners, who own around 25 percent of all rhinos in the country,<sup>79</sup> also were not keen on rhino horn infusion, because they were pushing for the legalization of trade in horn and did not

72. RTL Entertainment, ‘Neushoorns zijn goud waard – KOFFIETIJD’, 7 February 2014, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIQ3twHKltQ>> (20 February 2014). The PPF chief executive officer Werner Myburgh communicated the outcome and impact of the pilot rhino infusion in Ndumo and Tembe Reserves in Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as ‘the remarkable thing’ to the Dutch Postcode Lottery, and also emphasized the need to do more research on the devaluation of rhino horn (Confidential email correspondence, 12 December 2013).

73. Personal email, Dr Venter, 18 February 2014; Interview, chair PROA, Johannesburg, 18 March 2014.

74. Sam Ferreira, Danie Pienaar, Markus Hofmeyr, and Dave Cooper, ‘Are chemical horn infusions a poaching deterrent or an unnecessary deception?’, *Pachyderm* 55 (2014), pp. 54–61.

75. Interviews, staff Rhino Rescue Project, Johannesburg and Pretoria, February and March 2014.

76. Postcode Lottery, ‘Goed Geld Gala 2014’.

77. Ferreira *et al.*, ‘Are chemical horn infusions’; Email, Dr Venter, 18 February 2014.

78. Figures from Sarah Standley and Richard Emslie, *Population and poaching of African rhinos across African range states* (Evidence on Demand, London, 2013). These figures are the most reliable available, but need to be used with some caution as they are estimates.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

want to render their ware ‘totally worthless’.<sup>80</sup> The South African government has long been a proponent of ‘sustainable use’ of wildlife and wildlife products, and repeatedly put forth proposals to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora to lift the ban on rhino horn trade so that rhino horn owners could trade their stockpiles and use the proceeds for rhino conservation.<sup>81</sup> Whether the reasoning behind this proposal is valid is not of concern here, though clearly it is highly contested.<sup>82</sup> The question that should be asked, then, is why the South African government would want to make horns ‘worthless’ if it wishes to trade them.

Besides the fact that Kruger National Park officials and many private rhino owners are highly sceptical and might not choose to cooperate, it is practically impossible to treat so many rhinos. The treatment procedure takes a great deal of time and places high demands on manpower. Moreover, treatments would have to be repeated every three to four years (a full horn growth cycle) in order to be effective.<sup>83</sup> Others have pointed out that the PPF knew that the Kruger National Park and other crucial actors had major doubts and shown little inclination to cooperate before they went to pick up the dreamfund.<sup>84</sup> Although the PPF had offered to treat the Kruger rhinos, it was already clear that – despite official SANParks endorsement – many senior Kruger officials believed this was not a possibility they were willing to entertain.<sup>85</sup>

The third statement relates to how the publicity around the dreamfund award ceremony solely referred to the PPF as the organization that had treated the horns and would do so in the roll-out of the dreamfund project. Yet, it was the Rhino Rescue Project that developed and implemented all chemical horn infusion treatments. This was initially acknowledged by the PPF who had approached the Dutch Postcode Lottery on 10 June 2013

80. Telephonic communication, chair of Game Reserves United, 7 March 2014; Interview, chair PROA, Johannesburg, 18 March 2014.

81. South African Department of Environmental Affairs, ‘Edna Molewa briefs media on rhino trade proposal’, 3 July, <[https://www.environment.gov.za/ednamolewa\\_briefsmedia\\_onrhinotradeproposal](https://www.environment.gov.za/ednamolewa_briefsmedia_onrhinotradeproposal)> (4 March 2014). See also SAnews.gov.za, ‘SA to take rhino trade plan to CITES’, 25 July 2013, <<http://www.southafrica.info/about/sustainable/rhinos-250713.htm>> (13 February 2015); Ron Orenstein, *Ivory, horn and blood: Behind the elephant and rhinoceros poaching crisis* (Firefly Books, New York, NY, 2013).

