

Rural development and the role of game farming in the Eastern Cape, South Africa



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ABSTRACT

The analysis of game farming is set in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Game farming reorders the use, meaning and value of land and animal species. However, what it means for rural development processes in the immediate region and beyond is not well accounted for. We perceive game farming as an assemblage that brings together new actors, new forms of land use and new discourses. We argue that although game farming has generated new opportunities and new forms of added value to the available resources (e.g. eco-tourism, trophy hunting, game-meat production), situated in the history and contemporary context of the Eastern Cape, it is a contested, and from a development point of view, problematic land-use practice. We argue that game farming constrains land and agrarian reforms: the distribution of land and income remains skewed; 'poaching' occurs and game farms do not, or only minimally, generate new and badly needed employment opportunities. The game farm has emerged as an exclusive, globally well-connected space. The nature of the relationships this space maintains with the surrounding communities is, however, such that the overall contribution to rural development in South Africa is questionable.

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1. Introduction

Game farming has developed into a major subsector of the agricultural economy in South Africa. With its diversification into state, communal and private land, it also represents a significant shift in the meaning, practice and purpose of nature conservation (Suich et al., 2009; Child et al., 2012). Conservation is no longer solely associated with nature reserves managed by government departments or non-governmental conservation agencies and community-managed conservancies, but also, and increasingly, with private landowners (Carruthers, 2008: 160). Game farming began to establish itself in South Africa from as early as the 1950s (Carruthers, 2008: 165). Although it was contested and debated at the time, it became more widespread during the 1970s (Beinart, 2003: 386; Brink et al., 2011). From the 1990s onwards, game farming gradually became more significant and the Game Theft Act 105 of 1991 (RSA, 1991) triggered further expansion as it meant that landowners could now manage wildlife as a private property resource (Child et al., 2012; Snijders, 2012). Most game farms are located on former agricultural land that previously required the active eradication of wild animals; this land is now

actively used to (re)introduce wild animal species to create a new wilderness that caters for the demands of an international market for trophy-hunting and eco-tourism. This constitutes, as we will argue, a complex and critical factor in land use and processes of rural development in South Africa—the more so given the game-farm lobby's claims that the farming of game in South Africa (and elsewhere) is positioned in a space where the opposing demands of an expanding global market for trophy and biltong hunting, and game-meat production, on the one hand, and those of the local population for rural development, rural employment, nature conservation and eco-tourism, on the other, can be, and are being, successfully merged.

In response to these claims and to the rapid rate of its expansion, game farming has received substantial attention in the economic and ecological sciences literature as well as in the policy and public domain. In these discussions and analyses, a game farm is often presented as an abstract and idealised configuration of people, nature, markets and institutions. The important questions of who, whether and through what processes game farming contributes to rural development remain unanswered. The nature of the development processes and the exclusivity of the space that game farming produces remain hidden. The emerging relationships between game farmers, farm workers and neighbouring villagers are not well accounted for. Instead, income and value added as an expression of rational behaviour and game species compositions are taken

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as a one-dimensional measurement for success and impact. This article aims to address these issues by analysing how the game farm assemblage has come about and what kinds of spaces have emerged over time. In doing so, we reveal how such an assemblage shapes and reshapes rural development in the region surrounding the game farm.

The article proceeds as follows. After a brief explanation of the interpretive framework and methods of data collection, we elaborate on trends in game farming and how these are debated in the public and scientific domain. We then zoom in on game farming as we encountered it and observed it being practised in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Finally, we examine the complexities and contestations that game farming generates and the extent to which it contributes to rural development.

