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## **Poaching: between conservation from below, and livelihoods and resistance**

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This is the text before proofs were corrected.

### *Introduction*

'Poaching is a contested term and has different meanings in the different cultural and legal contexts it occurs.'<sup>1</sup> The notion 'poaching' is extremely problematic, and not just conceptually. It is not well understood and too easily assumed to be destructive and to negatively impact biodiversity. These assumptions also easily appear as 'received wisdom'<sup>2</sup> or resting on a conceptual understanding that there is only one nature.<sup>3</sup> The one-nature discourse potentially ignores that there are other, contrasting and contesting interpretations of nature, which, in turn, motivate 'local' people to engage in modes of appropriation of nature that, given the enactment of conservation laws, are designated as illegal. The act of 'poaching' is consequently treated as a criminal offence. 'Poaching' does, in my view, not always do justice to why local people in villages close to sites of plenty appropriate natural resources in this way. 'Local poaching' has, despite the community and the participatory-oriented nature of the recent (community-based) conservation discourses,<sup>4</sup> too often been probed *without* incorporating the underlying values, claims on usufruct, and access to resources, practices, and knowledge repertoires of local people and their interactions with the natural environment, including domesticated and wild animals. Nor are the emerging local realities in villages and in community-based conservation projects and programmes, and their relative achievements, taken into account. Moreover, not much is known about what is hunted and by what means. The often-used term 'illegal wildlife hunting', as preferred by some contemporary authors,<sup>5</sup> is also a problematic notion. Routine subsistence activities come to

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<sup>1</sup> N. Carter, J. López-Bao, J. Bruskotter, M. Gore, et al., 'A conceptual framework for understanding illegal killing of large carnivores', *Ambio*, 46 (2017), 251–264.

<sup>2</sup> M. Leach and J. Fairhead, 'Fashioned Forest Pasts, Occluded Histories? International Environmental Analysis in West African Locales', *Development and Change*, 31 (2000), 35-59.

<sup>3</sup> N. Gombay, "'Poaching" – What's in a name? Debates about law, property, and protection in the context of settler colonialism', *Geoforum*, 55 (2014), 1– 12. See also M. Blaser, 'The threat of the Yrmo: The political ontology of a sustainable hunting program', *American Anthropologist*, 111 (2009), 10– 20.

<sup>4</sup> F. Berkes, 'Rethinking Community-Based Conservation', *Conservation Biology*, 18 (2004), 621–630.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Duffy, F. St John, B. Büscher, and D. Brockington, 'Toward a new understanding of the links between poverty and illegal wildlife hunting', *Conservation Biology*, 30 (2016), 14–22.

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be criminalized under the category of 'poaching'. 'Illegal wildlife hunting' leaves political questions unanswered, such as 'whose laws' are being trespassed.

The focus of this chapter is on wildlife, which, in addition to what are known as 'iconic' animals, also includes fish. The objective is to develop a more nuanced view concerning 'poaching', one that reflexively provides space for 'poaching' in contemporary (rural) development, and conservation discourses and debates. Similar in scope and outlook as Woodroffe and colleagues,<sup>6</sup> who seek to solve human-wildlife-conflicts by improving the status of wildlife, this chapter seeks to contribute to the conservation debate by deconstructing what constitutes 'poaching'. My endeavour to do this navigates different layers. The first layer entails perceiving 'poaching' as being made up of multiple realities, practices, and motivations. Secondly, 'poaching' can possibly be understood conceptually as a mode of wildlife appropriation with its own ontological foundation, shaping, in turn, its practice and motivations. Thirdly, 'poaching' does not just co-exist next to or operate independently from other modes of wildlife appropriation but is also transformed and reshaped over time through mutual interactions with other modes. The importance of mutual shaping is that we should not deconstruct hunting in isolation from other forms. Interactions amongst and between kinds of hunting gradually blurs the distinction that can be made between 'subsistence' hunting, 'bushmeat' hunting, or simply 'poaching', as the local discourse often goes, along with hunting for trophies and recreational purposes, and the poaching of wildlife that is organised by syndicates.

Drawing on literature and field research data, three interrelated themes and debates, along with sets of questions, are then addressed.

1. The chapter reviews the question of whether 'bushmeat' hunting can be interpreted as a form of 'conservation from below', and if so, why, when, and how. This responds to the argument in the literature<sup>7</sup> that local resource users have developed or are developing intimate knowledge of the ecological status of the resources, their rates of reproduction, their rates of sustainable off-take, as well as their forms of sustainable off-take. Important questions have been left unanswered up until now. Is 'poaching' per definition unsustainable? Are claims on sustainable harvesting by 'poachers' ignored and indeed not properly investigated? The claims on sustainability are also lodged by hunters themselves. Implicitly this implies that 'poaching' could be based on a different ontology, one that builds on significantly different people-animal (or prey) relations than syndicate and trophy hunting.

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<sup>6</sup> R. Woodroffe, S. Thirgood, and A. Rabinowitz, *People and wildlife, conflict or co-existence?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> This is well summarised by J. Murombedzi, 'Pre-colonial and colonial conservation practices in southern Africa and their legacy today', *Washington, DC: World Conservation Union (IUCN)*, (2003).

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2. This chapter reflects on the question of whether 'local poaching' primarily means hunting for subsistence, for food and ritual purposes, and for barter trade by people residing in rural and communal areas. This also includes the question of whether 'poaching' is primarily motivated by poverty, as is assumed by many,<sup>8</sup> but also includes the question of whether, when, and under what conditions, local poaching evolves into 'commercial poaching', blurring the distinction between them.
3. The chapter simultaneously explores 'local poaching' as an act of resistance to the specific way the appropriation of wildlife is regulated and institutionalised in community-based conservation conditions, and those in private game farms and national park settings. Conservation policies do not just serve to conserve and protect wildlife and biodiversity but also to find ways to control how nature is to be appropriated. The legacy of past policies, which continues in the present, is one that has guided a one-nature perspective: a nature that needs to be protected and thus the way it is appropriated and controlled. Exclusion has unfolded over time as the mechanism to achieve this goal. Local people were and still are largely and varyingly legally excluded from appropriating wildlife. Processes of exclusion manifest themselves not just in criminalising laws, in fines and arrests, but also through fences that keep people out and that fences in wildlife in parks, reserves, and on game farms.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, fences act as a socio-material device *par excellence* that redefines not just the role of wildlife in society but also people-wildlife and property relationships, and the broader political economy.

The analysis of these three themes is organised around four key questions adapted from Bernstein' analysis of political economy:<sup>10</sup> who (legally) owns wildlife (e.g. questions of ownership and shifting property rights), who is allowed to harvest it (questions concerning claims of usufruct rights and access), who gets what (how is the value distributed), and what is done with the proceeds (for the purposes of accumulation, consumption, or pleasure). The reality also forces us to raise questions of social struggle (e.g. contestation, resistance, or disobedience of the rules and regulations) versus the way the proceeds from nature are distributed. The reality is of course not so simple and straightforward but more diffused.

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<sup>8</sup> J. D. Sachs, J. E. M. Baillie, W. J. Sutherland, P. R. Armsworth, N. Ash, et al., 'Biodiversity Conservation and the Millennium Development Goals', *Science*, 325 (2009), 1502–1503. E. Bowen-Jones, D. Brown, and E. Robinson, 'Economic commodity or environmental crisis? An interdisciplinary approach to analysing the bushmeat trade in central and west Africa', *Area*, 35 (2003), 390–402. W. Adams, R. Aveling, D. Brockington, B. Dickson, Elliott, J. Hutton, et al., 'Biodiversity Conservation and the Eradication of Poverty', *Science*, 306 (2004), 1146–1149. Duffy et al., *Towards a new understanding*.

<sup>9</sup> T. Pasmans and P. Hebinck, 'Rural development and the role of game farming in the Eastern Cape, South Africa', *Land Use Policy*, 64 (2017), 440–450. M. Spierenburg and S. Brooks, 'Private game farming and its social consequences in post-apartheid South Africa: contestations over wildlife, property and agrarian futures', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 32 (2014), 151–172.

<sup>10</sup> H. Bernstein, 'Rural Livelihoods and agrarian change: bringing class back', in N. Long, Y. Jingzhong, and W. Yihuan (eds.), *Rural Transformations and Development – China in Context: the everyday lives of policies and people*. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2010) 79–110.

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The chapter proceeds as follows. It first considers what the notion of poaching conveys in theoretical terms. I then make a distinction between the various modes of appropriation of nature, and wildlife in particular. Three forms are distinguished and characterised and placed in a historical context. The second part of the chapter zooms in on the dynamics of 'poaching' in order to answer these three questions. In the conclusion, I reflect on the dynamics and rapid changes happening in the realm of 'poaching', which, in turn, necessitate our redefining of poaching. 'Local poaching' does not operate in a vacuum and is transformed in many ways through interactions with 'syndicate poaching'. This, in turn, raises questions about the sustainability of 'poaching' and all other modes of hunting.