82. See Rhishja Cota-Larson, ‘Rhino horn: Debunking the pro-trade propaganda’, 14 October 2013, <<http://annamiticus.com/2013/10/14/rhino-horn-debunking-the-pro-trade-propaganda/>> (13 February 2015), and the information around a conference on rhino horn and wildlife trade organized on 8 and 9 April 2014: <<http://www.oscapconference.co.za>> (21 April 2014).

83. See Rhino Rescue Project, ‘Frequently asked questions’, n.d., <<http://www.rhinorecueproject.com/faq/>> (4 March 2014).

84. Bram Vermeulen, ‘De oorlog om de neushoorns en het goed geld theater van de postcode loterij’, *NRC*, 7 June 2014.

85. Interviews, staff Rhino Rescue Project and KNP, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Hoedspruit, and Skukuza, February and March 2014; participatory observation, KNP, February and March 2014; Ferreira *et al.*, ‘Are chemical horn infusions’.

‘with a concept note to provide funding for the treatment of rhino horn based on the methods developed by RRP’.<sup>86</sup> Before the dreamfund award ceremony, however, the PPF excluded the Rhino Rescue Project as a possible partner from the revised application that was submitted to the dreamfund adjudication committee on 17 January 2014.<sup>87</sup> By this time, the PPF was thinking about broader methods of horn devaluation. Both these decisions, however, were not communicated in the publicity around the awarding of the dreamfund, which was exclusively about rhino horn infusion as practised by the Rhino Rescue Project and showed videos of the Rhino Rescue Project at work. Moreover, the Rhino Rescue Project was still asked by the PPF to do a trial demonstration of the horn infusion method on 10 January 2014, which Mr John Loudon, the Dutch PPF director, attended and referred to as a ‘beautiful’ and ‘tranquil’ procedure.<sup>88</sup> All this led Lorinda Hern, the owner of the Rhino Rescue Project, to comment later in the media:

The foundation used intellectual property belonging to the Rhino Rescue Project, which championed chemical infusion of horns as an anti-poaching strategy, in the first proposal. ... The PPF threw us in front of the bus once they got the money from the Dutch. These guys work in the most extraordinary way – they used us to get the money, then they ditched us and rewrote their funding application, writing us out of the project once they received the money.<sup>89</sup>

Taking these points into consideration we conclude that the postcode lottery dreamfund award ceremony and the publicity around it were based on statements that were known to be unconvincing, and occurred within a broader context that called into question the efficacy of rhino horn infusion. Yet, when this was brought into the Dutch and South African media from June to September 2014, the PPF tried to silence this critique, and did so by using the social power that it had accumulated through its national and international networks of sponsors, wealthy individuals, and other elites.<sup>90</sup>

86. PPF, ‘Fact sheet on Peace Parks Foundation and Rhino Rescue Project’ (unpublished document), author collection.

87. PPF, ‘Fact sheet.’

88. RTL Entertainment, ‘Neushoorns zijn goud waard – KOFFIETIJD’, 7 February 2014, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIQ3twHKlrQ>> (20 February 2014); interviews, Rhino Rescue Project staff, Johannesburg and Pretoria, February and March 2014.

89. As quoted in Pearlie Joubert and André Jurgens, ‘MNET pulls rhino horn story as Rupert steps in’, *Sunday Times*, 14 September 2014. As mentioned above, it later became clear that the PPF had written the Rhino Rescue Project out of the project before the awarding of the dreamfund. Although the PPF believed that it had ended its formal relationship with the RRP and had never signed an MOU with the organization, staff from the Rhino Rescue Project have claimed that they were not aware of this, as suggested by the fact that they featured prominently in all the publicity around the award. Interviews, staff Rhino Rescue Project, Johannesburg and Pretoria, February and March 2014.

90. Ramutsindela, *Transfrontier conservation in Africa*; Spierenburg and Wels, ‘Conservative philanthropists, royalty and business elites’. For examples of the PPF’s influence, see the lists in Peace Parks Foundation, *Annual review* (Peace Parks Foundation, Stellenbosch, 2013).

