

## Whims of the Winds of Time? Emerging Trends in Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management

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**Abstract:** *This article reviews narratives and trends in biodiversity conservation and protected area (PA) management and examines contestations within and among them in the light of developments within the global political economy. Its argument starts with the assumption that trends in biodiversity conservation and PA management are, in large part, determined by global political and economic developments. The global political economy determines how both policy issues inherent to the conservation and development debate need to continuously be re-operationalised in order to remain politically acceptable. This argument is used to identify three recent trends in conservation, which we have termed 'neoliberal conservation', 'bioregional conservation' and 'hijacked conservation'. By illustrating these trends with empirical data from eastern and southern Africa, we aim to enhance the understanding and appreciation of macrosocial, economic and political dynamics—both constraints and opportunities—that impinge on conservation and development. In turn, this understanding could contribute to a better 'manoeuvrability' for the management and success of more technical initiatives that aim to improve conservation of biodiversity and PA management.*

**Keywords:** biodiversity conservation, protected area management, discourse, political economy, development

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*Conservation and Society*, Pages 22–43

Volume 5, No. 1, 2007

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## INTRODUCTION

THE DEBATES AROUND BIODIVERSITY conservation and protected area (PA) management are often heated ones. Different narratives, approaches and models argue for just as many configurations of biodiversity and PA governance. Possibly, the fiercest battles are fought over the issue of the human dimensions of biodiversity conservation. On an abstract level this entails the wide range of relations between humans and 'nature'. On a more practical level this often comes down to the issue of how to deal with (local) people living in and around PAs and important or threatened biodiversity. The community-based conservation (CBC) narrative asserts that it is possible and preferable to strike a balance between the needs of local people and the conservation of nature (Adams and Hulme 2001). This is challenged by voices advocating a protectionist approach or 'fortress conservation' with people separated from certain landscapes because they are inherently incompatible (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999). Important to note is that not one of the narratives or approaches has been absolutely dominant or implemented completely. Although similarities in language used by many different actors and conservation–development policies might suggest the opposite, in practice, implementation has rarely followed one narrative or model to the extreme. In fact, different narratives, models and approaches are constantly overlapping and competing, which makes the boundaries between them fuzzy and hard to identify in practice. Different studies have discussed this overlap through the analysis of narratives and counter-narratives (Leach and Mearns 1996; Adams and Hulme 2001; Hutton et al. 2005).

The aim of this article is not to give yet another historical overview of conservation narratives. Rather, its focus is twofold. First, to briefly outline how the 'grand narratives' of fortress conservation and CBC are situated within developments in the global political economy. Second, to identify emerging political economic trends that influence biodiversity conservation and PA management and are likely to do so in the foreseeable future. In so doing, the article stems from a *critical political economy* approach. According to Ford (2003: 121) 'a critical approach distinguishes critical theory from problem-solving theory, where the latter takes for granted the framework of existing power relations and institutions and is concerned with the smooth functioning of the system. By contrast, critical theory calls the very framework into question and seeks to analyse how it is maintained and changed'.

We argue that the main forces of recent global political change have been the fall of communism and the subsequent hegemony of neoliberalism; globalisation and the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution and most recently; the international emphasis on security. These are shaping biodiversity conservation and PA management in identifiable and distinctive ways. By presenting focused illustrations from Africa, we suggest that 'neoliberal conservation', 'bioregional conservation' and 'hijacked conservation',

although partially overlapping, are clearly identifiable in practice, thereby corroborating these shaping influences. In turn, this leads us to the contention that enhanced understanding of these shaping influences could contribute to a better ‘manoeuvrability’ for the management and success of more technical analyses that aim to improve conservation of biodiversity and PA management.

Before moving on, several conceptual reflections and clarifications are in order. As stated above, the article is steeped in a critical political economy approach. It tries to analyse dominant shifts in the global political economy and the effects these have on the issues of biodiversity conservation and PA management. ‘Shifts in the global political economy’ here can mean two things. First, it denotes potential or actual hegemonic political economic *discourse* that influences the behaviour of people and institutions in particular ways such as the ideological discourse of neoliberalism<sup>1</sup> and the recent discourse around international security<sup>2</sup>. Second, it entails influential political economic *practices* that greatly affect individual and collective behaviour. Hereby, we focus specifically on globalisation as a second source of recent global change<sup>3</sup>. Important to note here, however, is that discourses and practices mutually influence and reinforce each other, which leads us to another important reflection.

How do we distinguish between actual political economic changes in reality (practice) and changes in the way reality is viewed, constructed and represented (discourse or narrative)? Two diametrically opposed views in social science literature can be identified. On the one hand, Foucauldian approaches generally hold that discourse entails ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault 1972: 49). On the other hand, historical materialist approaches would contend that (unequal) material realities give rise to discourses that support and justify the (material) inequalities that benefit capitalist elites (Harvey 2005). In this article, we seek a middle way whereby discourse and practice mutually constitute each other. In the environmental literature, the construction of discourses often result from socio-political or economic trends combined with evidence of perceived or actual environmental realities. For instance, a set of images linked to environmental changes in Africa are common in both professional and popular media, all portraying local people as agents of environmental change, albeit negative change (Beinart and McGregor 2003). These images are linked to early colonial resource allocation strategies that were based on racial discrimination (Beinart and McGregor 2003). They have, however, found persistent support through research that sometimes discounts the socio-political and economic factors behind environmental change. This has resulted in certain assumptions about environmental ‘truths’ that have assumed the status of ‘received wisdom’ or prescriptive narrative, discounting alternative visions and local political agency. While these images have been challenged by some (Leach and Mearns 1996), they remain powerful means of interpreting agents of change

within African landscapes (see Cowling 2000). Of course, these issues remain context and location specific.