### **'Poaching': commoditisation and property**

'Poaching' stands for a mode of appropriating wildlife, which not only, in essence, captures our sociological imagination as a practice but also as property and the social relationships between people concerning wildlife. 'Poaching' thus involves (changing) property relations and the struggles to gain access and a share of the benefits of nature.<sup>11</sup>

1. 'Poaching' conveys an act of illegally appropriating wildlife, which is claimed to be property (e.g. private, collective, royal, public). 'Poaching' intentionally contravenes the laws and regulations enacted to protect wildlife and other renewable resources. It includes not just illegal harvesting but also sale, purchases, transport, and possession.<sup>12</sup> 'Poaching' is an illicit<sup>13</sup> form of appropriation, a form of direct access sanctioned by custom but criminalised by contemporary modern state law. A series of laws have been enacted in the southern African region by the state in order to conserve and protect natural resources, including wildlife. These laws allocate to the state, private landowners, and resource communities organised in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) projects, now and in the past, the right to own and benefit from wildlife. This has turned wildlife into a commodity,<sup>14</sup> a thing that can be owned and exchanged. Resources defined as property implies, as Karl Marx argued in 1842,<sup>15</sup> theft; poaching then is appropriating illegally what is claimed to be property. 'Poaching' is the manifestation of *de jure* rights upheld by the state, and entrenched in fences and private property relations coming into conflict with the *de facto* rights and claims of local people. 'Poaching' in this way needs to be positioned at the interface between *de jure* and *de facto* rights, and the claims and

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<sup>11</sup> Ref. J. Ribot and N. Peluso, 'A Theory of Access', *Rural Sociology*, 68 (2003), 153–181.

<sup>12</sup> R. Muth and J. Bowe, 'Illegal harvest of renewable natural resources in North America: Toward a typology of the motivations for poaching', *Society & Natural Resources*, 11 (1998), 9–24.

<sup>13</sup> Ribot and Peluso, *Theory of access*, 164.

<sup>14</sup> See for a theoretical discussion on the commoditisation of nature, D. Brockington, R. Duffy, and J. Ingoe, *Nature Unbound. Conservation, Capitalism and the Future of Protected Areas* (London: Earthscan Publishers, 2008). B. Büscher and R. Fletcher, 'Accumulation by Conservation', *New Political Economy*, 20 (2015), 273–298.

<sup>15</sup> K. Marx, Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly. Third article. Debates on the law of the thefts of wood. October 1842. First published in the Supplement to the *Rheinische Zeitung* ([https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Rheinische\\_Zeitung.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Rheinische_Zeitung.pdf))

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sanctions derived from these.<sup>16</sup> This makes 'poaching or illicit access also rights-based.<sup>17</sup> 'Poaching' thus may also be conceptualised as part of the rights-based social struggle against fences, private property arrangements, and other expressions of exclusion, and as being excluded from accessing wildlife for subsistence, barter, and cultural purposes. 'Poaching' turns out to be a discursive means or strategy to underpin and to legitimise one's claim on the benefits of nature, and thus accessing it. These are well expressed in hunters' narratives as we will see later in this chapter.<sup>18</sup>

2. 'Poaching' has an ideological dimension and is being judged morally, thus bringing up issues of history but also class, gender, race, and ethnicity, and of control and claims to morality. Quite a few authors point out that, in the context of southern Africa, control and morality is intrinsically associated with white settler histories, whiteness, and western notions of human-wildlife relationships as well as with issues of masculinity and status.<sup>19</sup> Trophy hunting in southern Africa involves a '(racial) hierarchy, domination and exclusivity'.<sup>20</sup> It is peculiar to note what is 'played out' during a hunt: where one sits in the van – inside or in the back; who carries rifles, and the division of tasks during the hunt between the hunter, the game farmer, the farm worker who tracked the lynx early in the morning, and the skinner:<sup>21</sup> an atmosphere of exclusiveness, which David Harvey<sup>22</sup> would analyse as a class division between those who are able and allowed to enjoy conservation benefits and those who are not.

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<sup>16</sup> Such emerging contexts are discussed as conditions of legal pluralism where people must accommodate differing legal traditions in one locality; see F. Von Benda-Beckmann, 'Who's afraid of legal pluralism?', *Journal of legal pluralism and unofficial law*, 47 (2002), 1–46. J. Unruh, 'Land Tenure and Legal Pluralism in the Peace Process', *Peace & Change* 28 (2003), 352–377. R. S. Meinzen-Dick and R. Pradhan, 'Legal Pluralism and Dynamic Property Rights' in *CAPRI Working Paper* (Washington: CGIAR Systemwide Program on Collective Action and Property Rights, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Ribot and Peluso, *Theory of Access*, 164; see also K. O'Brien, 'Rightful Resistance', *World Politics*, 49 (1996), 31–55; and K. J. O'Brien, 'Rightful resistance revisited', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, (2013), 1–12.

<sup>18</sup> A good example of hunters narratives is R. Hitchcock 'Traditional African wildlife utilization: subsistence hunting, poaching, and sustainable use', in H. Prins, J. Grootenhuys, and T. Dolan (eds.), *Wildlife conservation by sustainable use*, (Boston: Springer Science & Business Media, 2000) 389–416. There is quite some literature on poaching in the US organised around narratives of poachers. See for instance: Forsyth, C., Gramling, R., Wooddell, G., 1998. The game of poaching: Folk crimes in southwest Louisiana. *Society & Natural Resources* 11, 25–38.

<sup>19</sup> This is well depicted in S. Brooks, 'Images of 'Wild Africa': nature tourism and the (re)creation of Hluhluwe game reserve', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 31 (2005), 220–240. J. Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park. A Social and Political History* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995). Hughes, D., 2010. Whiteness in Zimbabwe. Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging. New York, Palgrave MacMillan. C. Gressier, *At Home in the Okavango. White Batswana Narratives of Emplacement and Belonging* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015). S. Marks, *Life as a Hunt: Thresholds of Identities and Illusions on an African Landscape* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> F. Brandt, *Tracking an Invisible Great Trek: An Ethnography on the Re-configuration of Power and Belonging on Trophy-hunting Farms in the Karoo*, (unpublished PhD thesis, Free University Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2013: 182).

<sup>21</sup> Pasmans and Hebinck, *Game farming*, 446

<sup>22</sup> D. Harvey, *A brief history of neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

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3. 'Poaching' reflects clandestineness, a secret act arousing some kind of excitement. Reading the narratives of hunters, or when one interviews hunters, various notions of excitement, of sportsmanship, adventure, and masculinity circulate. Hunting for trophies or simply meat (e.g. billtong) is not simply a sensational experience – local 'poachers' tell about the charm, experience, and skills you need to command to be able to find and kill an animal – but also the thrill of the kill and the thrill to escape arrest by wardens or the police.<sup>23</sup>

The transformation of wildlife into a commodity and the associated processes of exclusion sanctioned by law concern not only social relationships and people's relations to wildlife but it also changes the properties of wildlife. Von Benda-Beckman and colleagues refer to this as 'property acquiring new properties'.<sup>24</sup> The property rights ensuing from the privatisation and commoditization of wildlife are about the relationship between people concerning things such as wildlife, and the new or redefined meanings they attach to wildlife.<sup>25</sup> Property rights involve relationships between people and resources. It is not only about ownership *per se* but instead about bundles of rights and social obligations.<sup>26</sup> Rights to wildlife are thus embedded rights. As Von Benda-Beckman and colleagues (1996) lay out, property arrangements find their expressions in three different 'layers of social organisation'. Firstly, there is the layer of ideology (e.g. cultural ideals, gender, masculinity) and, secondly, a legal-institutional layer recognising and codifying people-wildlife relations. Thirdly, there is the layer of 'concretised property relations', which is about social relations between actual property holders. This is the interesting but complex layer of culturally embedded social obligations, reciprocity, and also the shifting alliances between family and, increasingly, the state, international conservation organisations, NGOs, and so on. Forming alliances has long served as one of the channels through which access to productive resources such as wildlife is gained and, in turn, has shaped livelihood strategies.<sup>27</sup> Rights, like the meanings of the resources, are therefore not fixed but are often fluid and temporary, subject to negotiation, potentially conflictive, and generating ambiguities associated with certain ways in which wildlife is used.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> C. Forsyth and T. Marckese, 'Thrills and skills. A sociological analysis of "poaching"', *Deviant Behavior* 14 (1993): 157–172.

<sup>24</sup> F. Von Benda-Beckmann, K. Von Benda-Beckmann, and M. Wiber, 'The Properties of Property', in F. Von Benda-Beckmann, K. Von Benda-Beckmann, and M. Wiber (eds.), *Changing Properties of Property*. (Oxford: Berghahn Press, 2006) 1–39.

<sup>25</sup> Von Benda-Beckman et al. *Properties of Property*; J. Ferguson, 'The cultural Topography of Wealth. Commodity Paths and the Structure of Property in Rural Lesotho', *American Anthropologist*, 94 (1992), 55–73.

<sup>26</sup> See Von Benda-Beckman et al. *Properties of Property*; C. Lund, 'Negotiating Property Institutions: On the Symbiosis of Property and Authority in Africa', in K. Juul and C. Lund (eds.), *Negotiating property in Africa*. (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2002) 11–43. M. Chanock, 'A Peculiar Sharpness: An essay on property in the history of customary law in colonial Africa', *Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), 65–88.

<sup>27</sup> S. Berry, 'Social institutions and access to resources', *Africa*, 59 (1989), 41–55.

<sup>28</sup> Ribot and Peluso, *Theory of access*, 172; see also S. Berry, *No Condition is Permanent. The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

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## **Perspectives and practices of appropriating nature**

'Local poaching' or hunting for bushmeat has a long history spanning the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial period. More recently, poaching and hunting have been widely documented notably in Africa's tropical regions: the Congo Basin and West Africa's forest zones,<sup>29</sup> and predominantly discussed in the context of hunting posing a threat to conservation.<sup>30</sup> Relatively few studies focus on hunting for bushmeat in southern Africa on or close to game reserves, parks, and game farms.<sup>31</sup> The creation of game reserves, parks, and game farms has a two-sided impact on the intensity of 'poaching'. Their expansion in numbers and hectares has gradually reduced the hunting grounds people historically hunted. Similarly, more recent peri- and urban expansion because of population growth has substantially reduced the space for hunting, notably in areas that are open access and communally managed (e.g. commonages). At the same time, the concentration of wildlife in such entities has created a new source of bushmeat in the southern African region and thus more opportunities for 'poaching'. In most cases this also means the importation and conservation of new game species. There are a large number of privately owned nature reserves in the region that are close to where most rural, communal areas are found.