2. Conceptual ideas and data collection

In this article, game farming and game farms are not perceived as fixed human–wildlife relationships or as isolated spaces enclosed by fences but rather, as an assemblage of ideas, human and non-human actors. Through its manifold interconnections, the game farm assemblage continuously generates new kinds of spaces with different and new attributes (Li, 2007, 2014; Anderson and McFarlane, 2011; McFarlane and Anderson, 2011; Umans and Arce, 2014; Woods, 2015). Like Li (2007: 265), we understand assemblage as the ‘grafting of new elements and reworking old ones; employing existing discourses to new ends’. It reconfigures nature, game, landscapes and social actors and the relationships between them in such a way that previously existing elements and interlinkages are rearranged to form new connections and relationships that did not exist previously. The concept of space is used here in the political and relational sense, without geographical connotations (McGee, 2004; Massey, 2005; Escobar, 2008; Jones, 2009). Space interpreted in this way provides a useful lens to investigate assemblages and to analyse the everyday policies and practices of the actors involved, including the social and material relationships that connect them.

As this article will demonstrate, game farming creates spaces where game farmers actively reorder and reclassify land and wild animals into new products and services. New animal species are introduced, but also relatively new categories of social actors (e.g. trophy and biltong hunters, and eco-tourists) with considerable impact on relationships with surrounding communities. Game farming also gives rise to new institutions (e.g. game farm lobbies, game auctions, specialised feed and fodder companies) and likewise produces new discourses to underpin and legitimise game farming as a land-use model that simultaneously conserves nature and enhances rural livelihoods. Game farming assembles these diverse elements by forging connections between them to create a configuration that works. The reordering of nature and culture, and the development of game farms as exclusive spaces, are essential outcomes of the game farm assemblage.

The game farm assemblage extends beyond the local and connects farms, the various game species and game farmers with global markets for eco-tourism and trophy hunting, and simultaneously also neighbouring farmers and villages, farmworkers and ‘poachers’. Game farms unfold as a locally specific configuration of an ‘interconnected, but not homogenous, set of projects’ (Tsing, 2000: 353) connecting people and spaces across the globe in many different ways (Woods, 2007, 2015). It offers ‘wilderness’ (Wolmer, 2005) and tourist gazes (Urry, 2002; Van der Duim, 2007), but at the same time produces fenced-off spaces excluding people and creating poaching opportunities. Unpacking these global–local connections requires, as Heley and Jones (2012: 212) reason, ‘paying attention to the agency of local actors, whilst also examining the

broader economic and social relations – both historical and contemporary – which locate places within wider networks’.

The expansion and further development of game farming takes place in the present; history and historical processes, however, cannot be ignored and become actualised in game farming assemblages. Historical processes – unequal access to resources, racial divisions of landownership, racial segregation policies (Beinart and Delius, 2014) – are reproduced in and through assemblages, shaping in turn their current dynamics and outcomes. Situating game farming in the complexities of history helps us to show that the ‘new’ that emerges in game farm assemblages, generates in turn new complexities, intensities, inequalities and contestations. ‘Poaching’ occurs next to trophy and biltong hunting, next to experiencing the wilderness and game-meat production. Game farms at the same time do not, or only minimally, generate new employment opportunities—an indication that viewing game farming as a driver of rural development is, at the least, problematic. The fences that are erected, as well as the anti-poaching and securitisation campaigns and laws are expressions of the new intensities generated by game farming and its further expansion. We need to realise, however, that game farming is not a homogeneously practised assemblage; rather, it generates heterogeneous, highly fragmented and diverse spaces (Umans and Arce, 2014).

The data for this article is derived from published as well as unpublished sources, such as reports from the South African Ministries of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Tourism, academic seminars and conference presentations such as those during the Wildlife Farming Conference held in Pretoria in 2015. Data released by Statistics South Africa on commercial agriculture for the years 2002, 2007 and 2012 are unfortunately incomplete and do not cover the full breadth of game farming. The most recent available (2015) General Household Survey (GHS) also offers only sketchy data about labour and employment on game farms. The data for 2015 in the category ‘Game hunting, trapping and game propagation, including related services’ is based on observations of only three to six jobs in this category per three-monthly survey (Stats SA, 2015). This could be taken to mean that in fact there are very few such jobs, but more likely it means that the GHS has not recorded this well (personal communication with Michael Aliber).