The changes in conservation (narratives) from command and control, which is commonly referred to as fortress conservation, to more inclusive forms such as CBC, should be seen in this light. The linkages between the two, as discussed below, show how narratives become prominent but never absolutely dominant. In other words, they assume what Adams and Hulme (2001) describe as narratives and counter-narratives, often building on windows of opportunity or weak spots of the other but always dependent on the wider political economic climate, as we will try to show below. Also, our global focus does not mean that the formation of ideas and discourse occurs only at the global level and subsequently determines the local level. Rather, this formation is flexible and local actors contest, re-configure and re-appropriate global ideas to suit their own situations (see Brosius 1999).

The last reflection is on terminology. Two terms that are used throughout the article need explaining: 'biodiversity conservation' and 'Protected Area Management'. We define these terms in a broad manner, in line with the broad macroperspective of the article itself. Biodiversity conservation in this article thus refers to the formal or informal protection or management of designated biological resources. With respect to PA management, we follow the World Conservation Union (IUCN) definition: the effective formal and/or informal governance of 'an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources' (IUCN 1994). Obviously, these definitions are not meant to mask conceptual nuances and changes over time. For instance, early conservation's preoccupation—around the 1930s and 1940s—with issues such as island forest depletion and game preservation through the creation of game sanctuaries focusing on single species (Anderson and Grove 1987) gradually made way for more inclusive conceptualisations of nature as interconnected processes, now generally referred to as biological diversity, integrated landscape and seascape or ecosystems. Unfortunately, as we will not be able to adhere to all the nuances in the debate, our conceptualisation of biodiversity conservation and PA management refers very broadly to (the management and governance of) the realm of nature with the note that this refers to both inside and outside of formal PAs.

### **THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FORTRESS AND COMMUNITY CONSERVATION**

Various scholars have written about the origins of PAs and their prominence as a vehicle of preservation (Anderson and Grove 1987; Nash 2001; Beinart and McGregor 2003; Igoe 2004). Among other influences, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English 'enclosure' movement (Igoe 2004), early German concerns with forest conservation (Matose 2001) and the American westward

expansion (Nash 2001) influenced the evolution of PAs as restricted zones in Africa. Local people were often moved and excluded from PAs, with enforcement of exclusion often carried out through ‘fences and fines’, creating what now is commonly referred to as ‘fortress conservation’ (Brockington 2002; Hutton et al. 2005).

Top-down fortress conservation has been the preferred conservation discourse and practice for much of the twentieth century (Hutton et al. 2005), surviving decolonisation and remaining influential until today (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006). However, political changes from colonial to post-independence governments led to the erosion of political acceptability of and support for exclusionary discourses. The concept of Community Conservation came forth from this new international development climate, triggering substantive changes for the management of PAs (Adams and Hulme 2001). From the 1970s onwards, it became clear that the top-down preservationist management discourse had to be supplanted by a more bottom-up inclusive and participatory sustainable use narrative. Although much more can be said about these narratives, the main point is that their specific characteristics and influence varies greatly over particular times, places and people involved. Recently, a resurgence of protectionist thinking further fuelled variation and complexity in conservation narratives and practices (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Wilshusen et al. 2002). In the words of Carruthers (2004: 383): ‘applying any over-arching model to a continent such as Africa is impossible. One of the defining features of African environmental history is its wide variety and the difficulty of ascribing any single direction to it’. In the rest of this section, then, we aim to briefly link the narratives to the macropolitical economic frameworks that influenced them, which in turn serves as a prelude to discussing more recent trends in the global political economy and their effects on biodiversity conservation and PA management.

The political economic system under which fortress conservation was developed and able to thrive in Africa was suppressive colonialism. Although not exclusively Anglophone in nature, the conservation developments in the West referred to above were principally reflected in the British colonial empire in Africa due to the settlement of relatively large white minorities. This is why the biggest and most popular parks are still to be found in Eastern and Southern Africa (Carruthers 1997; Igoe 2004). As in the UK and the USA, colonial nature and wildlife conservation policies in Africa found their origins in the ‘discovery’ that ‘nature’ was not endless (Nash 2001). In order to preserve the romantic ideals of the African Eden and to maintain elite hunting traditions, large tracts of land were set aside for preservation (Adams and McShane 1996; Draper et al. 2004). As these reserves were implemented after the exclusionary model, this impacted greatly on the local people. They were often forcibly removed from the land they had lived on or used for generations. Colonial imperialism thus made fortress conservation possible: in policy and in practice, nature conservation became a matter of strict law

enforcement through a 'fences and fines' approach, whereby interests of local people often had to make way for the interests of conservation.

