

When Race and Social Equity Matters in Nature Conservation in Post-apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

Current academic literature examining race and nature conservation in South Africa has relied mainly on secondary data analysis while neglecting the voices of local communities. This article draws on empirical experience to assess the extent of the impact of race and social equity in conservation, with the aim of promoting sustainable and more inclusive conservation practices in South Africa. Empirical results are drawn from different cases to examine racial equity in conservation. The findings suggest that conservation practices in post-apartheid South Africa are still exclusionary for the majority black population. Promoting more inclusive conservation is complex and requires a broader conservation agenda for more inclusivity and to genuinely tackle issues of poverty. There is a need for conservation groups to also include the previously marginalised in leadership structures and to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems. This will assist in changing the perception of marginalised people that particular persons dominate conservation. The paper further makes specific recommendations on how conservation can become more inclusive across social and race lines.

Keywords: neoliberal conservation, race, social equity, sustainability, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Despite the inclusion of racial and social equity in the constitutions of most democratic nations, including South Africa, concerns pertaining to race and social equity continue to manifest in different forms and various fraternities, including conservation (Leonard 2013; Kepe 2009; Teelucksingh 2007). Historically, during colonisation and apartheid-like eras in Africa, conservation appeared to be predominantly associated with particular races, specifically whites and persons belonging to the 'upper class', such as the elite and those in positions of power or authority (Kamuti 2018; Musavengane and

Simatele 2016; Jones 2016). In the history of development and natural resource management in Africa, race and social equity have been thought of as key factors in determining who will participate in conservation (Musavengane and Simatele 2017; Jones 2016; Teelucksingh 2007). For example, according to Anderson and Grove (1987), Europeans' impression of themselves as 'civilised' and Africans' as 'uncivilised' reflected the social attitudes of white cultural superiority and the inferior status of blacks at the time. Khan (2002) observed that this ideology took root in South Africa as elsewhere in Africa, and its characteristics were handed on to the traditional conservation organisations that became active during the twentieth century, strongly influencing their actions and development (see also Büscher 2011).

In an effort to rectify such misplaced perceptions and practices, environmental justice advocates have been and are pushing for inclusive policies and equal representation and participation in conservation (Tantoh and Simatele 2018; Vedeld et al. 2016; Leonard 2013). However, the questions still to be fully answered are: in what ways do the existing conservation regulations and policies promote inclusivity

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and participation in conservation? How are race and social equity influencing conservation efforts in the post-colonial or post-apartheid era? In this paper, we therefore use South Africa to examine the dynamics of race and social equity in conservation, whilst attempting to answer the outlined questions.

There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of race and social equity to promote social capital and enhance 'peace' (Jones 2016; Klein et al. 2015; Emery 2008). In the same vein, Kepe (2009) noted that silence about and the reluctance to address the issue of race in conservation and development at large could be a deterrent to realising sustainable communities and promoting better conservation practices. The fact that race issues (to a greater extent) are not (sufficiently) acknowledged in conservation does not nullify their existence. Race and social equity issues tend to raise emotions whenever they are discussed and as a result attempts are made to conceal them by those in authority (i.e. traditional leaders, legislators and conservation organisations) to avoid potentially uncomfortable discussions (Khothari 2006). However, the question is, in whose interest and benefit is the prevention of such discussions? For example, Musavengane (2017) noted with concern the negative impact of social equity on the co-management of common pool natural resources in land reformed communities, where youth, women and the poor tend to be marginalised. Yet many conservation programmes that seek to address poverty and improve community livelihoods seem to shun confronting race concerns. Khothari (2006) believed that the reason for shunning race can be attributed to the fluid nature of the concept, thus it is regarded as much safer to address race and social equity issues through other variables such as culture, ethnicity or religion, instead of confronting them directly (Kepe 2009). This is why there is need for dialogue regarding the dynamics of race and social equity in conservation in the 'new' democratic South Africa.

In this paper, our conceptual understanding of race subscribes to Teelucksingh's (2007: 649) environmental racialisation; according to the author, environmental racialisation "recognizes that agents' intentional actions can result in racist outcomes, even if these outcomes are systemic". The adoption of environmental racialisation in our case is motivated by the influence of historical processes on today's policies and practices. Environmental racialisation avoids treating race as an analytic category, which might appear to be a way of resuscitating and legitimising racial categories (Teelucksingh 2007). Instead, it is fluid, non-essential and situated, and it incorporates the racialised effects of ideologies and cultural practices that persist in the post-apartheid era and oftentimes determine the social setting that generates racialised restrictions in many areas, including conservation (Khothari 2006). Furthermore, we refer social equity to justice, equality, fairness, and forms of associations or groupings that exist in a community and have the ability to influence conservation outcomes unconsciously. Social equity is comprised of social class, gender ethnicity or culture, generational, educational and occupational categories (Klein et al. 2015).

In light of the above, this paper aims to establish the extent to which race and social equity influence the success of nature conservation in South Africa. Although limited academic literature has emerged in South Africa to examine race and social equity in nature conservation, these contributions have mostly been confined to secondary data analysis, whilst neglecting the voices of local community members impacted negatively by conservation practices. The article draws on empirical experiences to assess the extent of the impact of race and social equity in conservation, with the aim of promoting sustainable and more inclusive conservation practices in South Africa. In order to do so, the article will first explore nature conservation and race/social equity dynamics during apartheid. The following section then provides a discussion on the inclusive nature of conservation in post-apartheid South Africa. A discussion and conclusion follows, along with recommendations for more inclusive nature conservation.