I distinguish here three different practices or modes of appropriation of wildlife as property. This distinction has to be made to capture the multiple realities that constitute the appropriation that 'poaching' is enacted in many ways, by different categories of social actors, affiliated in different networks for varying purposes and embedded in specific rituals and human-animal/wildlife relationships. Each mode redefines the social relationships between

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<sup>29</sup> J. Robinson and E. Bennett, 'Hunting for Sustainability', in S. Manika and M. Trivedi (eds.), *Tropical Forests* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000). Links between biodiversity consumption, livelihoods and food security: the sustainable use of wild species for meat. Occasional Paper of the IUCN Species Survival Commission No. 24 (Gland: IUCN, 2002). E. Milner-Gulland and E. Bennett, 'Wild meat: the bigger picture', *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 18 (2003), 351-357. E. de Merode, K. Homewood, and G. Cowlishaw, 'The value of bushmeat and other wild foods to rural households living in extreme poverty in Democratic Republic of Congo', *Biological Conservation*, 118 (2004), 573-581. A. Lowassa, S. Magimbi, and B. Kaltenborn, 'The effect of wildlife conservation on food dependency of local people around Serengeti National Park, Tanzania. Report for the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute' in (Arusha: Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, 2004). J. E. Fa, C. Peres, and J. Meeuwig, 'Bushmeat Exploitation in Tropical Forests: An Intercontinental Comparison', *Conservation Biology*, 16 (2002), 232-237. J. E. Fa, S. Ryan, and D. Bell, 'Hunting vulnerability, ecological characteristics and harvest rates of bushmeat species in afro-tropical forests', *Biological Conservation*, 121 (2005), 167-176. J. E. Fa, S. Seymour, J. Dupain, R. Amin, L. Albrechtsen, and D. Macdonald, 'Getting to grips with the magnitude of exploitation: Bushmeat in the Cross-Sanaga rivers region, Nigeria and Cameroon', *Biological Conservation*, 129 (2006), 497-510.

<sup>30</sup> D. Brown and A. Williams, 'The case for bushmeat as a component of development policy: issues and challenges', *International Forestry Review*, 5 (2003), 148-155.

<sup>31</sup> Carruthers, *Policy Boys and Poachers*. W. Adams, 'Sportsman's shot, poacher's pot: hunting, local people and the history of conservation', in B. Dickson, J. Hutton, and W. M. Adams (eds.), *Recreational hunting, conservation and rural livelihoods: science and practice* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2009) 127-140. M. Hayward, 'Bushmeat hunting in Dwesa and Cwebe Nature Reserves, Eastern Cape, South Africa', *South African Journal of Wildlife Research*, 39 (2009), 70-84. Pasmans and Hebinck, *Game farming*.

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the actors involved concerning wildlife, redefining, in turn, the meaning of wildlife.<sup>32</sup> The first 'poaching' practice I distinguish is 'local poaching', 'subsistence' or 'bushmeat hunting'. I will use these notions interchangeably but simultaneously realising that 'bushmeat hunting' is a term used in the literature by biologists and ecologists, and refers to meat from the forest or bush, which includes wildlife. 'Local poaching', on the other hand, is like hunting commonly used in the local discourse and can, in turn, be further subdivided; a subdivision I will elaborate on in more detail in this chapter. A second way is trophy, sport, and venison or biltong hunting, which over the last few decades has been increasingly organised in privately held game farm settings.<sup>33</sup> A third mode, which I have termed 'syndicate poaching', is associated with the slaughter of animals like rhinos, lions, and elephants, and with violence, organised crime, and trafficking of wildlife.<sup>34</sup> These three modes, as we will argue, do not necessarily operate in isolation from each other or represent separate life worlds. We will come back to this in the concluding section of this chapter.

Common to all these modes of appropriating wildlife is that they occur in networks, networks that connect wildlife sites and hotspots in the southern African region in various ways to neighbouring 'local' villages and villagers, global markets, hunters and their associations, and consumers of venison. These are also driven by different motivations in part shaped by the nature of the network they are embedded in: accumulation and the making of a profit from nature, enhancing livelihoods, reducing poverty, providing food security, improving ones diet, claiming customary rights to wildlife – and let us not forget gambling and having fun and feeling pleasure, which all varyingly motivate social actors at different levels of intensity to hunt and to 'poach'. These networks, varying from village to village and between associations, are shaped by the nature of the market (e.g. the demand for certain species), and the social actors and the regulatory governance structure that shapes the intensity of the processes connecting the 'local' and the 'global'. Hunting associations in Europe and the USA, which organise hunting trips and mediate between hunters and community-based natural resource management projects for wildlife quota and private game farms for trophy, are regulated by law and have to comply with established rules and regulations. Hunting for venison and trophies is well regulated by (international) conventions (e.g. Standards for Hunting Methods in South Africa, which is incorporated in the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004). The management of game and species in South Africa, for

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<sup>32</sup> Muth and Bowe, *Illegal harvest*, based on a literature review of some 10 different forms of 'poaching'. I have condensed these to three as I find their typology overlapping.

<sup>33</sup> Pasmans and Hebinck, *Game Farming*. P. Cloete, P. Van der Merwe, and M. Seezman, *Game ranch profitability 2015 edition* (Pretoria: WRSA, 2015). W. Adams, 'Nature and the colonial mind', in W. Adams and M. Mulligan (eds.), *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for conservation in a post-colonial era* (London: Earthscan, 2003) 16–50. W. Adams, 'Sportsman's shot, poacher's pot: hunting, local people and the history of conservation', in D. B., H. J., and A. W. (eds.), *Recreational hunting, conservation and rural livelihoods: science and practice* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2009) 127–140.

<sup>34</sup> B. Büscher and M. Ramutsindela, 'Green violence: Rhino poaching and the war to save Southern Africa's peace parks', *African Affairs*, 115 (2016), 1–22.

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instance, is subject to international obligations such as Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS).<sup>35</sup>

'Syndicate poaching' does not comply with such laws and standards but is obviously regulated by mafia conventions. These mafia-like poaching syndicates are globally well connected.<sup>36</sup> We will provide some evidence that their connections spread out to villages in the southern African region. The 2016 Netflix film 'The Ivory Game'<sup>37</sup> shows this in great detail. The recent accusations against a top government official in South Africa<sup>38</sup> also indicate that the Chinese connection goes beyond the village and involves the state apparatus. The recent increase in poaching of elephant, illegal logging, and overfishing of the Zambesi River are directly the result of Chinese syndicates operating in the Zambesi province of Namibia and elsewhere in the region. Chinese crime syndicates operate in different ways; what is known is that crime syndicates have established networks with 'locals' in Zambezi to poach elephants for their tusks. Illegal fishing also involves Chinese providing local people with nets to catch fish in the Zambezi River. Recently protected tree species in the Zambezi were confiscated by the authorities.<sup>39</sup> Private game farms in northern Kwazulu-Natal are affected by poaching syndicates that work closely together with Chinese nationals based in the Jozini area. Lacking rangers, most of whom do not have firearms and a large area to patrol, makes protection a difficult task.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, there are also examples of white farmers allowing hunting on their farms. This interaction between hunters and poachers and landowners may be termed 'white complicity'.<sup>41</sup> 'Syndicate poaching' is not just driven by the mafia's pursuit of wealth. Gao and Clark show the complexity of the ivory trade, which is also shaped by Chinese consumers' motivation stemming from the socially constructed economic, social, cultural, aesthetic, religious, and medical values of ivory.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, the process of statutory law-making defines the legality of the appropriation of wildlife. Some of the practices are conceived as legal and condoned by the law, while other practices are considered illegal according to the same law. From that moment onwards, laws enacted that devolved the right to appropriate wildlife to land-holders triggered the privatisation of wildlife management. The Wildlife Act of 1975 in Zimbabwe, the 1975 Conservation Ordinance in Namibia, and the Game Theft Act 105 of 1991 in South Africa made

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<sup>35</sup> J. Cousins, J. Sadler, and J. Evans, 'The challenge of regulating private wildlife ranches for conservation in South Africa', *Ecology and Society*, 15 (2010).

<sup>36</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triad\\_\(organized\\_crime\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triad_(organized_crime)).

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.netflix.com/nl-en/title/80117533>.

<sup>38</sup> A National Government minister is accused of hanging out with a Chinese organised crime figure who traffics rhino horns and openly brags about bribing South African Justice and Immigration officials (<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/mahlobos-rhino-poacher-mate-20161112>)

<sup>39</sup> <http://oxpeckers.org/2017/02/xuecheng-hou-and-timber/>

<sup>40</sup> S. Mthethwa, 'Hunting in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Preliminary unpublished report', (2016), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Malcom Draper, pers. comm., May 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Y. Gao and S. Clark, 'Elephant ivory trade in China: Trends and drivers', *Biological Conservation*, 180 (2014), 23-30.