Not only did the PPF (ab)use their social power to benefit from the Rhino Rescue Project's initiative; there are also allegations and statements about the Foundation trying to pressure witnesses to retract the statements that they had made to journalists, according to the Ombudsman of the Dutch newspaper that broke the story in the Dutch media.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, in September 2014, when a critical documentary on the role of the PPF in getting the Dutch Postcode Lottery money was produced by the South African investigative journalism TV programme *Carte Blanche*,<sup>92</sup> Johan Rupert, the PPF chairman and son of Anton Rupert, personally intervened to request that the channel delay airing the documentary, which they did.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, although horn infusion had been sold to the public as the silver bullet that would save the rhino, it was already apparent that the dreamfund money would be used mostly for things besides infusion, including anti-poaching work in Kruger and helping the Mozambican government to strengthen 'its counter-intelligence capacity', amongst others.<sup>94</sup> These measures, ironically, are mostly related to the process of material green violence discussed above.

How to make sense of these dynamics? We argue that the pressure on the PPF became so great and the threat that their project might become irrelevant in the Southern African (and global) conservation landscape so real, that they became desperate to tackle the rhino-poaching crisis. As a result, the PPF were not only willing to make ill-founded promises and assertions relating to the publicity around the awarding of the dreamfund, but also to (ab)use their social power in order to protect their profile and ideas and aspirations related to nature conservation. Following Kleinman, this may be

91. This is what the Ombudsman concluded based on research that he did into the case following a complaint lodged with him by the Postcode Lottery and the PPF. See Sjoerd de Jong, 'NRC spoorde werkelijkheid op achter de neushoornshow', 20 September 2014, <<http://www.nrc.nl/ombudsman/2014/09/20/nrc-spoorde-werkelijkheid-op-achter-de-neushoornshow/>> (7 November 2014); confidential email correspondence, June 2014.

92. *Carte Blanche*, 'Rhino Infusion Debate', 15 September 2014, <<http://carteblanche.dstv.com/player/628044/>> (15 September 2015).

93. See Pearlie Joubert and André Jurgens, 'MNET pulls rhino horn story as Rupert steps in', *Sunday Times*, 14 September 2014. The title of the *Sunday Times* article is misleading as the Executive Producer of *Carte Blanche* subsequently explained that Rupert had asked the organization to delay the broadcast until senior *Carte Blanche* editors had been able to view the insert to make sure that it was fair. *Carte Blanche* agreed, and as a result it was shown at a later date. *The Times*, 'Rupert Request Stalls M-Net', 14 September 2014, <[http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/2014/09/14/rupert-request-stalls-m-net-rhino-horn-story](http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/2014/09/14/rupert-request-stalls-m-net-rhino-horn-story/)> (11 November 2015). Johan Rupert did not see this as a problem, though he admitted that 'in hindsight', 'we were naïve and over-enthusiastic in our belief that rhino horn infusion could help save the rhino' and announced that 1.5 million Euro had been refunded to the Postcode Lottery. *Bloomberg*, 'Billionaire Rupert Says Dutch Lottery Refunded for Rhino Failure', 15 September 2014, <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-09-15/billionaire-rupert-says-dutch-lottery-refunded-for-rhino-failure>> (20 November 2015).

94. Susanna Oosthuizen, 'Rhino not extinct on her watch, says minister', 17 April 2014, <<http://lowvelder.co.za/187722/rhino-extinct-watch-says-minister/>> (28 April 2014); Peace Parks Foundation, 'Rhino Protection Programma ligt op schema', n.d., <<http://www.peaceparks.nl/news.php?pid=1297&mid=1484>> (30 July 2015).

a less visible or even unlikely form of violence, since it is neither 'brutal' nor 'extreme'. It is nonetheless 'violence that is multiple, mundane and perhaps all the more fundamental because it is the hidden or secret violence out of which images of people are shaped, experiences of groups are coerced, and agency itself is engendered'.<sup>95</sup> In this light, the actions of the PPF are perhaps most important in terms of the political objective they served: the defence of a particular 'dream' of peace parks that, we concluded above, did little to acknowledge historical and current suffering, and the racialized, unequal political economies of which it is part.