THE NEXUS OF RACE, SOCIAL EQUITY AND CONSERVATION

In most situations, conservation benefits are highly skewed, and this inequity is thought to affect the achievement of the desired conservation objectives (Leonard 2013; Agrawal and Redford 2009; Agrawal 2001). This has led to the common supposition that the attainment of the success triple bottom line goals (i.e. effective, efficient and equitable) are the best in attaining set conservation goals. Profoundly, in their study on the probability of biodiversity conservation success, Klein et al. (2015) found that equity has a significant influence on the success of conservation. Furthermore, the authors reported that imperfect equity tends to produce the best conservation outcomes, posing a threat of ignoring or even negating the relationship between equity and success.

Equity is an important component in the nature conservation sector, and plays a key role in its success (Ban et al. 2013). Equity is concerned with fairness and justice for all stakeholders (Aumer-Ryan et al. 2007). However, it is a broad concept that should be narrowed to contextualise the purpose of the study. The focus of this paper is on how equity influences the participation of people in conservation and the outcome of conservation efforts, therefore we focus on a narrow view of social equity (see Table 1). Broadly, equity theory (see Adams 1965) anchors on exchange, dissonance and social comparison theories in making suggestions on how individuals perceive their relationship with others. In their seminal study, Huseman et al (1987) outlined four major propositions that capture equity theory: 1) individuals assess the input/output ratio when evaluating their relationships with others; 2) inequality is believed to exist when the outcome/input ratios of an individual in comparison to others are perceived to be unequal; 3) the greater the perception of inequality, the more one distances oneself from an activity; and 4) the more distressed one feels, the harder one works to restore equity through diverse restoration techniques (e.g. altering inputs or outcomes, avoiding comparisons, or terminating the relationship).

Table 1
Types of social equity that can influence conservation

Equity type	Equity description
Social Class	Distribution of conservation costs and benefits based on social groupings (e.g. the elite and the local community; the poor and rich; the upper and lower classes)
Gender	Distribution of benefits and costs based on the gender group. If a particular gender receives more, it will be regarded as inequity unless justified collectively
Ethnicity/cultural	Distribution of benefits and costs on ethnicity and cultural grounds. Equity is said to exist when John Rawls' (1971) veil of ignorance is applied. This entails the distribution of benefits without looking at the birth and social status of people
Generational	Distribution of costs and benefits from one generation to the next
Educational	Distribution of benefits and costs based on educational status (i.e. degree, diploma, certificate, matric or primary)
Occupational	Distribution of benefits and costs on the basis of an individual's trade or sector of employment

Source: Adapted from Klein et al. (2015)

Similarly, Klein (2015: 300) noted that “a complex collection of social structures, economic systems, and policy frameworks determine the relevance of equity to conservation outcomes, and thus conservation success”. These conservation equity social elements therefore define how wealth and power are distributed in natural resources management, and consequently influence and reflect access to natural resources within a community. In the same vein, John Rawls, whose goal was to define principles for distributive justice that are aligned or compatible with the ideals of freedom and equality, put forward two principles that should be followed to realise the desired equity (Rawls 1971). Of greater significance in the context of this study is Rawls' (1971) “*veil of ignorance*”, which encourages us to be ignorant of accidents of birth (i.e. colour of skin, place of birth, gender). In the context of conservation, this means that if we are thinking about principles that we are going to use for distributing conservation outcome/benefits fairly, we should not know anything about where we sit in society or our natural talents, i.e. the accidents of our birthplace/family and our genetic makeup. For example, we should not know whether we are black or white (or any other colour), or the socio-economic class from which we come. This said, it is important to note that equity issues across racial lines in South Africa are essential and delicate. Generally, although progressing much better economically than most African nations, the country is still fragile and shattered socially (Leonard 2013).

The theories presented so far help us to understand the significance of equity, which may lead to appreciating the need to integrate multi-actors in the conservation space. To unite multi-actors in the conservation arena, neoliberal practice has become a dominant approach. Neoliberalism is conceptualised as a complex process, with an inconsistent assembly of philosophies, institutions, discourses, actors and related practices, which aim to enhance the processes of

decentralisation, financialisation, marketisation, privatisation, and/or commodification in society (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016; Brenner et al. 2010). Neoliberal conservation is often associated with a triumphalist ‘triple win’ discourse that eulogises its ability to protect the environment, grow the economy, and consequently bring micro-benefits to local people (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016; Igoe and Brockington 2007). Thus, neoliberal conservation's protagonists set these interventions as primarily technical or apolitical in nature, with the intention of releasing the tensions that exist between conservation, the mitigation of environmental change, and the livelihoods of communities (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016; Bracking 2015). Roth and Dressler (2012) and Cavanagh and Himmelfarb (2015) noted that most often, projects regarded as neoliberal conservation greatly resemble the imprints of historical environmental policy and regulation and their connection to state formations. Kepe (2009) noted that conservation policies in South Africa are not far from the apartheid system, and conservation practices resemble many historical practices. Historians and political ecologists have noted strong relationships between current neoliberal conservation practices and pre-neoliberal practices, specifically the racially charged colonialism/apartheid in Africa (Ngubane and Brooks 2013).