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venison and sports hunting a legal practise. Hunting for subsistence purposes or for local sale, possession, and transport were from that moment on designated as illegal and thus punishable. These laws were later amended after independence in 1980 and 1990 in Zimbabwe and Namibia, respectively, and were extended to also include the right of communities residing in communal areas to benefit.<sup>43</sup> 'Local poaching' nevertheless remains a criminal act and the actor criminalised. Moreover, the idea that community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) would be an ideal vehicle for securing wildlife conservation, which would simultaneously both generate benefits to the wildlife resources and enhance the well-being of the rural people residing with these wildlife resources, is not always supported by the vast literature.<sup>44</sup> CBNRM has proven not to function as premised. Nor does the market operate in ways that always support endeavours of CBNRM communities to reap the benefits of their control over wildlife resources.<sup>45</sup> We will return to the implication of the failure of CBNRM later in the chapter.

Wildlife was, before these laws were amended, considered owned by the state but not necessarily an open-access resource. The appropriation of wildlife was varyingly regulated by the state and by customary authorities. Historically Africans hunted for wildlife as an everyday life practice, one that was sanctioned by the then 'pre-colonial' tribal authorities. The form of hunting was traditionally or rather culturally regulated.<sup>46</sup> Specific species could not be hunted because of taboos (e.g. you do not hunt your totem). There is a tendency to romanticise, as Murombedzi (2003) argues, about what is known as pre-colonial conservation practices. As societies were socio-politically hierarchical, the rights to use wildlife were often such that commoners were excluded from the proceeds of nature. Game could often only be killed with consent of the chief or king. In addition, there were also local rules on how the trophies would

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<sup>43</sup> B. Child, 'The practice and principles of community-based wildlife management in Zimbabwe: The CAMPFIRE programme', *Biodiversity and conservation*, 5 (1996), 369–398. B. Jones and M. Murphree, 'Community-based natural resources management as a conservation mechanism: lessons and directions', in B. Child (ed.), *Parks in Transition. Biodiversity, Rural Development and the Bottom Line* (London: Earthscan, 2004), 63–104. B. Child, J. Musengezi, G. Parent, and G. Child, 'The economics and institutional economics of wildlife on private land in Africa', *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice*, 2 (2012), 18.

<sup>44</sup> See Berkes, *Rethinking Community Based Conservation*, P. Balint and J. Mashinya, 'CAMPFIRE through the Lens of the 'Commons' Literature: Nyaminyami Rural District in Post-2000 Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34 (2008), 127–143. F. Nelson and A. Agrawal, 'Patronage or Participation? Community-based Natural Resource Management Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Development and Change*, 39 (2008), 557–585. M. De Vette, R. Kashululu, and P. Hebinck, 'Conservancies in Namibia: A discourse in action', in B. Arts, S. Van Bommel, M. Ros-Tonen, and G. G. Verschoor (eds.), *Forest-People Interfaces* (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2012) 121–139. J. Kahler, G. Roloff and M. Gore, 'Poaching Risks in Community-Based Natural Resource Management', *Conservation Biology*, 27 (2013), 177–186.

<sup>45</sup> See R. Lapeyre, 'The conflicting distribution of tourism revenue as an example of insecure land tenure in Namibian communal lands', in W. Anseeuw and C. Alden (eds.), *The Struggle over Land in Africa - Conflicts, Politics and Change* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2013), 85–104. R. Lapeyre, 'Revenue sharing in community-private sector lodges in Namibia: a bargaining model', *Tourism Economics*, 15 (2009), 653–669. M. Bollig and E. Olwage, 'The political ecology of hunting in Namibia's Kaokoveld: from Dorsland Trekkers' elephant hunts to trophy-hunting in contemporary conservancies', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 34 (2016), 61–79.

<sup>46</sup> Murombedzi, *Pre-colonial and colonial conservation*.

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be treated; trophies like elephant tusks and lion skins would usually be given to the chief as a gift and to show support, and were used for traditional ceremonies. The title of Hinze's paper "'Without Chiefs there would be no Game" – Customary law and Nature Conservation'<sup>47</sup> is telling in this respect. Although this does not imply that during pre-colonial times 'poaching' or 'illegal hunting' was absent. Poaching could be interpreted as an act of resistance against the pre-colonial order. Pre-colonial Africa surely had their Robin Hoods. Another point to make would be that such 'local poaching' in many situations was in harmony with customary rights over wildlife.

Laws and the making of laws, however, need to be put into context. On the one hand, statutory law with regard to protection of wildlife has often been designed without consulting local communities, respecting their laws and customs, and the new laws would impact on their customary rights. We will return shortly to this aspect when we discuss 'local poaching' in more detail. On the other, the development of statutory laws to protect wildlife began with the realisation by various social actors (e.g. the State, local and international NGOs, local people) that wildlife numbers at the time of enactment were finite due to over utilisation by the elite, white settlers, local hunters, and so on. Jane Carruthers' research and publications elaborated in detail on the assault on wildlife in southern Africa.<sup>48</sup> These were the times, as MacKenzie<sup>49</sup> explains, that commercial hunting for ivory and skins in British colonial Africa served as a perk for European settlement, which gave way to a hunting culture on the part of a colonial elite consisting of settlers, autocrats, and bureaucrats who were deeply obsessed by shooting trophies, sportsmanship, and an old boys culture.<sup>50</sup> These hunting practices co-existed with 'subsistence' hunting, which was important for African people. Like most white settlers, African people and particularly those who came to settle on annexed land, also depended on the same natural resources as those they displaced. Losing or gaining territory implied losing or gaining animal resources. Moreover, additional aspects contributing to the depletion of wildlife include human population growth (leading to increased human-wildlife conflict), increase in grazing areas, and drought (conflict over scarce resources such as grazing and water).

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<sup>47</sup> M. Hinz, *Without chiefs there would be no game: Customary law and nature conservation* (Out of Africa Publishers, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> J. Carruthers, "'Police Boys" and poachers: Africans, wildlife protection and national parks, the Transvaal 1902 to 1950', *Koedoe*, 36 (1993), 11–23. J. Carruthers, 'Influences on Wildlife Management and Conservation Biology in South Africa c.1900 to c.1940', *South African Historical Journal*, 58 (2007), 65–90. J. Carruthers, 'Nature conservation and natural resource management 1870s–2000', in P. Delius (ed.), *Mpumalanga. History and heritage* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010), 247–291.

<sup>49</sup> J. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>50</sup> See also E. Steinhart, 'Hunters, Poachers and Gamekeepers: Towards a Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya', *The Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 247–264. E. Steinhart, *Black poachers, white hunters: a social history of hunting in colonial Kenya* (London: James Currey, 2006).

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This was also the time that conservation biology became an influential body of knowledge shaping the discourse of conservation. It coincided with the moment in the southern African region when the need for managing (that is conserving and preserving) wildlife became a key societal objective. Conservation biology evolved from a descriptive naturalist perspective to one that emphasised that wildlife 'should be studied and not hunted'.<sup>51</sup> Wildlife like any other natural resource could (or should) have an economic value. Discovering and assessing that value, and how to use and access it, was one of the material reasons behind the spread of wildlife sciences more broadly.<sup>52</sup> Protecting wildlife and conserving biodiversity became an important driver for research and the further development of the discipline. The further development of the discipline was very much contested and hampered by the vested economic and political interests of veterinary and agricultural scientists, and their institutions. To varying degrees, these sciences positioned themselves vis-à-vis the science of wildlife, as wildlife was seen as threatening 'the all-important pastoral economy of South Africa and the retention of any large area of undisturbed nature was consequently undesirable'.<sup>53</sup> Wildlife transmitted diseases to domesticated animals and they needed to be kept apart. Predators like lynx and lion causing damage to livestock or crops were relabelled as vermin or problem animals, and could thus be hunted.<sup>54</sup> This was, as Carruthers<sup>55</sup> explains, the main push behind a new form of environmental governance: national parks and game reserves. Wildlife could then also be studied in its natural environment, and commercial and illegal hunting could be contained. At a later stage, notably from the 1950s onwards, wildlife management science developed a new branch: game farming became an object of study and developed as a recommended domain for the gradual development of what is now a thriving business.<sup>56</sup> The role of the market and the intensity with which market relations shape the dynamics of conservation has been framed as neoliberal conservation. The market indeed increasingly extends into nature conservation practices (e.g. trophy hunting, eco-tourism, game viewing).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Carruthers, *Influences on Wildlife Management*, 77.

<sup>52</sup> W. Beinart, 'Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change in Southern and Central Africa', *Past and Present*, 128 (1990), 162–186, 176; Carruthers, *Influences on Wildlife Management*, 75.

<sup>53</sup> Carruthers, *Influences on Wildlife Management*, 77.

<sup>54</sup> W. Beinart, 'Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change. W. Beinart, 'African History and Environmental History', *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), 269–302. J. Murombedzi, *Pre-colonial and colonial conservation*.

<sup>55</sup> J. Carruthers, 'Changing perspectives on wildlife in Southern Africa, c. 1840 to c. 1914', *Society and Animals*, 13 (2005), 183–200. J. Carruthers, *Influences on Wildlife Management*.

<sup>56</sup> J. Carruthers, "'Wilding the farm or farming the wild"? The evolution of scientific game ranching in South Africa from the 1960s to the present', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* (2008), 160–181. Pasmans and Hebinck, *Game farming*. Cloete et al., *Game ranching profitability*.

<sup>57</sup> J. Silva and N. Motzer, 'Hybrid Uptakes of Neoliberal Conservation in Namibian Tourism-based Development', *Development and Change*, (2014). B. Büscher, 'Anti-Politics as Political Strategy: Neoliberalism and Transfrontier Conservation in Southern Africa', *Development and Change*, 41 (2010), 29–51. R. Lapeyre, 'The Tsiseb Conservancy: How Communities, the State and the Market Struggle for Its Success', in R. Van der Duim, M. Lamers, and J. Van Wijk (eds.), *Institutional Arrangements for Conservation, Development and Tourism in Eastern and Southern Africa*. (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015) 39–59.