*Discursive violence: celebrating death*

The previous examples offer two very different perspectives on green violence in relation to the rhino-poaching crisis and the defence of peace parks. However, they are one element in a culture and politics of violence that characterize South African society more broadly, in which the rhino-poaching crisis has enabled a group of very vocal and mostly white people to air more general feelings of rage and violence. These behaviours were not encouraged by the PPF or the South African government. However, one aspect of these activities is worth mentioning here because it helps to demonstrate the atmosphere surrounding these events, namely the way in which social media provided a platform for online discourses of violence in relation to the poaching crisis.

Following Michael Karlberg, we understand discourse to entail the development of a collective and patterned mode of thinking and communication aimed at shaping worldviews and influencing human behaviour.<sup>96</sup> In the context of the poaching debate, online platforms have been used to develop discourses and ways of thinking about poachers and what should happen to them that are highly problematic. One element of these discourses relates to celebrating the death of poachers, of which the following comments to a Facebook post announcing the death of two suspected poachers provide an extreme but increasingly common illustration:<sup>97</sup>

Comment by *A*: Poachers deserve to die! That's final – and besides, this was divine intervention! The Universe got rid of a cruel poacher who kills for a living, so why should poachers live? So they can kill and maim our wildlife?

Comment by *B*: Not all human life is worthy of respect, in my opinion. Some humans really are just a waste of skin and oxygen thieves. Society is enriched when they are no longer dwelling amongst us.

95. Kleinman, 'The violences of everyday life', pp. 228, 239.

96. Michael Karlberg, 'The power of discourse and the discourse of power: pursuing peace through discourse intervention', *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, 1 (2005), pp. 1–25.

97. Comments on a Facebook group post, rendered anonymous.

Comment by C: Aha yes totally agree ... but then if I follow that through there would be very few humans left on earth – which would be a good thing for the earth of course. But I am not the judge. Rapists and killers of other humans are tried and then sentenced (and yes, I think we should have the death penalty back).

Comment by B: Nah. I don't even respect their right to life. They do not begin to display the faintest smattering of RESPECT and therefore will not receive mine. If we are going to respect their right to life it simply means we agree that poachers should not be shot on sight. And I certainly do not agree with that!!

These and similar examples seem to suggest that social media have enabled extremist discourses geared towards protecting rhinos at all cost. In these discourses, the 'suffering subject' in need of development through peace parks was substituted for the 'poaching subject' who deserves to die. This poaching subject disturbs the dreams that peace parks are supposed to embody: spaces of peace, harmony, development, economic growth, and, most importantly, as spaces inhabited by charismatic and 'perfect' animals, not fallible humans who are not 'a good thing for the earth of course'. In the process, online participants believe they surrender the self to a project that is larger than the self, within which one can be an environmental hero while condoning violence and death.

This situation is reminiscent of the 'state of exception' that Giorgio Agamben has written about.<sup>98</sup> Peace parks and other conservation areas in these online discourses function exactly according to the 'vision' that the founders of the PPF laid out and wanted to be recognized by future generations. These are dream spaces – a concept that consistently returns in the peace parks discourse<sup>99</sup> – that focus on the future and in which the violence of the past and contradictions of the present do not have a role. They build on and extend older dynamics of what David Hughes refers to as the 'imaginative project of colonization' where whites and 'euro-Africans had to *imagine* the natives away' in order to craft 'an idea of settler-as-nature-lover'.<sup>100</sup>

### Conclusion

The different dimensions of green violence discussed in this article are closely interrelated. Discursive and material violence, especially, are intimately connected and have been so for a long time in relation to wildlife

98. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of exception*.

99. See, for example, Anton Rupert's comments in the annual reviews of the activities of the PPF (Peace Parks Foundation, *Annual review 2002*: 3; Peace Parks Foundation, *Annual review 2003* (Peace Parks Foundation, Stellenbosch, 2004), p. 3, where he states that 'the dream of peace parks has become a reality' and 'The dream is to once again create an Africa without fences, where wildlife can roam freely across international borders'.