International debate on race theory

Interest in racial matters and racial dynamics have been changing globally, over the past few decades. Winant (2000) noted that, the World War had significant dimensions of revulsion at racism and genocide. After the war era, there was an emergence of the social movements against colonial practices which were heavily racial. The prominent examples are the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid mobilisation in South Africa (Winant 2000). Although prefigured in various ways by ethnocentrism, the concept of race is modern, and taking preliminary form in prehistoric concepts of civilisation and barbarity (Snowden 1983), citizen and slave (Hannaford 1996). Furthermore, the rise of the world political economy exacerbated the idea of ‘race’. For example, the genealogy of race, can be traced to the onset of global economic integrations, the birth of seaborne empire, conquest of the Americas, and the rise of the Atlantic slave trade (see Winant 2000). The concept of race, therefore, emerged overtime as a kind of world-historical bricolage, which was more practical in defining economic, resource accessibility and sharing processes.

Theories about race and racism vary from biological to caste theories, and from class theories to theories based on Christianity theology. Proponents of the Darwinism ‘scientific’ theories are of the view that, “Africans are primitive, have smaller brains, and are a distinct and inferior species” (Van Dyk 1993: 77). At varied scales, the grey patches of this theory continue to appear to this day. Then, the rise of the Marxism led to the idea that Africans were enslaved in service to propel the growth of capitalism. Capitalism is believed to be exploitative in nature,

as it emphasises on keeping the wages of the labourers down to maximise profits (Van Dyk 1993). Moreover, Van Dyk (1993) noted that, despite the fact that the blacks have been victims of racial discrimination and inequality, other societies, blame the victim as an explanation for inequality. Mills (1959) profoundly postulated that, it is essential to understand the role of social structure to establish the meaning of race in relation to understanding characteristics of Africans. In an effort to advance the understanding of 'race theories', other variants emerged, ethnicity-based theories, class-based theories and nation-based theories. Ethnicity-based theories viewed race as the collective identity of people of the same culture. Class-based theories classified race in terms of economic status and group-based status, and nation-based theories perceive race in geopolitical descriptions largely determined by decolonisation processes (Winant 2000; Van Dyk 1993).

Combined, these theories will aid our analysis of the 'race and equity' nexus in South African conservation space through examining existing social structures and processes.

METHODOLOGY

The operational framework of this article is based on qualitative research, and the methodological positionality underlying it is interpretative in nature. A document analysis approach was adopted for data collection, which Neuman (2000) noted helps to compare cases, are less expensive and are unobtrusive compared to other methods. However, the main challenges of document analysis are that it is not suitable to evaluate opinions of different actors, and some documents may be sensitive and not publicly available. These challenges were mitigated by obtaining primary data through fieldwork research. The review process of archival records involved a search for literature using research search engines such as Scopus and Web of Science. Keywords such as 'conservation', 'apartheid', 'black Africans', 'race', 'class' and 'social equity' were inputted in the search engines, and 341 articles published between 2000 and 2018 were found. In addition to this, web-based search engines such as Yahoo, Google, and Google Scholar were employed to search for recent journal articles on the topic. Further scanning of articles led us to reviewing 51 articles, which had empirical evidence on the race/social equity continuum for conservation. Other grey literature from the print media (e.g. newspaper articles, reports and press conferences) were also engaged with to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of race and social equity in the South African conservation space. A rapid appraisal and meta-synthesis of these pieces of literature resulted in the identification of emerging themes on stakeholder participation in the spectrum of race and social equity continuum. The identified themes included: participation of Africans in conservation as service providers or visitors, perceptions of Africans on conservation, involvement of different classes of Black South Africans in conservation, and the role of traditional structures in conservation.

To support the evidence obtained during the review process, primary data was collected. The research drew on

fieldwork conducted by the first author between May 2014 and September 2017 in Gumbi (Uphongolo municipality) and Zondi (Umvoti municipality) communities in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The two communities claimed their land through the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 processes, and operate the Somkhanda and Ngome game reserves respectively. The second set of data was collected by the second author in Dullstroom, Mpumalanga (2014) and St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal (2016). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and personal observations. The participants included households (mainly Africans), game reserve visitors, policy makers, traditional leaders, and conservation project managers. All the interviews were transcribed and content analysis was used to code the data collected into themes. Neuman (2000) noted that content analysis is used to analyse similar sets of texts, and it can be used to compare content across different texts. The content was analysed qualitatively and was discussed concurrently with the fieldwork findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Nature conservation and race dynamics during and pre-apartheid

It is well known that race plays a critical role in the categorisation of people (Leonard 2012; Seekings 2008). Categorising people according to a racial hierarchy was central to repressive governance systems in colonised states and slave-based communities from the seventeenth century until the twentieth century (Jones 2016). Thus, it can be argued that epistemological racialisation stems from institutional or governmental racialisation, with racialisation referring to the social and political processes that give rise to racially construed groups (Skinner 2006).

Research suggests strong associations between current conservation practices and racially charged colonialism and apartheid in South Africa (Kepe 2009). In his analysis, Leonard (2013) observed that the idealisation of Africa as a Garden of Eden has strongly influenced the management and use of natural resources by local communities through prescribed notions which view local people as threats to their own resources, widening environmental injustice. A series of racist, disempowering and disenfranchising legislations were enacted to ensure the exclusion of black people from conservation activities during apartheid, which we term "conservation apartheid". Conservation apartheid is a manifestation of the more general phenomenon of conservation racism, which we define as policies and practices that differentially affect (whether intentionally or unintentionally) individuals, groups or communities on the basis of race or colour. Conservation racism, which can be equated to environmental racism, tends to affect people of colour whilst benefiting the white populace (Dickinson 2012; Stull et al. 2016).