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### Unpacking 'local poaching'

'Poaching' is usually associated with poverty. The commonly voiced, received wisdom is that local people or commoners appropriate nature out of poverty and hunt whatever they can get their hands on, indiscriminate of species and numbers. The Millennium (now Sustainable) Development Goals discourse directly associates poaching with enduring poverty.<sup>58</sup> Ending or reducing poverty is the best possible strategy to stop 'poaching'. The causal relationship assumed between poaching and poverty has been critiqued and needs further scrutiny. The reverse is also claimed to be important: poaching may lead to poverty, certainly under conditions when 'poaching' of wildlife, illegal logging, or fishing takes place on a large scale in indiscriminate ways. Such 'poaching' poses severe threats to household level food security strategies that hinge on sustainable harvesting from the wild.<sup>59</sup> Quite a number of publications point to local and global market demand for illegally hunted products as an *explanans* for its continuation.<sup>60</sup> Whether local poaching is a threat to biodiversity and species composition in local ecosystems, as is often argued in the literature,<sup>61</sup> is subject to debate. One could then even make a point by saying that these poaching activities that take place on a commercial scale (e.g. organised on demand by syndicates, traders, and local elites) undermine 'local poaching'. This increasingly is a reality that needs to be taken into account when discussing local biodiversities and livelihood opportunities.

The remainder of this chapter serves to deconstruct 'poaching'. There is little detailed and reliable quantitative data available on how much is being hunted or 'poached', how that compares to ecological thresholds, and how much is 'legally' hunted as trophy and billtong. There is more information on what motivates and drives people to 'poach', who 'poaches', and how 'poaching' is organised. I will use data from recent studies in South Africa (Eastern

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<sup>58</sup> Sachs et al. 2009, *Biodiversity Conservation*. Bowen-Jones et al., *Economic commodity or environmental crisis?* (2002). Adams et al., *Biodiversity Conservation and the Eradication of Poverty* (2004). R. Duffy et al., *Toward a new understanding* (2016). R. Grey-Ross, C. Downs and K. Kirkman, 'An Assessment of Illegal Hunting on Farmland in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: Implications for Oribi (*Ourebia ourebi*) Conservation', *South African Journal of Wildlife Research*, 40 (2010), 43–52.

<sup>59</sup> C. Romanelli, D. Cooper, D. Campbell-Lendrum, M. Maiero, W. Karesh, D. Hunter and C. Golden, *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health A State of Knowledge Review* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2015). S. Sethi and R. Hilborn, 'Interactions between poaching and management policy affect marine reserves as conservation tools', *Biological Conservation*, 141 (2008), 506–516. D. Sheil, 'Conservation and Biodiversity Monitoring in the Tropics: Realities, Priorities, and Distractions', *Conservation Biology*, 15 (2001), 1179–1182.

<sup>60</sup> Bowen-Jones et al., *Economic commodity or environmental crisis?* (2003). J. Brashares, P. Arcese, M. Sam, P. Coppolillo, et al., 'Bushmeat Hunting, Wildlife Declines, and Fish Supply in West Africa', *Science*, 306 (2004), 1180–1183. Gao and Clark, *Elephant Ivory trade* (2014).

<sup>61</sup> This position is defended in Brashares et al., 2002, *Bushmeat hunting*.

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Cape,<sup>62</sup> Venda,<sup>63</sup> and KwaZulu-Natal<sup>64</sup>) and Namibia<sup>65</sup>, and to an extent in Zimbabwe.<sup>66</sup> William Mponwana conducted a series of interviews in Uitzicht in the Mogalakwena Municipality of the Waterberg District, Venda, and Limpopo with Peter, Masipa, Daniel, Kharthu, April, James, Aumen, Kingsley, Maffie and Benjamin. Shile Mthethwa interviewed two hunters and two game wardens/ranchers involved in anti-poaching campaigns in KwaZulu-Natal in October/November. Rodger Lubilo collected data from 75 'poachers' in three conservancies in the Zambezi province in Namibia between 2011 and 2015.

Before I elaborate on these strategies and practices in some detail, I will dwell on what they have in common. Hunters' narratives are full of references to adventure, the thrill of the kill but also the thrill to escape arrest, the excitement, and craftsmanship. Hunting is recreational and socially bonding but also sport and gambling. Taken together their narratives display that 'poaching' is not necessarily related to poverty nor do they tell us that 'poaching' is purely rational and is responding to market incentives. The excitement of hunting combined with satisfying one's cultural needs and exercising one's natural or birthright to harvest wildlife explains the continuity of bushmeat hunting despite it being criminalised. Hayward suggests it is the '*relatively wealthy city dwellers who are seeking reminders of their traditional lifestyles*'.<sup>67</sup>

Hunters also turn out not to be professional hunters per se. Most have paid jobs, varying from headmaster, to herder, security guard, and taxidermists. Some are unemployed. Hunters assert they not only hunt for food or financial gain. Hunting is also recreational and bonds friendships, they say:

We hunt for fun and to enjoy the thrill of seeing one man's dogs outpace another man's. We go hunting to extend our friendship. There are about thirty of us. We go hunting every Sunday morning. We drive all around Limpopo and we have been as far as Kwazulu-Natal and the North West looking for game. We went to Kwazulu Natal for four days and came back with 22 gemsbok. These dogs are quick. My male dog named Dollar is very strong and can kill a big buck by himself. I usually go with two dogs from all my dogs when just going casually. In Potchefstroom the fields are flat and you can see animals very easily [Masipa].

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<sup>62</sup> Pasmans and Hebinck, *Game Farming*; Hayward, *Bushmeat hunting*.

<sup>63</sup> Mponwana, *Bushmeat hunting in Limpopo*. Unpublished report (2016).

<sup>64</sup> Mthethwa, *Hunting in KwaZulu-Natal*. Unpublished report (2016). T. Kamuti, 'Private Wildlife Governance in a Context of Radical Uncertainty Dynamics of Game Farming Policy and Practice in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa', (unpublished PhD thesis, Free University Amsterdam, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> Lubilo, R., Forthcoming 2018. 'Enactment of 'community' in community-based natural resource management in the Zambezi region, Namibia', (unpublished PhD thesis, Sociology of Development and Change, Wageningen University).

<sup>66</sup> S. Matema, 'Bushmeat hunting in Save Conservancy, Zimbabwe', (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Hayward, *Bushmeat Hunting*, 79.

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The sites where the hunting takes place are mostly in the communal areas, nearby a game farm or reserve. The most commonly hunted animals are bush pigs (bosvark), springboks (gazelle), and impalas. Other animals, which hunters report to have hunted and caught, are rabbits, warthog, caracals, gemsbok, oribi, kudu, rock hyrax, springhaasie, and birds (guinea fowls and the crested Francolin).

I've killed eleven bush pigs this year. There are a lot of pigs in these bushes. This month alone I've also killed two impalas. Big ones. I have killed caracals but do not eat them. Other people eat them but I don't because it has a bad smell. I have also killed some animal that is found near the river. It is able to go up trees and looks like a cat. It is called letlaparankwe. Its meat is red like that of a cow. I walk up to 15km as I hunt all the way up to the mountain [of one of the nearby villages named Nkidikitlana]. There are some days where I get nothing. If I am able to track an animal today and not kill it, it encourages me to come back the following day looking for me [Daniel].

Vlakovark (referred to as *topo*) or warthogs are the least hunted. They are known for their aggression and ability to sometimes injure or kill dogs:

A real hunter is one that is able to kill a vlakovark. That animal can even kill you as a hunter. They outsmart dogs a lot and often when we see them we make sure our dogs don't attempt to go after them. A vlakovark is different from a bosvark (bushpig). A vlakovark will go into thorny bushes knowing your dogs won't follow. That's when your spear becomes handy but you need to be careful because that thing can kill you. These are always going up and down because they are hardly killed. We fought a warthog from midnight till am when our boss asked is to kill them. The warthog came out of a hole flying like a bullet. The dogs were so tired that they rested under a tree. As the warthog stops and faces us, we have to climb up trees. Then we get off once it starts moving. Its level of danger to humans can be like that of a lion. It is easier to kill if it's hole is under a tree then you easily stab it on its head as it peeks [Kharthu].

Some say that they have no preference for the type of animal to hunt but rather go out in hopes to find meat. Whatever is found and killed suffices for the hunter.

I never go hunting and come back empty handed. I will make sure I'm in the bushes all night till morning until I kill something. Last time I went hunting I killed three animals in one hunt. Meat is meat and as long as it can support us. I've killed rock hyraxes which very tasty meat [Peter].

Hunters walk up to 20km in total in the wild as they go hunting. Some hunters prefer to track animals by using spores while others hunt near the river. Others do not follow a particular path but just go wherever the road leads them:

When I go hunting, I first test to see if there is wind. If there is wind I usually go perpendicular to the direction of the wind. After covering significant distance, I turn and go against the wind. I won't catch anything apart from this way. That way, animals coming my way won't hear me approach because of the wind. I can track animals for more than three hours before seeing anything. Animals can sense us and dogs can also sense animals.

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Early mornings are a perfect time to go hunting. I wish I had greyhounds because they are the fastest. But they are stupid dogs because they have no brakes and can die easily while in pursuit and hit into trees [April].

The hunter narratives also point out that apart from ordering 'poaching' discursively, 'poaching' is differentiated in terms of 'technology' and social organisation. It is important, for instance, to differentiate hunting with well-trained hunting dogs<sup>68</sup> and particularly taxi hunting, which has become very popular, particular in South Africa.<sup>69</sup> Dog owners form groups and transport them in a taxi, from where they are released to hunt down animals. The hunters cum dog owners gamble amongst themselves whose dog will win the chase killing the prey first. Hunting with dogs requires a financial and social capital investment in well-trained and well-bred hunting dogs and collectives. Taxi hunting is contested by conservationists and portrayed as destructive and dangerous.