With the demise of African colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s also came the demise of fortress conservation as a legitimate conservation discourse. A new development climate in the 1970s saw broad emancipatory movements for all sorts of suppressed, underprivileged and previously disadvantaged groups in many countries and internationally. This resulted in a changing international development climate that at the level of rhetoric at least became conducive to issues of popular participation, local ownership and a passionate plea by many international organisations for a more just international economic order.<sup>4</sup> A well-known international illustration of this emancipatory spirit is the signing of the first Lomé treaty of 1975 between the European Community and 46 developing countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, which was hailed as a genuine breakthrough in relations between 'developed' and 'developing' countries. The preamble of the treaty itself puts it as follows: the treaty is 'resolved to establish a new model for relations with developed and developing states, compatible with the aspirations of the international community towards a more just and more balanced economic order'.

Generally, this international emancipatory dynamic was seen to be predominantly influenced by and based on Marxist, socialist philosophy. The emphasis was on the liberation of the proletariat from capital-owning elites and 'struggles' were often phrased in these or similar wordings. Internationally, this resulted in the above-mentioned plea for a more equal international order, whereby one of the most important issues was a more balanced international distribution of capital. However, with hindsight it is clear that the actual ideological underpinning of decolonisation turned out to be (neo)liberal, with emphasis on markets and free trade (Harvey 2005). Instead of changing international relations in a revolutionary way, it was done in the liberal way of which it is generally claimed that the effects are that the gap between developed and developing countries has been widened instead of decreased (Harvey 2005; Ferguson 2006). Likewise, with respect to the relationship between the European Community and a large group of developing countries under Lomé, it is similarly claimed that 'the apparent changes were semantic rather than concrete' (Lister 1988: 58).

Coming back to the issue of conservation, it is clear from the literature that the apparent changes in conservation discourses from fortress to CBC have also often stayed semantic (Hulme and Murphree 2001; Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006). The failure of CBC to bring either conservation or development was increasingly noted (Barret and Arcese 1995; Wainwright and Wehrmeyer 1998; Songorwa 1999; Wunder 2001), and further fortified by increasing calls to go 'back to the barriers' (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Wilshusen et al. 2002; Hutton et al. 2005). Whether this 'neoprotectionist' upsurge has now caused CBC to be in crisis is still heavily debated, but what is certain is that in conservation discourses and practices, there is and has never been an ulti-

mately overriding or dominant approach in both theory and practice. In fact, the opposite is the case. The inability of the two main narratives (and their hybrids) to meet all expectations associated to biodiversity conservation and PA management in reality (among others: biodiversity conservation, community development, economic growth and with the advent of transfrontier conservation also ‘international cooperation’) seems to continuously spur new conservation hybrids and trends in theory and in practice.

The majority of these trends and hybrids are of course place and time specific. However, if indeed trends in biodiversity conservation and PA management are for a large part determined by global political economic developments, it should be possible to identify some key developments that are likely to have important effects on the (near) future of biodiversity conservation and PA management. We will try to explore and empirically illustrate the effects of three macropolitical economic developments that have dominated many social scientific discussions in the last one and a half decade: (1) the fall of communism and the subsequent hegemony of neoliberalism, (2) globalisation and the ICT revolution and most recently, (3) the international emphasis on security.

### **THE FALL OF COMMUNISM AND THE SUBSEQUENT DOMINANCE OF NEOLIBERAL CAPITALIST IDEOLOGY**

#### *Socio-Political Context*

Just weeks before the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, the ‘communist empire’ collapsed, ending the so-called Cold War. Not long after, exclamations on the ultimate victory of neoliberal capitalist ideology arose, even arguing that humankind now entered the ‘final ideological stage in history’ (Fukuyama 1992). Although few shared this conviction, it was clear that neoliberalism had become the dominant international ideology (Burchill 2001). Two particular effects worth scrutinising in some more detail are the dominance of the ‘Washington Consensus’ in international relations and international ‘development’<sup>5</sup> and the ‘commercialisation of everything’.

Basically, the Washington Consensus comes down to three closely related economic principles that are portrayed as being vital for two major cornerstones of neoliberal capitalist ideology: continuous growth and continuous ‘progress’ towards some state of ‘development’. These three principles are privatisation, stabilisation and liberalisation. In short, privatisation entails either the full or the partial transferring of ownership of ‘capital’ or ‘assets’ from a public entity to a private entity or that public sector institutions start functioning according to ‘private sector-operating principles and mechanisms’ (McDonald and Ruiters 2005: 17).<sup>6</sup> Stabilisation comes down to the stabilising of social and political structures to such extent that they are conducive to, or at least do not hamper a smooth running of economic market processes. Fi-

nally, liberalisation in a very general sense puts emphasis on freedom of individualistic choice as to how capital or assets should be developed, marketed, bought and sold in an open and competitive market environment.

Another major effect of the dominance of neoliberal thinking is that all segments of society become more and more subject to market logic or 'commercialisation' (Sonnenfeld and Mol 2002; McDonald and Ruiters 2005). Of course, mercantilist market principles have a long history especially in the western hemisphere, but it is clear that they received a strong worldwide boost after the ending of the cold war (Harvey 2005). But 'to presume that markets and market signals can best determine all allocative decisions is to presume that everything can in principle be treated as a commodity. Commodification presumes the existence of property rights over processes, things and social relations, that a price can be put on them, and that they can be traded subject to legal contract' (Harvey 2005: 165). The core of commercialisation is thus found in the transformation of the qualitative intrinsic or 'use value' of goods, services and people to prioritising their quantitative 'exchange value', determined in monetary worth (McDonald and Ruiters 2005: 21).