In the same vein, Steyn (2004) was of the view that White people's ideologies on conservation during apartheid led to

their dominance in conservation, thereby excluding indigenous communities. Although apartheid was formally legalised in 1948 when the National Party won the elections, its roots were already put in place by colonialists from as far back as 1652 (Stull et al. 2016). First order rural marginalisation began with the forcible relocation of Black South Africans to rural spaces far from the economic and cultural hubs controlled by Whites, while second order rural marginalisation relegated Black South Africans to the worst land in these distant rural spaces. Lastly, the third order was the continued isolation and neglect of Black South Africans (Stull et al. 2016). These three orders of rural marginalisation have had a major influence in defining conservation policies, and appear to have created a sense of “hatred” toward conservation among Black South Africans and the majority of blacks on the African continent. Most notable was the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936, which forced black people out of the ‘prime’ land for Whites to inhabit and pursue conservation and agricultural activities.

From 1948, a series of aggressive laws against Black Africans was enacted and enforced, including the Separate Amenities Act (1953), which stipulated that any public premises could be reserved for the exclusive use of a particular race (Wilkins 2005). Government used the Act to establish an unfair and unequal distribution of natural resources, which affected Black people’s environmental attitudes and perceptions, and was a major influence on their lack of interest regarding conservation issues (Khan 2002). South African National Parks’ (SANParks) domestic tourist profile (see Table 2) reflects the slow adoption of conservation among black South Africans.

Against this backdrop we question the adoption, adaptability and resilience of conservation by Black South Africans 24 years after apartheid. Are apartheid systems still involved subtly in the formulation of conservation policies that are meant to bridge the ‘race and conservation’ gap? Kepe (2009) observed that conservation policies and attitudes within South Africa

still display evidence of racialised mindsets. It is important to note that although race played a major role during apartheid, social dynamics further added to the existing segregation, thereby widening the inequality gap. Combined, racial and social segregation strengthened the flow of resources and services to society’s upper echelon and further impoverished Black South Africans.

The discussion so far points towards apartheid as being the primary basis of inequality, which was heavily defined by, and anchored in, race and class (Seekings and Nattrass 2005). A large urban African working class emerged in major cities as most families lost their land and became dependent on wages to survive. Thus, during the four decades of apartheid, inequality remained high as those with more fiscal resources benefitted from the system compared to the middle and lower classes.

Within this context, a number of Black Africans became peasant farmers, boosting conservation and agrarian produce for whites. Due to the increased population of blacks, reserves were created where they could not pursue agrarian activities or have decent livelihoods (Seekings and Nattrass 2005). People in the reserves had to depend on remittances from those who had migrated to mines and other forms of employment in urban areas, while those who had no representatives in the cities remained poor. Simkins (1984) observed that the shortage of land negatively affected agricultural output for all households in the reserves², but the impact was felt most by the poorest in society.

Challenges towards inclusive nature conservation in post-apartheid South Africa

The dawn of democracy in 1994 sought to ensure the creation of a democratic governance system that is inclusive in all processes and structures. This resulted in the development of a Constitution in 1996 which guarantees the protection of the environment whilst improving the livelihoods of local

Table 2
South African National Parks Domestic Visitor Profiles

Population	2012/3		2013/4		2014/5		2015/6		2016/7		2017/8	
	Black South Africans	White South Africans	Black South Africans	White South Africans	Black South Africans	White South Africans	Black South Africans	White South Africans	Black South Africans	White South Africans	Black South Africans	White South Africans
Day Visitors	385,826	827,463	424,489	865,751	465,689	985,056	508,744	1091,080	555,800	1001,063	577,823	1000,934
Day Visitors/Total SA Day Visitors	31.8%	68.2%	32.9%	67.1%	32.1%	67.9%	31.8%	68.2%	35.7%	64.3%	36.6%	63.4%
Overnight Visitors	48,390	445,386	42,529	451,994	40,584	466,716	45,821	486,981	52,737	444,782	58,548	450,565
Overnight Visitors/Total SA Overnight Visitors	9.8%	90.2%	8.6%	91.4%	8.0%	92%	8.6%	91.4%	10.6%	89.4	11.5%	88.5%
Total	434,216	1268,592	467,018	1322,323	506,273	1456,025	554,565	1570,205	608,537	1447,331	636,371	1450,091
Total Visitors/Total SA Visitors	25.5%	74.5%	26.1%	73.9%	25.8%	74.2%	26.1%	73.9%	29.6%	70.4%	30.5%	69.5%

Source: SANPARKS (data received through e-mail and modified to contextualise)

*Please note that “Black South Africans” is inclusive of “Indian” and “Coloured”.

*Due to the way in which the South African demographic figures are collected and captured, SANParks is aware and accepts that there may be a small margin of error involved and that these figures may not be 100% accurate. This does not diminish the value of these measures in indicating trends in park visitation by South Africans.

*The table exclude figures from Agulhas, Table Mountain and West Coast National Parks. Agulhas overnight figures included as from 2011/2 and Lighthouse as from the second quarter of the 2012/3 financial year.

*Data capturing errors at Numbi Gate in 2013 caused considerable numbers of day visitors to reflect as overnight visitors to the Kruger National Park.

communities (RSA Government 1996). This commitment appears to have encountered enormous challenges in implementing policies that seek to overcome poverty, protect the environment and ensure the equal use of natural resources due to inherent and persistent apartheid tensions (Crane 2006; Kepe 2009; Büscher and Dressler 2012). It is in this context that Alexander (2002) associated the continual race, class and social equity challenges to the typical apartheid bourgeois path being followed in the 'new' South Africa when formulating and implementing policies. For example, in conservation, there is seemingly a continual widening of the gap between people of different races and social status. It is therefore difficult to expect different conservation outcomes whilst relying on conservation policies that may not be inclusive.