Below is the narrative of a hunter in KwaZulu-Natal who was interviewed by Shile Mthethwa in October 2016. The narrative explains the social organisation of the hunt, the how, and what is hunted and when. The role of hunting dogs is central in this narrative.

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<sup>68</sup>See: <http://mashable.com/2015/07/19/south-africans-dogs-hunting/#uq.27cnfaSqO>.

<sup>69</sup>See: <http://www.traveller24.com/Explore/Green/pics-illegal-taxi-dog-hunters-destroying-sas-biodiversity-capenature-20160829>. T. Kamuti, *Private Wildlife Governance*, 277 ff.

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Mr C is a local hunter in Northern KwaZulu-Natal who denied ever using any snares. He professed to be hunting with dogs and started his own dog-breeding programme. He mentioned that there are four to five breeds of dogs which are generally used in the area for hunting; namely the borzoi, saluki, proter (a greyhound like breed), indigenous dog breed and one he referred to as *impondo* (it looks like a greyhound [proter], *saluki* or *borzoi* but its ears are pointed and small like an Alsatian or German Sheppard. His preferred breeds are the saluki and borzoi which he currently owns and is trying to breed. The hunting he claims takes place in the mountains of the communal area and is mainly for duiker, hares and rabbits. He mentioned that all the speed hounds or hunting dogs are sight animals as they can't follow the scent of an antelope. For that reason they are held by the owner during the hunt and are only released when an antelope is seen. Holding also conserves the energy of the dogs and also increases the chances of success during the hunt.

The duiker he claims are seen when they are herding cattle and the area where they are seen is marked especially if it is seen in the same area more than twice. The person who has spotted and confirmed the area where the duiker stays is the leader of the hunt and he is the one who sets the rules of how the hunt is to be conducted. He will call for the hunting party and set the date, hunters in the area are free to invite hunters they know from other areas. Mr C says he hunts for spot and most of the people that he acquainted to who are not from his village, he met during hunting expeditions in his area or their area when they are invited to participate in a hunt. Hunters walk in a c shape to draw the antelope into the semi-circle so it can be hunted. Disputes of whose dog caught the antelope are settled by each owner who thinks it's his dog that made the kill describing how his dog makes a kill before they go and inspect the dead animal. The one who is proved right keeps the kill, if the other party is still not satisfied the other parties arbitrate but the final decision rests with the one who called for the hunt to take place. In most instances the one who called for the hunt will get to keep the animal or give it to the one he thinks is telling the truth. Argumentative hunters are more often than not ostracised and not invited to future hunts, if they insist on joining anyway the senior guys sit him down and in no uncertain terms tell him he is not welcome.

Hunts he says are conducted before sunrise or early morning, part of the reason he says is the fact that "proters" tend to overheat when chasing down an animal. This breed he states finds it difficult to cool down naturally during the heat of the midday sun and may even die if they are not helped to cool down by pouring water over them. The borzoi and saluki don't have the problem of overheating during the chase, part of the reason he says he prefers breeding them. The hunting dogs he says have to be taken out periodically so they can stretch their legs and come back home tired. This is done to avoid the dogs being mischievous, as they tend to start chasing down goats and getting into all sorts of trouble. For this the dogs are taken to the mountain and allowed to chase anything as long as it's not dangerous, this way they tend to tire quickly and herded back home. The dogs he says spend most of their time locked during the day only to be released at night to resume guarding duties.

Dog or taxi hunting is significantly different from the hunter who makes use of snares, spotlights (for night hunting), slingshots, and short and long stabbing spears. Often these hunting technologies are combined, this to emphasise that it is not just a modern form along side 'traditional' forms of 'poaching'. Along with their well-trained hunting dogs, hunters walk with a spear made from reinforced steel. The steel is sharpened at one end and the other end is tied with layers of rope or cloth for grip. The spear is used to stab bush pigs when they go

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into holes or when the dogs are holding the animal down. Warthogs stuff their bodies into thorny bushes or trees making it difficult for dogs to attack.

### *'Poaching' as discursive strategy*

Making sense of the field data, I followed Ribot and Peluso,<sup>70</sup> and am conceptualising 'poaching' as a form of appropriating wild life that is embedded in and shaped by a variety of strategies that are discursively expressed and legitimised. I identify three discursive 'poaching' strategies. These are not clear-cut, as we will see, but partly overlap.

- (1) 'Poaching' is a legitimate practice, which is sustained by claims on cultural and customary rights to feed ones family and to supplement the family diet with protein.
- (2) 'Poaching' is an 'act of resistance' against the processes that exclude local people from being excluded from appropriating wildlife. 'Poaching' is a birthright.
- (3) 'Poaching' also, and increasingly, serves to satisfy a market demand. Hunting for cash has become more and more important.

### *'Poaching as legitimate'*

Haywards<sup>71</sup> case study in the Dwesa and Cwebe forest reserves of the Eastern Cape underpins the argument that bushmeat hunting is significant, quantitatively and socio-culturally, and that it supports rural livelihoods. It holds significant nutritional value and supplements locally produced and purchased food with protein from the natural environment. Bushmeat holds great sociocultural value for rural people, in particular the poor.<sup>72</sup>

Hunting for food is an often-recurring answer in interviews and surveys with 'poachers'. Knapp and colleagues<sup>73</sup> sampled villages outside Ruaha National Park in Tanzania and found that 79% of the 'poachers' poached for food, while some 78% also hunted for cash. Those hunters who called themselves poor stated hunting to obtain food was paramount.<sup>74</sup>

*Seshebo* in Venda refers to anything that can be eaten with porridge (pap) or rice or samp and is usually in the form of red meat or chicken.

I hunt for seshebo. I do not sell anything. Even when I kill an impala, it is all mine. I do not want anyone near it. Bushmeat has little to no fats compared to this processed meat. It is healthier and this meat can cover me for an entire month [Daniel; James].

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<sup>70</sup> Ribot and Peluso, *Theory of Access*.

<sup>71</sup> Hayward, *Bushmeat hunting*.

<sup>72</sup> S. Kachula and C. M. Shackleton, 'Quantity and significance of wild meat off-take by a rural community in the Eastern Cape, South Africa', *Environmental Conservation*, 36 (2009), 192–200. D. McGarry and C. Shackleton, 'Children navigating rural poverty: rural children's use of wild resources to counteract food insecurity in the Eastern Cape province, South Africa', *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 15 (2009), 19–37.

<sup>73</sup> E. Knapp, N. Peace, and L. Bechtel, 'Poachers and Poverty: Assessing Objective and Subjective Measures of Poverty among Illegal Hunters Outside Ruaha National Park, Tanzania', *Conservation and Society*, 15 (2017), 24–32.

<sup>74</sup> Knapp et al., *Poachers and Poverty*, 27.

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Quite a few hunters mentioned the need for meat for sustenance (*seshebo*) and argued that bushmeat is readily available and goes a long way. One hunter stated that his preference is for bush pigs only:

I go for these pigs only. I used to hunt rabbits at a younger age. My current dogs aren't as strong as my previous pack. They go for pigs because they like animals that put up a fight. I sometimes help them fight the pigs as some are tough especially the warthogs as opposed to the bush pigs. Baboons are also a problem because they get violent so when I have my spear or axe I am a part of the fight to try and protect my dogs. When they see bucks they assume they are goats and I have to shout at them to chase but they remain still [Aumen].

Another hunter referred back to before 1994 when they were given permission to hunt in the village and so became accustomed to hunting from then on. The hunter opted not to disclose the type of tools he used to hunt over the years. Other hunters had mentioned him as someone who possessed guns for hunting:

Back in the day when the white people were in power, they gave us rights to hunt locally. There was an abundance of animals roaming around back then. We had kudu, all kinds of bucks and meat was an easy find. I don't recall a time whereby I would go to the shops to buy meat. (...) Nowadays I'm older, there isn't as much game as before and I have to go with my grandson into the wild and he does most of the work [Kingsley].

Research by Rodgers Lubilo in three conservancies in Zambezi province, Namibia, shows that 'poaching' is associated with being poor. Local communities in the three conservancies belong to the group of people who could be termed poor and politically marginalised, who have limited alternative livelihood options other than living and carving out an existence in the conservancy.<sup>75</sup> Only a few are employed by the conservancy. Many struggle and make ends meet through low-input farming that often suffers from baboons and elephants; casual labour and hunting are among the few options comprising value-adding activities in the area. Field data obtained from interviews shows that many hunt for the pot and supplement their diet with protein from the wild, including fish, small mammals, and antelopes.

Local poaching in the conservancies is also legitimised and explained by conservancy members as a cultural practice that revolves around an intimate association of culture and nature. Hunting is culturally well embedded; from time immemorial they have hunted wildlife, they say, and were taught by their parents how to hunt. This is reflected in the cultural norms, practices, and in the way hunting is talked about. Nature and culture are seen as co-evolving (Ingold 2000). Hunting forms an integral part of socialisation processes: at a young age, boys learn the hunting skills from their fathers and learn the behaviour of the various species of

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<sup>75</sup> K. Khumalo and L. Yung, 'Women, Human-Wildlife Conflict, and CBNRM: Hidden Impacts and Vulnerabilities in Kwandu Conservancy, Namibia', *Conservation and Society*, 13 (2015), 232-243.