An important consequence of this transformation is a continuously increasing need for *marketing*. If the value of goods, services and even people is increasingly measured by the market's demand for them (e.g. what people are willing to pay for it or their *exchange value*), then the active stimulation of this demand becomes a necessity. After all, the existence of a market presumes *competition*, which means that if one supplier is able to increase the demand for their products through marketing, its competitors will lose their share of the market unless they reciprocate with their own marketing. Hence, commercialisation becomes self-perpetuating: more and more previously untouched things or spheres need to be commodified to allow expansion of markets and opportunities for marketing. According to Kovel (2002: 42) this process can even occur perversely, since neoliberalism sees 'each boundary/barrier as a site for commodity formation'. For example, the unintended side effect of overeating has been an increased amount of people suffering from bulimia, a situation which in turn can be commoditised by marketing 'home fitness videos' and weigh-less drugs. Another sphere that has not been exempted from commoditisation is conservation.

### ***Neoliberal Conservation***

Neoliberalism has turned land, fauna and flora into '*natural resources*' whereby their principal value is their exchange value and their right to existence based on what the market is willing to pay for them in monetary terms (McAfee 1999). According to Liverman (2004: 734): 'this move to commodify nature and market its services is a massive transformation of the human-environment relationship and of the political economy of regions and landscapes'. Based on this transformation, Murphree (2000: 10) has identified



several 'enduring challenges' for biodiversity conservation and PA management that according to him 'have taken on particular forms and acquired growing salience in our recent environmental history'. The first of these deals with the equation of natural supplies and human demands. The second is the actual commercialisation of nature, more commonly known as 'payments for environmental services'.

First the demand and supply issue. The basic dilemma is as follows: once human demands outweigh the supplies nature can provide, some kind of management control becomes necessary to balance the two. Historically, there have been many localised examples of human demands outweighing natural supplies. However, the strains on this management control seem to have become much more severe in recent times. These strains include increased levels of technology for the exploitation of nature, demographic changes, the increasing distance between production and consumption (and thus decreased visibility of environmental destruction), changing cultural habits, etc. According to the recent Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, it is clear that current human consumption far exceeds the earth's resources and this is not 'sustainable'<sup>7</sup> (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005). Hence, regulatory management in order to balance demand and supply is essential. So far, however, the dominant regulatory system is the self-regulatory neoliberal one, with competition and market as its main regulatory principles. A good example hereof is the current climate change issue. Those countries that have not ratified the Kyoto protocol, most notably the USA and Australia, justified their decision saying that they prefer a self-regulatory system of climate adaptation and mitigation. But this does not mean that the Kyoto agreement is not neoliberal. To the contrary: the only politically acceptable way of dealing with climate change appeared the trading of carbon emissions on a 'carbon market'. But the effects of neoliberalism on conservation go further than the marketisation of conservation, as exemplified by the recent trends of 'commoditisation of nature' and 'payment for environmental services'.

In extreme market logic, a product only has right of existence if it can muster a clientele, a market. If not, neoliberal economic theory would predict that the product is bound to disappear or be replaced by a more popular competing product. Transposing this logic to the environmental domain, nature and biodiversity have to be justified by ensuring a demand for their existence. Indeed, many studies have already tried to identify 'environmental services' and their (potential) clientele (see for example, Costanza et al. 1997 for an overview). Among others, these services include water for household and agricultural consumption, (certain) biodiversity for tourism and climate regulation for urban heat amelioration and wind generation (Costanza et al. 1997). However, this shift in importance from use to exchange value of nature is much contested. Within the conservation biology network associated to the neoprotectionist resurgence we for instance find passionate pleas for an appreciation of

nature for its intrinsic value and not just for what it means to people in market terms (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999).

A last noteworthy effect of neoliberal dominance is an increasing acceptance of, or even a 'need' for private sector involvement in biodiversity conservation. This shift follows years of activism against private sector operations and their impact on the environment. It can be argued that this has partly been an image makeover on the part of the private sector. The oil company Shell, for example, quite effectively restyled itself as environmentally friendly after years of protests against their polluting of the Niger delta in Nigeria.<sup>8</sup> But arguably more important is that a lot of money can be made with biodiversity conservation. This is partly due to the development of the international eco-tourism market with travellers seeking unspoilt natural areas for enjoyment and recreation. Moreover, PAs make for great conference centres and business meeting places. As a result, private sector involvement in biodiversity conservation and protected areas management has exploded in the last decade (Langholz 2003; Child 2004).