100. David Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, landscape, and the problem of belonging* (Palgrave MacMillan, New York, NY, 2010), p. xiii.

conservation in Africa, as also argued by Roderick Neumann: ‘The discursive construction of the African poacher/Other and the normalization of shoot-on-sight directives create a potent moral geography centred on African national parks as ground zero in the war to protect global biodiversity.’<sup>101</sup> Our analysis confirms Neumann’s conclusion, but adds several significant dimensions that become apparent when we connect the current rhinopoeing crisis to a larger context of building and defending peace parks. The first point is that the concept of ‘social violence’ signifies that actors are willing to engage in a broad range of violent tactics to support their objectives of biodiversity conservation. This is the reason why we posit the concept of ‘green violence’ to capture but also go beyond ‘green militarization’.

Secondly, we suggest that this willingness to engage in green violence should be seen in a context of how violence more generally manifested in the historical context of Southern Africa through to the present, and the various forms it took under different socio-political and environmental contexts. The positing of peace parks as a way to forget about violent pasts in order to focus on a utopian future ensured that discussion of the impact of such violence was avoided. Or rather, following Veena Das, the current lived experience of historical violence is both refused a voice and revealed ‘through a proliferation of words that drown out silences that are too difficult to bear’.<sup>102</sup> The PPF, as we showed, is particularly well known for its dominant, celebratory discourse in support of peace parks conceptualized as dreamscapes of harmony, collaboration, and understanding.<sup>103</sup> As the PPF and other actors tied the legacies of important elites into the success of peace parks, so it became even less possible to accept and deal with the past. In turn, we suggest that not dealing *politically* with historical violence results in pent-up frustration that in turn increases the prospects for the types of green violence that we witness today.

Thirdly, we argue that the historical political economy of peace parks not only increased the prospects for, but indeed *legitimizes* and *encourages* ‘green violence’. The consistent positing of peace parks as ideal spaces, through which deep-seated colonial and mostly white anxieties and hopes for a ‘pure’ and ‘pristine’ Africa continue to be recycled, places those that rupture the dream in a space of exception where neither the aspirations of the dream nor the legal right to life apply.<sup>104</sup> Humanity is stripped from those that violate the ‘imaginative project’ leading to the legitimation and celebration of violent death. It is these forms of green violence that threaten the core of what peace

101. Roderick Neumann, ‘Moral and discursive geographies’, p. 833.

102. Veena Das, *Life and words: Violence and the descent into the ordinary* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2007), p. 9.

103. Büscher, ‘Transforming the frontier’.

104. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer*.

parks are supposedly about to a greater extent than the rhino-poaching crisis ever could.

These three conclusions add important dimensions to the study of violence in nature conservation. Most analysts of what we call green violence in the Southern African region have focused on specific incidents or forms of violence such as forced removals of locals,<sup>105</sup> restrictions on access to natural resources necessary for livelihood,<sup>106</sup> killing of 'poachers' and the militarization of protected areas.<sup>107</sup> This trend is found elsewhere in the African continent and in other parts of the world.<sup>108</sup> We find these studies important but also lacking in two respects. They over-emphasize violent activities within a specific period without paying attention to the ways in which such violence is continued, sometimes involving the same actors. More importantly, the studies lack a conceptual framework by which we can develop typologies of violence and place them under one umbrella. We think that green violence is an overarching concept that not only brings past experiences of violence into a meaningful analytical framework, but also has the potential to guide analyses of violence in nature conservation in the future.

105. Patrick Harries, 'A forgotten corner of the Transvaal: Reconstructing the history of a relocated community through oral history and song', pp. 93–134, in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, community and conflict: Southern African perspectives* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg 1987, pp. 93–134); Milgroom and Spierenburg, 'Induced volition'.

106. Thembela Kepe, *Environmental entitlements in Mkambati: Livelihoods, social institutions and environmental change on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape* (University of the Western Cape, Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, 1997).

107. Duffy, 'Killing for conservation'; Lunstrum, 'Green militarization'.

108. Daniel Brockington and James Igoe, 'Eviction for conservation: A global overview', *Conservation and Society* 4, 3 (2006): 424–70; Krishna B. Ghimire and Michael P. Pimbert (eds), *Social change and conservation* (London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2013).