Forthcoming as: Hebinck, P. 2018b, 'Poaching: between conservation 'from below', livelihoods and resistance ', in *Nature Conservation in Southern Africa. Morality and Marginality : Towards Sentient Conservation?*, eds. J.B. Gewald, M. Spierenburg and H. Wels, Leiden/Boston: Brill Publishers. Pp. 253-289.

wildlife. Since this is a cultural practice, it is not perceived as illegal but as an essential livelihood asset.

For many hunting is a birthright. '*You are born with it*' is a commonly heard expression. Rodgers managed to informally interact and engage with local poachers to get an idea of the meaning of poaching as a God-given right to use the game. They expressed anger for being referred to as poachers as they feel insulted. '*How can someone who does not live here with us refer to us as poachers just because we harvest our own resources? We are just good hunters and above all, we have kept these wildlife for many years,*' explained one of the local hunters in Sobbe conservancy.

It is our birth right as inherited from our forefathers that we should hunt wild games for meat, and use it in such a way we want. In the old days we used to hunt for the whole village. When I come from hunting I would distribute the meat to all the people in village, but today because of the government, we cannot openly do that we hide because they have criminalised hunting of game, which is not good. We will continue to hunt because we are entitled to eat meat and government can't stop us in order to make foreigners rich.

These sentiments are commonly shared by many of the local people in the communities including the younger ones who also added that:

Hunting is our right, and we should be allowed to hunt, and the conservancy should engage the government to change the laws, what do we benefit? Nothing, so when you hunt, you are able to have food for the family.

#### *'Poaching' as contestation'*

Those without the ability to legally enter a game farm or make use of its resources appropriate game through 'illegal' hunting. Game farmers and nature reserve managers in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal say they sometimes have to cope with animal losses, especially bushbuck or other ungulates, due to 'poachers' entering from 'the other side of the river'. The interview by Shile Mthethwa with Mr A., a white male working in a land claim reserve, learned that when on patrol they remove on average per month ten snares both fresh and old from the reserve. As the area is made up of continuous game farms, he stated that those farms that seem to be affected the most by poaching are those on the periphery with fewer incidences for those more central in location. 'Poaching' is perceived as a threat and a crime, and game farmers and hunters specifically consider it 'unethical' and 'illegal'. Mr B. said that on a monthly basis they remove forty to fifty snares from the property. Mr A. stated that in their reserve they remove on average about ten snares per month with their focus being on game trails where the animals walk. The use of hunting dogs came up in both interviews as problematic. Their off-take cannot be quantified. Mr A. mentioned that they have a shoot-on-sight policy with regards to dogs on the property. Mr B. indicated that hunting with dogs is a very big problem in the area, with their intelligence information showing a number of

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syndicates operating in the area. He says that there are now established and reputable hunting-dog breeders in the area who are the go-to people if someone seeks to purchase a dog. The price of hunting dogs, such as greyhounds, has increased due to the popularity of hunting in the area.

Regardless of why people hunt bushmeat, it potentially involves more than a 'wildmeat crisis'.<sup>76</sup> The 'poaching' on and around game farms as well as in CBNRM projects such as those in Namibia studied by Rodgers Lubilo<sup>77</sup> and in Zimbabwe by Steven Matema<sup>78</sup> and others<sup>79</sup> can be interpreted as a specific contestation of the way wildlife conservation is organised: as private game farming, and in nature reserves and national parks. It is different from the violent contestations against game farm owners in KwaZulu-Natal, which have resulted in open conflict over land claims,<sup>80</sup> or the 'silent' contestations over game farming in the Karoo, which have resulted in a 'process of displacement' of farm dwellers.<sup>81</sup> Game farms in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, and elsewhere in southern Africa have created a new source of bushmeat that is appropriated by 'poachers'. 'Poaching' may thus be interpreted as a contestation against being excluded from those resources.<sup>82</sup> The 'fencenization' of the rural areas and the changes in the nature of fencing are a clear manifestation of that exclusion.<sup>83</sup> Fences are boundaries that separate people from wildlife and signal who owns wildlife. More and ever-higher fences prevent the previously possible interactions between 'white' commercial and 'black' homeland farming practices. '*In the old days,*' an informant from a rural village in the Eastern Cape once remarked during a discussion in early 2000 about land-use changes, '*our cattle often grazed on white land; now with these high game fences this is not possible any longer. To let our cows be inseminated by these big commercial bulls is no longer possible.*' The fencing put an end to the co-evolution of 'homeland farming' with farming for trophy and game-meat production. Fencing also deprives local black people of their socio-cultural rights to wildlife. This is a break with the past, when black people hunted freely, when their livelihoods were a combination of growing crops, keeping cattle, and hunting game. Similar processes are occurring in Namibia where fencing – officially condemned by state law and agrarian reform polices – encroaches on conservation areas in

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<sup>76</sup> E. Milner-Gulland and E. Bennett, 'Wild meat: the bigger picture', *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 18 (2003), 351–357.

<sup>77</sup> Lubilo, *Enacting community*.

<sup>78</sup> S. Matema, 'Bushmeat hunting in Save Conservancy, Zimbabwe', (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2007).

<sup>79</sup> V. Dzingirai, 'The new scramble for the African countryside', *Development and Change*, 34 (2003), 243–264.

<sup>80</sup> S. Brooks and L. Kjelstrup, 'An anatomy of dispossession: post-apartheid land rights and farm dweller relocation in the context of a private game reserve initiative, northern KwaZulu-Natal', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 32 (2014), 238–257.

<sup>81</sup> F. Brandt and M. Spierenburg, 'Game fences in the Karoo: reconfiguring spatial and social relations', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 32 (2014), 220–237, 234.

<sup>82</sup> Pasmans and Hebinck, *Game farming*, 447.

<sup>83</sup> See also, for an historical pointing of the same process, L. Van Sittert, 'Holding the Line: the Rural Enclosure Movement in the Cape Colony, c. 1865-1910', *Journal of African History*, 43 (2002), 95–118.

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favour of an expansion of a commoditised cattle economy.<sup>84</sup> Wolmer<sup>85</sup> notes similar developments in the Lowveld in Zimbabwe.

At the same time, the reality of 'poaching' is not hidden or denied by the game farm and estate managers. On the contrary, it is publicly discussed and spoken of as a 'criminal', 'unethical' activity that threatens the game farm and biodiversity. 'Poaching' and the presence of 'poachers' together legitimise their drive to continue and even intensify the securitisation of the rural areas close to game farms and national parks.

There is substantial evidence that poaching occurs in conservancies in Namibia. This is not in line with the objective of conservancies to prevent and reduce poaching in favour of trophy hunting. Poaching nevertheless occurs, which is quite evident in the fieldwork by Rodgers Lubilo.<sup>86</sup> Local hunters convey in their narratives to him that they continue to hunt as a way of rejecting, resisting, and showing disobedience to the conservancy framework. The way the conservancy is enacted means for them that they are largely excluded from the distribution of benefits in the forms of paid jobs or projects. Most local hunters are not formally educated, are poor and marginalised, and will not be absorbed into the current management systems that require some level of education. Poachers realise that community-based conservation will normally benefit the conservancy elites, the educated, those in influential positions. Hunting means survival for them, and simultaneously a protest against exclusion and elite capture.

When there are jobs, we are not employed, they need educated people, they also employ their own children and friends, so for me, I keep quiet and kill whenever I get chance, because if we talk they don't like us' [a local poacher at Kwandu].

'When we kill an animal we either exchange for basic essentials, sugar, money, clothes, etc., and we can survive, but when we stop, where will we get money and who is benefiting from this conservation [a local hunter at Wuparo].

As long as we remain poor, we will continue to hunt the game, and we are ready to go to jail if arrested because we have no choice; look here, since we started the conservancy, we are not employed; it's the same people, and those educated who get the jobs [a local poacher at Sobbe].

Some scholars attribute the failure of community-based programmes to weak institutional control mechanisms that create opportunities for local elites to siphon off substantial shares

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<sup>84</sup> C. Van der Wulp, *Transformation Of Communal Land: Illegal Fences In The N≠A Jaqna Conservancy, Namibia*, (unpublished Master's thesis, Sociology of Development and Change, Wageningen University, 2016). W. Odendaal, 'Elite land grabbing in Namibian communal areas and its impact on subsistence farmers' livelihoods', in *Policy Brief 33* (Cape Town: PLAAS, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> W. Wolmer, *From Wilderness Vision to Farm Invasions. Conservation & Development in Zimbabwe's South-East Lowveld* (Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2007).

<sup>86</sup> Lubilo, *Enactment of Community*.

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of local resources.<sup>87</sup> Balint and Mashinya<sup>88</sup> also note similar processes of elite capturing in Zimbabwe's CAMFIRE projects.

The elite are in control and they benefit both, from salaries and also from those who kill animals because they are somehow related [a teacher].

Local hunters feel excluded and have valid arguments for continuing their protest by continuing to poach. The employment criteria in many conservancies favour elites, friends, close relatives to traditional leadership, and those linked to field staff of supporting NGOs and state agencies. This excludes those without connections within the community, who then respond by being disobedient vis-à-vis maintaining the status quo. This state of affairs has many interpretations; some local poachers have also developed networks with outsiders to provide a ready market, making local poaching a form of employment for those involved.

Hunting is a form of employment for us, we are not educated and we can't find jobs, so we hunt to support ourselves; that is the only thing we can do [local hunter at Kwandu].