One example of an organisation that combines business interests with biodiversity conservation is African Parks Foundation (APF). Although a statutory non-governmental organisation, its business interests are quite obvious, with its founding chairman, the late multimillionaire Paul Fentener van Vlissingen, having been one of the owners of Makro and Calor Gas. APF currently manages seven PAs in five countries in Africa. On their website, they claim they run the parks as business: 'African Parks is managed on the basis of business disciplines such as increasing the sources of income, cost control, accountability and delivery with the long-term objective that each park becomes a viable entity that benefits the local community'.<sup>9</sup> One of the (contractual) parks, Marakele National Park in South Africa, clearly adheres to more upmarket eco-tourism, which fits in with the many private game reserves in Limpopo Province, suggesting that biodiversity conservation is not the only imperative. Although not a new approach, public or private nature reserves and PAs run according to a business approach such as Marakele have of late gained in popularity and studies to understand their (economic and developmental) impacts have been or are being undertaken (Child 2004). One effect, however, is clear. In areas of the world where land rights and conservation are contested issues or where there are high levels of poverty, privatised nature reserves represent a new form of dispossession or obstacles to effective re-distributive reforms. This is surely the case in South Africa, for instance, where conversion of land use to conservation-related activities enjoys certain exemptions for reform.

So far, we have shown how conservation has to re-invent itself to remain politically acceptable in a neoliberal world. But proponents of the market approach go even further by maintaining that the market logic works to create synergies between conservation and development, thus falling in line with the currently dominant paradigm of CBC. However, a recent special issue of the *Journal of Wildlife Law and Policy* on markets in relation to CBC has scruti-

nised this assumption and found that in Africa, communities and market logic in relation to conservation are still very far from being compatible (Levine and Wandesforde-Smith 2004). They state two reasons why. First, ‘the invisible hand of the market has not worked by indirection to produce anything remotely approaching a broad groundswell of support among the majority of Africans in Africa for wildlife conservation’ (Levine and Wandesforde-Smith 2004: 138). This has often been an assumption of neoliberals, but so far evidence has found that markets in Africa do not function as smoothly and efficiently as in developed countries, while issues of accessibility, political instability, different cultural ideas about economy (for instance more based on kinship or patron–client relations than on demand–supply logic) and high volatility in some important market sectors such as tourism further inhibit markets to function as western proponents would want them to. Second, Levine and Wandesforde-Smith point at the failure of most decentralisation policies in African countries to give local people decision-making power over natural resources. They argue that ‘in the face of neoliberal downsizing, state agencies desperately struggle to retain some form of control, and the newly opened access to cash in CBRNM programmes can be an irresistible temptation, if not for national, governments, then for local governments, to appropriate. Rather than increasing community control, decentralisation has placed disadvantaged rural communities in competition with the state in a contest that they are unlikely to win’ (Levine and Wandesforde-Smith 2004: 139). All in all, supporting evidence for a market-based approach of CBC seems to be lacking, at least in Africa, but so far, this has not stopped many organisations and governments from trying.

The debate around neoliberal conservation has been intense and has brought about fierce contestations and many paradoxes. However, as Hartwick and Peet (2003) have pointed out, neoliberal ideology seems to have a way of effectively assuaging paradoxes and incorporating them (see also Kovel 2002). This makes it hard to challenge its fundamental assumptions, guaranteeing that the dominance of neoliberal capitalist ideology will continue to have major effects on biodiversity conservation and PA management.

## GLOBALISATION AND THE ICT REVOLUTION

### *Socio-Political Context*

Despite, or perhaps because of its vagueness and elusiveness, the concept of globalisation is one of the most discussed phenomena of the last two decades. In an age where the advance of technology continuously increases the speed and volume of people, goods, ideas and information across the globe, posing that something globalising is taking place is seemingly very straightforward. And even though some observers argue that in the past there have also been ‘phases of globalisation’, Held and McGrew (2002: 2) contend that: ‘although

contemporary globalisation has elements in common with its past phases, it is distinguished by unique spatio-temporal and organisational features, creating a world in which the extensive reach of global relations and networks is matched by their relative high intensity, high velocity and high impact propensity across many facets of social life, from the economic to the environmental'. In other words, present-day globalisation has fundamentally altered political, economic and social dynamics and processes, in turn influencing the dynamics and processes surrounding PA management and biodiversity conservation as well. Under the heading of 'bioregional conservation', we propose three main 'spatio-temporal and organisational' conservation consequences of globalisation: (1) holistic and post-border approaches to conservation, (2) the disregarding of (historical) space and time in nature conservation and (3) the clash between globalistic and Africanist views on nature conservation. Important to stress here is that a linear cause-effect relationship between globalisation and the three conservation 'consequences' can never be proven. Some of these have already been in effect for long and globalisation has just reinforced them, or provided the context under which they could thrive.

### ***Bioregional Conservation***

Firstly, globalisation has literally and mentally created space and time to regard the natural environment in a more globally holistic way. One specific effect of this has been the assuaging of the importance of the state and international borders in international environmental governance (Biermann and Dingwerth 2004), which is very likely an effect of this same trend in international governance studies in general (Rosenau 1997; Held and McGrew 2002). Consequentially, we have seen the rise in popularity of bioregionalism (Fall 2003), ecosystem and landscape approaches (Driver et al. 2003), global environmental governance (Biermann and Dingwerth 2004) and perhaps most recently, Transfrontier Conservation Areas (Wolmer 2003; Büscher and Dietz 2005). All these are trends in nature conservation or environmental governance that surpass the nation-state as the ultimate organisational unit and thus regard international boundaries as something 'unnatural'.