Although the intentions of the policies and their practices might be good, the outcomes seem to suggest otherwise. The examples and quotations used below, although not conclusive or exhaustive, serve to stress points about race and social equity dynamics in conservation in the post-apartheid era. An interrogation of race and social equity dynamics in conservation is critical to inform the kind of intervention needed. Kepe (2009: 876) also suggested that "assumptions concerning black people's knowledge about and interest in conservation need further interrogation".

Black people's involvement in conservation

It is widely acknowledged by a number of analysts that nature conservation continues to be a domain of Whites in terms of professionalism and activism (Leonard 2012; Van Damme and Meskell 2009; Marris 2007). This trend is closely attributed to the colonial approach to conservation as explained above, including systematic segregation and attacks on blacks, unjust resource use and imprisonment, and even killing in the name of conservation (Neumann 2004; Kepe 2004, 2009). Effective transformation is yet to be realised in the conservation sector as most non-governmental organisations are headed by Whites. According to Di Dold (Leonard 2013) from the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), "Our membership is still composed of middle to upper-income white membership. We've got in the whole of KwaZulu-Natal five black members. Their [Blacks] first question is; are you going to give me a job? They are trying to survive. We have done a lot of membership drives and we absolutely hit a blank wall...".

However there have been limited attempts to integrate blacks into conservation issues in post-apartheid South Africa through financial assistance and skills development. For example, according to WESSA's CEO Report (2016) more than 300 young recruits have successfully completed the Department of Environment Affairs funded Youth Environmental Services Programme in the Western Cape, which WESSA implemented between 2013 and 2015. The programme is an empowerment model designed to provide youth (18 to 35 years) from previously disadvantaged backgrounds with an integrated year-long training and workshop learning programme. Initiatives like these provide opportunities for young people to expand their environmental knowledge and become more involved in

conservation issues. In light of this, it is necessary to examine what impact such empowerment programmes are having in transforming the conservation sector to ensure better racial inclusion.

Additionally, are there current genuine efforts to incorporate blacks in leadership roles in conservation as opposed to just worker roles? Beinart (2000) and Ramutsindela (2004) note that hegemonic conservation ideas propagated by colonial and racialised mind-sets could still persist through education and other forms of knowledge transfer, which will probably make it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the existence of racialised thinking as the approaches will systematically be passed from one generation to another. This will be problematic if the knowledge being transferred has not evolved to include the cultural practices and beliefs of the blacks in conservation. Further interrogation in this regard is therefore needed to determine the level of adopting 'black conservation practices' in a democratic South Africa. It must also be understood, however, that social needs concerns (as emphasised by Dold above) amongst the black majority have also served to hinder black involvement in conservation issues. For example, South Africa remains an unequal nation, especially if we take into account its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).³ This is largely due to the elected government spearheading a neoliberal ideology (Bond 2005) whilst perpetuating apartheid-era environmental and social risks (Leonard 2011), for example many poor households still have unsatisfactory access to education, healthcare, energy, clean water and waste services (Hoogveen and Ozler 2005).

An environmental scientist at the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) (Interview, October 2013) noted a lack of participation by Black people in tourism and conservation in the Dullstroom area, which is a popular tourist destination that houses the endangered White-winged Flufftail (Birdlife South Africa 2014) and more than 150 bird species (De Jager 2010).

"I think the poor people [in the Dullstroom township] can't really afford to visit all these upmarket facilities in the protected areas. They haven't got the opportunities for the kids to go and have a game drive, or a bird watching, or a night drive, or fishing. So they are not really part of it [conservation], they can't experience the goodness of it."

Despite such social challenges, in an effort to ensure knowledge and skills transfer to young blacks in many land reformed communities within South Africa, collaborative management arrangements are entered into by local communities and conservation non-governmental organisations (CNGOs). For example, organisations such as the Wildlands Conservation Trust (WCT), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and WESSA have pledged to participate in knowledge transfer through co-management arrangements. For example, when the first author interviewed a young black manager at one of the CNGOs, who is also a beneficiary of a land claim in Gumbi community, about whether he was brainwashed by the conservation education system, he exclaimed that:

"I cannot say I am being brainwashed or not because I don't have knowledge on conservation, our parents never taught us

any, so I cannot make a comparison to determine whether what I learnt at the conservation college is biased or not. However, I can say that I learnt the right way of conservation”.

Unless this gap in conservation knowledge is narrowed down through good practices and adequate education that includes Africans, apathy and/or conservation conflicts will continue to prevail between and among local people and conservationists.

Traditional governance structures and influence of conservation attitudes

Traditional leaders have also influenced black people's attitudes to conservation issues in rural areas. For example, in Northern KwaZulu-Natal province, the Zondi community has claimed their land through the land restitution processes. Conservationists, in agreement with the community leaders, decided to only pursue conservation game farming on the reclaimed land without consulting all the concerned community members, and went on to erect fences/boundaries similar to those of the apartheid era. These actions were viewed as racial, as alluded to by a female respondent in her late 70s in the Zondi community:

“The Chief and his friends forcefully removed us from our homes to pave way for the game reserve. We were never consulted by the community leaders or Trust and we don't even know what a Community Trust is and how it came into being. To them [conservationists and traditional leaders], we are like enemies and undesirable species inhibiting the progress of conservation... they don't even care about us.”