### *Poaching for cash*

Bushmeat is simultaneously hunted to satisfy an urban market demand for game meat motivated by preference, or by cultural needs by urbanites. The demand for bushmeat is driven by its low prices relative to domestic meat, or by a preference for its taste, as Barnett<sup>89</sup> suggests for Mozambique. Research by Matema<sup>90</sup> shows that people consume bushmeat for its taste. They hunt, however, to earn cash to support the family.<sup>91</sup> A dynamic market not only exists for bushmeat in towns, as is mostly assumed, but also in rural villages. The study in Save Conservancy in southern Zimbabwe showed that, according to the hunters, villagers from neighbouring communities constituted the largest proportion of bushmeat buyers (74.5%,). Hunters (n=150) also sold bushmeat to local business people (12.4%), police camps (2.1%), teachers (6.2%), and nurses (4.8%). Some hunters (2.8%) exchanged bushmeat for grain in Mozambique.<sup>92</sup>

Mponwana's study<sup>93</sup> supports the conclusion drawn by Matema (2007) that the local market is a predominant outlet for bushmeat. When there is a demand for a particular type of animal, some hunters go out to find that animal to sell. Sometimes the availability of the animal determines whether a hunt for a particular animal occurs. Prices for bushmeat are usually

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<sup>87</sup> J. P. Platteau, 'Monitoring Elite Capturing in Community-Driven Development', *Development and Change*, 35 (2004), 223–246. M. Thompson and K. Homewood, 'Entrepreneurs, Elites, and Exclusion in Maasailand: Trends in Wildlife Conservation and Pastoralist Development', *Human Ecology*, 30 (2002), 107138.

<sup>88</sup> P. Balint and J. Mashinya, 'CAMPFIRE through the Lens of the "Commons" Literature: Nyaminyami Rural District in Post-2000 Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34 (2008), 127–143, 129.

<sup>89</sup> R. Barnett, 'Food for Thought: The Utilization of Wild Meat in Eastern and Southern Africa', *Kenya: Traffic East-Southern Africa*, (2000).

<sup>90</sup> Matema, *Bushmeat hunting in Save Conservancy*.

<sup>91</sup> Matema, *Bushmeat hunting in Save Conservancy*, 36.

<sup>92</sup> Matema, *Bushmeat hunting in Save Conservancy*, 40.

<sup>93</sup> Mponwana, *Bushmeat hunting*.

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negotiated between buyer and hunter. These hunters usually go as far as into reserves. There was talk in some of the conversations that hunting in reserves take place because their employers are ripping them off, pocketing tips received from licensed hunters who come trophy hunting.

I have a friend not too far from here who probably has his fridge filled with six pigs worth of meat awaiting collection. He is a violent hunter, that one, such that he kicked a porcupine once and has in his legs a piece of its spikes. He hunts only to sell and hunts only in reserves at night.

The Arab and Indian tourists pay in dollars when they come this side. They used to tip us in dollars in front of our bosses. Say now an Arab tourist tips me; he tells me I'm giving you a tip of \$200. Our bosses now take our tips and at the end of their visit they give you like \$80 from your original tip. I often work hand in hand with the Arab to not speak to my bosses about missed shots (for which they have to pay). They pay me to be quiet and in the case of a wounded animal we make meat of it by selling it after finding it [Kharthu].

**The owner of the greyhound dogs benefits twice, from both hunting and breeding:**

These greyhounds are so useful. Sometimes I have teachers and officers coming to me looking for meat. Luckily I have friends who own reserves, so when I'm broke I load my dogs and go hunting. I then sell to these people [Masipa].

I do not eat pork therefore all the pigs I kill I sell to those that eat pork [April].

My brother and I are the only people that eat meat from four-legged animals. So we take some of the meat from our kill and sell the rest [Benjamin].

When a friend of mine wants meat. I hook them up with some of the guys who work on the farm who may know of the whereabouts of those animals. At night we go out hunting. Then from there we benefit from selling [Maffie].

## **Discussion and conclusion**

A few issues emerge quite clearly. 'Poaching' or bushmeat hunting continues to exist. It serves as an additional source of protein for the poor; it produces cash for household-related investments; and it satisfies culturally defined needs for certain meat. Local people in conservation areas will continue to resist, reject, and will remain defiant when conservation institutions organised by the state, private sector, and community-based conservation projects continue to administer wildlife the way they currently do. Benefits from wildlife are not well distributed; the current distribution system largely benefits local elites. Were conservation policies and strategies to become more inclusive and redistributive, rather than exclusive, and would thus ensure that various interests groups are integrated and not treated as minorities so that people would see their livelihoods as more safeguarded, 'local poaching' might be reduced in the long run. The pressure on wildlife resources might then diminish. By conceptualising 'poaching' or bushmeat hunting as a culturally embedded and shaped mode

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of wildlife appropriation ('hunting is our birth right'), some degree of 'local poaching' will continue.

A second wildlife question, as part of the many other agrarian questions, is which mode of appropriation is sustainable. Does the natural parks conservation mode or the private game farm mode, coupled with other forms of 'Fortes conservation',<sup>94</sup> create conditions for sustainable production and reproduction of wildlife? 'Accumulation by conservation', as Buscher and Fletcher<sup>95</sup> frame the current neoliberal model of the appropriation of nature that extends into wildlife conservation, '*denies that the fundamental unsustainability of capitalist production threatens (...) the basis for the existence of life, both human and non-human, in much of the globe*'. Can capitalism cum neoliberalism address the wildlife crisis that manifests in loss in biodiversity of the world's fauna and flora, or are we part of a scenario where '*the system would find another basis for renewed accumulation that, while further intensifying its ecological contradictions, would be able to stave off the long-anticipated "limits to growth" imposed by these contradictions for some time to come*'.<sup>96</sup>

Or, alternatively, is the solution for the wildlife crisis already practiced but not well understood by nature conservationists and not appreciated by the market? When viewed from a different angle and accepting an ontological turn, one may argue, in contrast to what some conservationists<sup>97</sup> argue, that local poaching is sustainable. Local hunters point out that they are selective as to what kind of animals can be hunted for home use, as well as when and how. There is some acknowledgement in hunters' narratives that animals can be attributed with agency. A village hunter in Wuparo conservancy claimed the following.

We also know what animals we can kill and not kill; for us we hunt for our families; we don't want to get rich, we just need for our pot, But those who kill elephants are poachers because they kill, remove the ivory, and run away, leaving the meat to rot that is not good, so those are poachers who should be arrested, not us who kill for relish.

This is much in line with the Venda phrase '*ga nama ga e jewe*', which translates as '*the place where meat is not eaten*'. This is widely used by villagers to refer to game reserves and is very telling about how local villagers view game farms and reserves.

On the other hand, we need to be aware of counter claims. Mr B., in an interview,<sup>98</sup> mentioned that a school principal was once arrested driving in his *bakkie* with five fresh carcasses mostly impala and nyala cows. He said that the hunter was removing productive animals, which would help replenish the numbers.

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<sup>94</sup> D. Brockington, *Fortress conservation: The preservation of Mkomazi Game reserve, Tanzania* (London: James Currey, 2002).

<sup>95</sup> B. Büscher and R. Fletcher, 'Accumulation by Conservation', *New Political Economy*, 20 (2015), 273–298, 293.

<sup>96</sup> Büscher and Fletcher, *Accumulation by Conservation*, 293.

<sup>97</sup> See, for instance, C. Gibson and S. Marks, 'Transforming rural hunters into conservationists: An assessment of community-based wildlife management programs in Africa', *World Development*, 23 (1995), 941–957.

<sup>98</sup> Mthethwa, *Hunting in KwaZulu-Natal*.

Forthcoming as: Hebinck, P. 2018b, 'Poaching: between conservation 'from below', livelihoods and resistance ', in *Nature Conservation in Southern Africa. Morality and Marginality : Towards Sentient Conservation?*, eds. J.B. Gewald, M. Spierenburg and H. Wels, Leiden/Boston: Brill Publishers. Pp. 253-289.

The three modes of appropriation that were distinguished in this chapter do not unfold in a vacuum or simply co-exist. These modes need to be conceptualised and understood as mutually transforming and shaping/reshaping each other in such a way that the boundaries and even the discursive means by which they are legitimised become blurred. This leads, in turn, to a reassembling into new modes of appropriation, generating new kinds of conservation spaces with different and new attributes. The boundary between poaching for cash and/or food and 'syndicate poaching' is easily blurred and often crossed as the following examples indicate. Local fishermen sell their fish to Chinese traders in exchange for fishing nets, while over-fishing the Zambesi. Hunting syndicates often have someone working in the reserve who informs them about the areas where game is usually concentrated so that they don't waste time once inside the reserve. These are examples of new conservation spaces that contribute to biodiversity losses and a deepening of the wildlife crisis, strengthening, in turn, the further militarisation of wildlife conservation.

Alternative conservation spaces potentially exist and are expressed in narratives and claims such as those of the hunter claiming sustainability of his hunting methods and experiences that are shaped by hunter local bodies of knowledge.<sup>99</sup> Together with the Venda phrase '*ga nama ga e jewe*', these narratives may form a relevant starting point for recognizing that there are alternative modes of sustainability in wildlife appropriation. These hinge on fundamentally different human-wildlife relationship interactions than those exhibited in market-oriented modes of appropriation. These involve asymmetrically connected ontologies<sup>100</sup> and involve local claims on sustainability and wildlife appropriation that are embedded in locally accepted cultural repertoires. Notions guiding wildlife appropriation are well shaped by the idea that it is a birthright to hunt. It seems that such conservation spaces exist and respond well to the rural poverty challenge: hence the reference in the title to "poaching" as conservation from below'.

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<sup>99</sup> See also Murombedzi, *Precolonial and colonial conservation*.

<sup>100</sup> Blaser, *The threat of the Yromo*. See also Gombay, "Poaching" – What's in a name'.