Secondly, Dietz (1996) points to the importance of increased organisational, managerial and cultural mobility across space and time in relation to natural resource management. Looking at natural resource management and biodiversity conservation from an entitlement perspective, Dietz argues that globalisation has decreased the *felt* importance for many actors between an entitlement to natural resources and a specific location. Thus, 'the activities of external intervening agents can deeply influence the relationship of local communities with the natural resources' (Dietz 1996: 44). Of course, the influence of external agents on natural resources in Africa is centuries old and has been the most defining feature of current-day environmental governance and management (Hulme and Murphree 2001), but the difference is that the

relativity of space and time has never been as absolute as it is now (or at least for those who can afford it). Thus, we see that actors from all over the globe not only constantly meddle in Africa's biodiversity conservation affairs, but even feel morally entitled to do so (Dietz 1996; Nelson 2003; Büscher and Dietz 2005). Again, the example of the APF suits this discussion. On their website, the APF declares that 'most of Africa's national parks are in rapid decline and, within a few years, they will be lost to Africa and the world forever. We work with a strong sense of urgency that something must be done now, before it is too late'.<sup>10</sup> In this self-entitled right to intervene, the APF does not stand alone. According to Chudy (2006: 45) there is 'a growing trend of western philanthropists who use their personal fortunes to buy enormous tracts of land in countries where they feel that governments are failing to safeguard their natural heritage'.

Finally, globalisation cannot be understood without analysing its antonym of localisation. In fact, many influential authors pose that this dialectic between localisation and globalisation is perhaps the most defining feature in understanding current-day global affairs (Rosenau 1997; Friedman 2000; Held and McGrew 2002). As shown above, in an age whereby neoliberal marketing and making belief are constantly growing in importance, the struggle over the operationalisation of ideas also intensifies. In very broad brush strokes, then, one can often characterise concepts or ideas such that they reflect the globalisation/localisation dialectic. Vale and Maseko (1998) have done so, for example, with the concept of African Renaissance. They identify globalist and Africanist interpretations of the concept. According to them, the globalist interpretation adheres more towards western ideas associated with the Washington Consensus, while the Africanist interpretation hinges more towards African identity, culture and history. In conservation practice, it is clear that the globalisation-localisation dialectic is becoming an important political economic trend defining new trends and behaviour in biodiversity conservation and PA management. The question then becomes whether there are globalist and Africanist approaches to biodiversity conservation and PA management arising and what they constitute (see also Van Ameron and Buscher 2005). An empirical example from the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project (MDTP)<sup>11</sup> might help to illustrate this.

The MDTP is one of the many transfrontier conservation areas currently being pursued in Southern Africa.<sup>12</sup> Jointly managed by South Africa and Lesotho, its objectives are to conserve the countries' shared Maloti-Drakensberg mountain ecosystem and stimulate the resident populations' development through eco-tourism. Despite being a *transfrontier* project, South Africa and Lesotho operationalised these objectives very differently. The South African Project Coordination Unit (PCU) embarked on an extended bioregional planning approach, focusing predominantly on the identification of conservation priority areas and integrated PA management. The Lesotho PCU prioritised the involvement of local people in the project area. They held many public in-

formation gatherings, erected local structures and tried to plug the project's objectives into the ongoing decentralisation process in Lesotho. Both PCUs did try to accommodate the others' approach, but their first priorities remained very different throughout the project.

Although one has to be careful not to dismiss the nuances and dynamics in both approaches, it is clear that the South African approach hinges more towards 'globalism', while the Lesotho approach could be termed 'Africanist'. The South African PCU stressed the wider Maloti-Drakensberg bioregion rather than the actual project area as the 'planning domain'; much valued 'clear' land tenure arrangements with a preference for formal PAs with strictly regulated access to resources and pressed for the concept of 'payments for environment services' to be taken up in the project. Moreover, they took a very rational approach to decision making in the project, based on scientific data. All these characteristics are closely associated with globalist neoliberal thinking. In fact, several people interviewed in the project directly identified the South African approach as 'western' or 'European' oriented. The Lesotho PCU, on the other hand, resisted at first the wider planning domain because they rather wanted to entrench themselves in the original project area through various local structures, from 'district steering committees', 'managed resource associations' to local tourism and pony trekking associations. Their approach was much more relational instead of rational or based on scientific data. With respect to the land tenure situation of Lesotho—being communal and thus for many neoliberal globalist thinkers very chaotic or unorganised—one of the PCU members illustrated this well by saying that 'as a Mosotho,<sup>13</sup> I feel that all the resources belong to all the people',<sup>14</sup> after he had acknowledged that some form of exclusionary PA was probably necessary to stop degradation of the rangelands. This emphasis on culture and commonage came back in many more interviews and participatory observations by the first author and can clearly be associated to a more Africanist approach.