Furthermore, the issues of social inequity in conservation tend to be more visible in rural communities, where power plays a critical role in accessing natural resources. In most circumstances, those in power appear to benefit more than those without power (Musavengane and Simatele 2017). This is mainly associated with the decay of the traditional governance systems, which has resulted in increased corruption and an unfair distribution of natural resources. In an interview with a former member of the Emvokweni Community Trust in Gumbi, these sentiments were clearly defined:

“The passing away of our old chief has brought new dynamics in the power structure. The new chief wants to have the overall voice in decision making of the Somkhanda Game Reserve (SGR). The current traditional authorities have sour working relationships with the existing Emvokweni Community Trust (ECT), and the community at large.”

The above scenario is prevalent in most rural communities around South Africa and has adversely affected conservation. For example, some community members associate conservation with corruption and view it as a way of excluding them from accessing ‘their’ natural resources. The approaches being used by some black Chiefs and traditional leaders in pursuing conservation are the same strategies that were applied during apartheid, which has not helped to engage Africans in conservation issues. The undemocratic actions of traditional

leaders are also problematic, as many have forged alliances with conservationists to the detriment of local community residents and effective community decision making. Thus, rural people have continued to view conservation as a form of disenfranchisement. It is important to note that apartheid reserves were meant to quarantine and detach people from their land and natural resources, which is why one of the Gumbi interviewees, who is a founding member and beneficiary of the Somkhanda Game Reserve, emphasised the importance of public consultation:

“When we successfully claimed the land, the first thing I did was to do community consultations to educate people on the true or current meaning of reserve as they still had a mind of apartheid reserves. I was blamed by people, even my closest relatives, who didn't understand what a reserve is. I had to explain to them that the Game Reserve belongs to them and is meant to benefit them.”

It is clear from the above that some traditional leaders may be using participation as a ‘cosmetic label’ to make conservation proposals appear acceptable, but the residents do not feel that they are genuinely involved in any decisions about the use of their land due to poor traditional leadership governance. On the other hand, in many rural communities in Africa, the black populace tends to be consulted for the sake of consulting, but they are not really involved in conservation projects in any meaningful way as they are viewed as potential threats to conservation. Such a strategy is discriminatory, as blacks (in the lower classes) are often viewed as poor or donor cases, and possible threats to the goals of conservation. Unless Black South Africans are regarded in real terms as equal participants in nature conservation, there will continue to be indirect racial and social conflicts between traditional leaders and local communities and between blacks and whites in pursuing conservation. The motivating factors for blacks to embark into conservation should be derived using ideologies that differ to apartheid ones.

Changing conservation attitudes to incorporate Black leaders

Some external community initiatives to involve blacks in conservation have emerged in South Africa, for example, SANParks has initiated a range of interventions in order to make a greater contribution to the socio-economic development of neighbouring communities. Given the history of colonial and apartheid dispossession and exclusion, it is recognised that the relationship between national parks and neighbouring communities in a democratic dispensation requires a quantum shift in order to ensure that there is a developing sense of ownership and buy-in on the part of the communities. SANParks thus runs the largest environmental education programme in South Africa, with over 200,000 learners going through a range of programmes per year, most of whom are from previously excluded communities. During SA National Parks Week over 50,000 people from previously excluded communities enter the parks in order to obtain exposure to the parks in their vicinity. In order to

set up a structured relationship with all stakeholders around national parks, Park Forums have been established that give communities and other stakeholders a consultative platform in the management and development of national parks (SANParks Annual Report 2016).

Although the above initiatives are good, it is important to incorporate Black Africans in leadership structures within conservation organisations. In an effort to promote social equity, SANParks has included blacks in high-level management leadership positions within its organisational structure in recent years (SANParks Annual Report 2016). Previously this has not been the culture within SANParks, and there still needs to be an improvement in the attitudes of White-dominated, privately owned conservation organisations. For example, 1995 saw the appointment of the first black woman, Dr Yvonne Dladla, as Director of the SANParks social programme, which aims to improve the parks' relationships with their community neighbours. The appointment was met with challenges from white Afrikaners, the majority of them Park Managers and conservationists, who resisted black transformation approaches (see Van Damme and Meskell 2009). They argued that the social approach was diverting the interests and mandate of SANParks to be a social development organisation. The social programme led to the development of SANParks Directorate of People and Conservation, where Masuku van Damme worked as a social ecologist. Van Damme noted that "...from working within the organisation, it is clear that traces of intolerance have not completely disappeared in SANParks" (Van Damme and Meskell 2009: 79).

This highlights that racialised tensions and thinking may still prevail in conservation, particularly in government-controlled institutions. In rural communities where conservation happens or has been proposed, Whites are mainly involved with the backing of a few blacks as staff, which appears to send mixed signals to the black communities. Some perceive conservation as a White people's thing, while others have a mentality of viewing Whites as oppressors, mainly because of actions taken in the name of conservation during apartheid. The inclusion of blacks in leadership structures within conservation organisations in a post-democratic South Africa is still a challenge. For example, of a total of 32 staff at Birdlife South Africa (2016), only two are African. On the other hand, the WESSA (2017) leadership team seems to fare slightly better; of the twelve Directors, five are people of colour, although there is still room for improvement.