It is clear from the example that the two PCUs differed in approach. In itself, this does not say much about what works in practice. However, the very conflict of approaches greatly impacted on the collaboration in the project and thus on the direction and impact of the project. Although this is just one example, it is likely that with the increasing interaction between actors from around the globe, the struggle for interpretation of ideas and concepts is also likely to increase in velocity. Hence, localisation and globalisation are important political economic dynamics that will define new trends and behaviour in biodiversity conservation and PA management for the foreseeable future.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL EMPHASIS ON SECURITY**

### ***Socio-Political Context***

The latest political economic phenomenon which is likely to have major consequences for biodiversity conservation and PA management is the interna-

tional (re-)emphasis on security after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the USA on 11 September 2001. As this is a very recent phenomenon and its effects still very much debated, we will treat this only shortly here, indicating and illustrating a few likely consequences for the issues concerned with in this paper.

Most important in the international discussion around security is that the concept is again framed in terms of the nation state. This is despite the conceptual shifts triggered by the end of the cold war. Duffield (2001) notes that after the cold war, security issues were diffuse and often related to the free movement of people across boundaries. Rather than looking at security from the perspective of interstate wars, the post-cold war era suggested that security can be defined in many different ways and on many different levels (Mukwaya 2004). One important way seemed to be the link between environmental degradation and potential conflicts in securing livelihoods or economic profit.

Developments since 9/11, however, have led the current US government, which dominates the debate, to focus purely on national state security, exemplified by the erection of the new US department of homeland security. This re-emphasis on the state in an era of seemingly decreased state importance due to globalisation has had two major effects. It firstly sparked a resurgence of nationalisms with all the symbolism that this entails (flags and other national symbols, etc.), especially so in the USA. By reactionary default, this then also happened in many other countries in the world, especially in the West where a re-tightening of immigration laws has been a subtle result of a response to the perceived new threats to national security.<sup>15</sup> In Southern Africa, the bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam in 1998 led to calls for a regional SADC security strategy aimed at controlling the free human movement after one of the suspected terrorists was located in Cape Town in 1999 (Rifer 2005). The reaction of African countries to the perceived global terrorism threat can at best be described as either placid and/or 'accepting' as it is often linked to donor support from the west or using 'terrorist' discourses to suit national interests (Mukwaya 2004).

Secondly, because terrorism forms a threat to state security, the exact opposite is also seen to be true: state failure leads to or is conducive to terrorism. Hence, a justification for increased state control or interventions from the West becomes apparent here and this is exactly what we see happening throughout the world. For example, perceived 'terrorist training countries' can be attacked on the pretext that not doing so will create insecurities for the US. Weak African states find themselves in complicity with the US's unilateral interferences on the pretext of deflecting internal conflicts and threats from non-state agents. For instance, recent bombings by the US on suspected Islamic terrorists in Somalia were portrayed as protecting the interests of both the USA and the Somalian government.

Another important aspect of the international emphasis on security is that it does not only include issues directly related to terrorism and security (such as defence or weapon control). Issues such as economy, health, culture and the environment become strategic weapons in the war on terror and are conceptually re-operationalised to fit the security framework and justify increased state control. This is predominantly played out in the form of international aid or support to national programmes of poor countries. How this works out for the environment and natural resources will be discussed below. In congruence with the terminology used in the political debates on security we will do this under the heading of ‘hijacked conservation’.

### ***Hijacked Conservation***

The first possible consequence, paradoxically enough when considering the discussions of the previous trends, might be a re-tightening of borders. The re-assertion of the nation state has caused an increase on the emphasis on borders and issues of immigration, which could pose new problems and challenges especially to the development of transfrontier conservation areas (Dzingirai 2004).<sup>16</sup> While it can be argued that more secure boundaries would result from close management of TFCAs, evidence from Southern Africa shows that issues of sovereignty have affected or slowed negotiations for establishing TFCAs (see Duffy 1997). Thus, we see a contradiction between the implementation of TFCAs and the rhetoric of peace and security. It should be pointed out, however, that some of the re-tightening of borders is—quite opportunistically—related to economic issues, especially where one country is economically stronger than other TFCA parties. This is the case with South Africa and almost all of its neighbours, but has become most pronounced with Zimbabwe, which has been experiencing political and economic turmoil. In short, even with TFCAs there is a tendency to rely on militarised security and electrified fences to secure boundaries, rather than to use them as vehicles for peace and security (Whande forthcoming).

Another paradoxical effect of the security trend is that conservation and PA management seem to have become even more marginalised due to increased attention for the issues. For example, there has been much recent attention for the issue of climate change. Moreover, it has been argued that Africa’s new strategic significance after 9/11 might offer opportunities for increased attention for biodiversity conservation due to increases in the influx of tourists that want to visit PAs and a renewed attention for Africa’s minerals and oil (Mills 2004). However, the point is whether this attention is genuine or whether other, ‘larger’ issues determine that attention must be paid to conservation issues. The pragmatic environmentalist might make her or his peace with increased environmental protection and awareness under the wider objective of state security. However, for this reasoning to hold, two assumptions must be in place.