Gender classification vs. conservation

Issues of gender and the involvement of women have become important in conservation. This is reflected in the inclusion of a passage on equitable and sustainable conservation planning in the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and its implementation guidelines, Agenda 21 (CBD 1992). The documents highlight the vital role of women in realising sustainable biodiversity due to their skills and knowledge, which are valuable for conservation planning (CBD 1992). Yet, women have historically been excluded from the participation processes

where key environmental decisions that affect them are made (United Nations, Division for Sustainable Development 1992). Recognising the structural nature of gender inequality, many environmental institutions began adopting gender mainstream (GM), i.e. the integration of gender concerns, into conservation institutional policies and practices. The United Nations, Economic and Social Council [UNESCO] (1997) defines GM as:

"...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

Reflecting on this conceptual definition, South Africa has enacted national equity laws such as Employment Equity (EE) and included them in different policies, including conservation, to adhere to international trends. However, gender continues to be a discriminatory variable in conservation as often women are voiceless at the local level where actual projects happen. For example, in rural KwaZulu-Natal, communities seem to be organised along patriarchal lines where men tend to dominate in community decision-making, including conservation, and women appear to rely upon and agree with what the men say during meetings (if they are even allowed to attend). Men are viewed as decision makers in most African cultures and women are regarded as housewives, a scenario which has been accepted as a norm. The voicing of women during public gatherings is thus viewed as taboo and disrespectful. A woman in Gumbi community asserts to this during an interview:

"I know that we have Somkhanda Game Reserve in Gumbi community, but never attended any meeting. In most cases, my husband is the one who attends the meetings which are mainly male dominated. So, my husband is the one with more information..."

A woman in her 70s from the Zondi community commented that a community game reserve is not important to her as she does not benefit directly and is never included in decision making; instead, she wants her goats to graze as they provide direct benefits. This is a sentiment shared by many women within the community. Such views point to the importance of a GM approach, as it can improve the outcomes of community-based conservation schemes because "gender roles often shape (1) values about the environment, (2) environmental knowledge, (3) interaction with, access to, and control of environmental resources, and (4) levels of participation, benefit sharing, and effectiveness of environmental conservation initiatives" (Ogra 2012: 1259).

Despite the above, a closer look at the leadership and management structures in the Gumbi community suggests the inclusivity of women in conservation. The current

(as at September 2017) Emvokweni Community Trust board is made-up of six members, three males and three females, and the sitting chair is a woman. Furthermore, their game reserve (Somkhanda Game Reserve) employs more than 50 people, 16 are permanent staff members and 5 management staff, three of whom are black males. One white male is the project manager and the other member is a black female. Wildlands is currently training a youthful man to take-over the role of project manager when the collaborative contract it has with Gumbi community elapses, or when the community can independently operate the game reserve. Such dynamics fit in with Agrawal and Gibson's (2001) findings that ideally, community-oriented conservation should be inclusive. This view was supported by Buckingham, Reeves and Batchelor (2005), who argued that in most circumstances, state structures seem to be limiting factors for gender equality as much as they are liberating.

Conservation policies and legislation

Through full public consultation and participation, new policies and legislation have been developed in all sectors, including conservation in the post-apartheid era. Securing sustainability and equitable access to resources are fundamental objectives of these policies and legislation. The National Environmental Management Act [NEMA] (Act 107 of 1998) notes: "The environment is held in public trust for the people. The beneficial use of environmental resources must serve the public interest and the environment must be protected as the people's common heritage". The Act is regarded as the framework legislation for biodiversity and conservation, and emphasises inclusivity of all stakeholders regardless of race and social status. The Protected Areas Act and the Biodiversity Act support the objectives of NEMA, while the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act of 2004 aims at providing a regulatory framework to protect South Africa's ecosystems, valuable species and its entire biological wealth. This latter Act provides the framework, norms and standards for the conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing of South Africa's biological resources, without necessarily looking at race or social status. The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act of 2004 provides for the protection and conservation of ecologically viable areas representative of South Africa's biological diversity and its natural landscapes, seascapes and the management thereof. The Act acknowledges that people are land custodians and should participate in managing and benefitting from it. Moreover, South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biological Diversity (July 1997) is guided by the main aims of the Convention, namely the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of biological resources, and equity. Combined, the conservation policies promote equitable access to natural resources and promote the rights of all to participate in conservation-related activities.

Regardless of having good policies in place, there are still challenges in realising social equity and non-racial inclusive

conservation practices at the micro-level. Rawls' (1971) "veil of ignorance" encourages us to be ignorant of accidents of birth (i.e. race, gender, place of birth), as do the current conservation policies and statutes, but at the local level, this is not the case. It is therefore critical for local authorities and private companies to embrace these policies and implement them. In an interview with Nathi Gumbi, the beneficiary and founder of Somkhanda Game Reserve, the informant reported that "*at times our traditional policies and practices are not taken into consideration when making national land statutes, and this is the source of continuous conflicts between the traditional authorities and community members, or between the government and traditional authorities*". Thus, policy fragmentation seems to promote social inequity in conservation projects in South African rural communities. Furthermore, Rawls (1971) noted that if we are thinking about principles that we are going to use for distributing conservation gains fairly, we should not consider race or social status. However, it is critical to take into consideration society's genetic make-up through consultative processes when making policies to enhance social equity at the micro-level.

Relations between race, class and equity, and the role of gender in conservation

The results of this study indicate that there are strong links between race, class and equity in conservation, adding weight to previous research. For example, Büscher (2016: 3) argued that "interconnectedness between histories of (white) belonging through the environment and (black) dispossession through conservation" influences perceptions of people toward conservation related issues. Building on Kepe (2009), this current study provides additional evidence that race issues still play a critical role in influencing the participation of black Africans in conservation. Furthermore, the data suggest that black South Africans seem to be underrepresented in the conservation sector, which tends to undermine the objectives of equity. Aumer-Ryan et al. (2007) opined that equity is more concerned with fairness and justice to all stakeholders. The fusion of all races and classes is critical in promoting equity that shapes the attitudes and perceptions of people toward conservation. As noted by Huseman et al. (1987), social equity stresses that the greater the perception of inequality, the more one distances oneself from conservation activities.

Despite the importance of women in natural resource management, they continue to be neglected in conservation participatory processes. These findings are consistent with other studies, which have found that there is an underrepresentation of women in natural resource management, and where they are present, they lack influence in decision-making at both the local and national level in developed and developing states (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2017; Agarwal 2010). To promote democratic justice and social equity in conservation, both men and women need equal representation at decision-making levels.

Furthermore, this study found that where there is increased participation in conservation issues, women's participation may not increase. This was described by Lundberg (2018) as

the continual reproduction of gender differences and power imbalances. However, where gender balance is achieved, the question is whether women are being forced into the already conservation masculine structures without changing the masculine hegemony? An equal integration of feminine and masculine social norms in conservation is thus necessary to promote equity and diminish the dominance of one gender, particularly as women have the capacity to contribute to conservation product diversification, especially those in rural areas with strong community ties (United Nations Conference and Trade Development [UNCTAD] 2017). Giving women greater access to economic opportunities in conservation is thus inherently valuable in itself and is essential to secure more inclusive growth.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF RACE AND SOCIAL EQUITY ON CONSERVATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

This paper set out to examine the dynamics between transformation in the conservation sector and race/social equity continuum, with the aim of promoting sustainable conservation practices in South Africa. Despite the introduction of democracy, the conservation sector appears to be largely white-dominated in the leadership structures. One of the findings to emerge from this paper is that historical influences still shape black people's view that conservation is not in their domain. This echoes Callewaert's (2002) findings regarding the importance of local history for understanding and addressing environmental injustice. Unless race and social equity issues are confronted directly in the conservation sector, transforming the sector will take longer than anticipated, thereby threatening the inclusivity of all people across racial and social lines. There is thus a need to have reflective conservationists who appreciate the role of the past in achieving the desired goals of conservation.

However, beyond historical factors influencing more inclusive engagement in conservation practices, contemporary issues of poverty and inequality have influenced how blacks and the previously marginalised have engaged in conservation. Unfortunately, the government's engagement in neoliberal ideology has resulted in the country remaining unequal. Many poor households lack access to basic needs and fiscal resources, which is a priority over engaging in conservation. This will pose a significant barrier towards a more inclusive conservation agenda, however the inclusion of the previously marginalised in conservation can be a way to alleviate poverty via sustainable jobs in tourism. Thus, viewing conservation as a strategy to tackle poverty can result in conservation becoming more inclusive across race and social lines.

The results further indicated that the issue of conservation exclusivity extends beyond historical and contemporary poverty issues, with traditional leadership posing a barrier to their constituencies engaging in conservation and shaping community-based conservation. The paper has found that some traditional leaders appear to be misusing their power, as it tends to infiltrate the management of community

conservation schemes as opposed to collaborative management arrangements. As the results indicated for a community in KwaZulu-Natal, conservationists and community leaders decided to pursue conservation on communal land without consulting the community members, and erected fences/boundaries as was done during apartheid. This has led to the disenfranchisement and resentment of community members leading strikes and vandalism. Thus, if conservation is to become more inclusive and cross racial barriers, traditional leaders will need to engage with their constituencies for inclusive participation and decision making. It will also be important for the government to re-define the separation of powers in the management of community game reserves to determine traditional leaders' boundaries. This suggestion is in agreement with Vucetich et al. (2018), who found that communal traditions are not static and that communities are entitled to a role to steer their traditions in a way that benefits the majority. Thus, asking the traditional authorities to engage community members on conservation issues, possibly to substitute traditional approaches with co-revised alternative approaches that are development-centred, will neither be an abomination nor unjust, if community members' interests are prioritised (Vucetich et al. 2018; Fitzherbert et al. 2014).

This paper notes gender as playing a significant role in determining participation in conservation. Women in rural communities tend to be excluded based on patriarchal traditions, for example in some rural KwaZulu-Natal areas, men tend to dominate in community decision-making, including conservation. On the other hand, some communities have started embracing and involving women in managerial positions. Overall, this paper strengthens the idea that healthy communities can only be achieved through equal inclusivity of men and women in conservation issues.

Taken together, these findings suggest the role of social equity and race in promoting conservation, and highlights the implications of not managing the nexus between them. More research is needed to better understand the transformation policies within the conservation sector, especially by large organisations. Further research could also be conducted to determine the effectiveness of land reform in pursuing the agenda of conservation in rural areas in other African countries, especially the perceptions of black Africans on conservation. It would be interesting to compare the views of Whites and blacks to find accommodations where both could win and work toward a common goal. Overall, conservation for conservation to be inclusionary it requires that people across every racial and social group work jointly to pursue the benefits that conservation has to offer.

NOTES

1. 'Africans' in this paper refers solely to Black Africans and not to Indians or Coloureds. In the South African Constitution, 'Black' include 'Africans, Indians and Coloureds'
2. Reserves are areas that were designated exclusively for black Africans to live in.

3. South African is number 32 in GDP ranking (<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>), but number 116 in HDI ranking (= medium human development) (http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf).

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