First, environmental security, including public safety from environmental dangers, and national state security must somehow be reconciled to complement and strengthen each other. This proves problematic as it would involve a shift of resources from state security to environmental protection. A related reason is that environmental threats do not, from the face of it, pass as an obvious security issue despite the increased linking of environmental degradation to social and political conflict. According to Vogler (1996: 10), 'environmental and orthodox national security concerns are usually regarded as being profoundly antithetical in almost every possible respect'. Second, and probably the reason for the failing of the first assumption, security as defined at the state level is very different from security defined at other levels of aggregation. For example, state security rarely considers local communities' definition of security and these are likely to revolve around issues of livelihoods, tenure over and access to land and natural resources, while the state is predominantly interested in sovereignty issues and national protection against invasion or attacks. An example in this regard was the conflict between Botswana and Namibia over Sedudu/Kasikili island along the Chobe River, which was initially a site of localised conflicts of access to and use of resources but was transformed as both governments deployed gunships in the area before final resolution was reached at the International Court (see Ashton 2000). In short, the concept of security acquires such differences in meaning for different actors that a possible connection becomes very difficult.

In conclusion, although the effects of the current international emphasis on security are far from clear, the prospects for the issues of biodiversity conservation and PA management do not look good. This conclusion in itself is not new. Dyer, writing in 1996 before the current emphasis on security, concluded the following in a piece on environmental security as a universal value: 'Environmental security and national security are alternative values, arising in the context of alternative world views. If the case is made out for adopting a global perspective, environmental security could stand as a universal value on which more localised environmental policy could be properly founded. If traditional inter-state perspectives hold sway, there is little chance of environmental security becoming any more than an addendum to the traditional politico-military security agenda' (Dyer 1996: 37).

## CONCLUSIONS

This article sought to review narratives and trends in biodiversity conservation and PA management. It started with the assumption that trends in biodiversity conservation and PA management are in large part determined by global political and economic developments. The world political economy determines how both policy issues inherent in the conservation and development debate need to continuously re-operationalise themselves in order to remain politically acceptable. This argument was then used to identify three recent

trends in conservation, which we have termed ‘neoliberal conservation’, ‘bio-regional conservation’ and ‘hijacked conservation’. In short, neoliberalism, globalisation and the recent international emphasis on security are having and will have major impacts on conservation and PA management in the (near) future. The article has tried to spell out some of these influences.

Although the argument that conservation and PA management are influenced by wider political economic trends is not new, we hope that by having spelt out these influences more precisely, actors in the debate will more consciously pay attention to this reality. This may sound straightforward, but because participants in the debate are often busy arguing with each other—in terms of biocentric *vs* anthropocentric arguments—they lose the ability to see how both conservation and development are heavily influenced by wider political economic trends. Acceptance of the influence of political economic issues on biodiversity conservation might lead to better understanding and appreciation of these wider dynamics—both constraints and opportunities—that impinge on them, in turn contributing to a better ‘manoeuvrability’ for the management and success of more technical analyses furthering better conservation of biodiversity and PA management.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank William Wolmer for his important contributions leading up to the first draft of this article and his stimulating comments throughout the writing process; Conrad Steenkamp and Daniel Marnewick of the Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiative; Bernhard Venema and three anonymous reviewers for their critical and constructive comments. The Amsterdam Institute for International Development funded part of the first author’s on-going research. The Embassy of Finland in South Africa, the German Research Foundation and the Ryochi Sasakawa Fund for Young Leaders funded parts of the second author’s on-going research.

### **Notes**

1. Hereby, we lean on such recent works as Harvey (2005) and Ferguson (2006).
2. See for instance Duffield (2001) and Mukwaya (2004).
3. Influential works that we take from are Held et al. (1999), Held et al. (2002) and Rosenau (1997; 2003).
4. This became known as the ‘New International Economic Order’ (NIEO).
5. Note that many have pointed towards an emerging Post-Washington Consensus in international development thinking (see Öniş and Şenses 2005), which posits that the ‘hard’ neoliberalism of the 1980s has given way to a more critical approach, accepting alternative views on development. However, there is little doubt that in general world affairs neoliberalism has become increasingly dominant and that development has not been exempted from this trend, leaving Öniş and Şenses to be very careful in their conclusion that although a Post-Washington Consensus has opened up some space for alternatives, it is doubtful whether much of its practical operationalisation has actually changed.

6. According to McDonald and Ruiters (2005: 17), examples of private sector operating principles and mechanisms are profit maximisation, cost recovery, competitive bidding, cost-benefit analyses, performance-targeted salaries, ringfenced decision making and demand-driven investments, while 'traditional public sector-operating principles' comprises integrated planning, (cross)subsidisation, supply-driven decision making, equity orientation, etc
7. As in meeting the needs of the present generations without jeopardising the needs of future generations.
8. Many NGOs, such as Greenpeace, however, argue that this make over is only a public relations exercise and that nothing has changed in reality.
9. [www.africanpark-foundation.org](http://www.africanpark-foundation.org). Last viewed: 20 February 2007.
10. See [www.africanparks-foundation.org](http://www.africanparks-foundation.org). Last viewed: 20 February 2007.
11. This example is based on the first author's field research on the MDTP from 2005–2007.
12. See Büscher (2005) for a more extended overview of the project.
13. Inhabitant of Lesotho (singular). Plural: Basotho.
14. MDTP PCU staff member, meeting 17 June 2005, Maseru, Lesotho
15. The current centre-right political parties on mainland Europe, for instance, campaign for office based on increased immigration controls.
16. Following on this statement, it must be said that many TFCAs, especially in Southern Africa, have actively taken up the security challenge and are now devising security strategies despite that they had often not planned this beforehand. One example of a TFCA in this regard is the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project.

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