We also draw on a detailed case study of a game farm in the Eastern Cape in order to discuss processes in the reordering of nature and changing social relationships. Interviews exploring landscape transformations, animal (re)introductions and ‘poaching’ were held with the game farmer and neighbouring farmers during a two-month period of fieldwork in 2012.¹ The data allows us to present an account of the specific practices and relations on the game farm as well as the discourses and organising practices of most of the actors involved in the global game farm context. Not all actors were interviewed and/or observed, however, as ‘poachers’ tend to be reticent about their activities. The study focuses specifically on the Eastern Cape as part of a longitudinal engagement with rural development processes in the former homelands, notably the former Ciskei (Hebinck and Lent, 2007; De Wet, 2011; Hebinck et al., 2011; Hebinck and Van Averbeke, 2013). An analysis of the trends and dynamics of game farming as a relatively recent land-use activity adds to and broadens the existing knowledge about rural development dynamics in the province. These dynamics are shaped, not just by what happens over time in the former homelands, but also by the interaction with the former South African part of the Eastern Cape where land, despite land and agrarian reforms, is still largely

¹ ‘Poaching’ is neither an adequate nor a correct term for the harvesting of wild game as it criminalises the act of poaching. Nonetheless, given the lack of an appropriate term, we refer to ‘poaching’ but also refer to bushmeat hunting, a more neutral term for this activity.

white owned. Migration from the former homelands to these areas, motivated by the search for work, is the predominant form of interaction, notably to the medium-sized and larger urban centres in the province and beyond (Bank and Minkley, 2005; De Wet, 2011).

3. Trends in game farming

The available data underscores the significance and economic potential of the game farm land-use model for rural development. From 1991 until the mid-2000s, game farming grew at an annual surface increase rate of 5.6% (ABSA, 2015). It is estimated that for the year 2003 there were about 5000 game ranches and more than 4000 mixed game and livestock farms in South Africa (ABSA, 2003). In 2006, this number increased to an estimated 9000 game ranches and another 15,000 landowners involved in mixed game and livestock farming (Patterson and Khosa, 2005). During this period, the total area for game farming peaked to 20.5 million ha in 2006 (NAMC, 2006) after which it stabilised, with about the same area coverage and number of game farms in 2015 (ABSA, 2015: 97; Dry, 2015; Janovsky, 2015). Traditional conservation areas (e.g. the 22 national and 100 provincial parks) cover some 6 to 8 million ha (ABSA, 2003, 2015; Janovsky, 2015). The number of animals (20 million plus) owned by private game farmers is about three to four times more than the number (six to eight million) in government-protected areas (NAMC, 2006; Dry, 2015).

The analyses by Wildlife Ranching SA/Wildbedryf SA (WRSA) (Cloete et al., 2015; Dry, 2015) points out that game farming provides more employment and adds substantially more added value to land than conventional farming. WRSA claims that the game farm sector provides 140,000 sustainable jobs, which is three times the number provided by domestic stock operations (Dry, 2015). Data about employment generation is contested, however, by other sources, to which we will return later.

The trophy-hunting market has expanded tremendously in South Africa during the last 20 years. In 2003 it was estimated that about 6000 trophy hunters visit South Africa annually (ABSA, 2003, 2015). The local or biltong segment is by far the largest, with an estimate of 200,000 hunters. The differences between trophy hunting and biltong hunting are many. Trophy hunting is less frequent and trophy hunters are highly profitable visitors (Cloete et al., 2015). Revenue from trophy hunting increased from 10 million USD in 1988 to about 100 million USD in 2004/2005 (Lindsey et al., 2007: 457) which has increased fivefold to 557.5 million USD in 2015. Data from the Agricultural Surveys of Statistics South Africa show that '[h]unting; trapping and game propagation including related services' is the fastest growing agricultural subsector, nationally as well as in the Eastern Cape.

The head of ABSA Agribusiness, Janovsky (2015), estimates the current total value of the game meat industry to be about 9.2 billion USD (2015 exchange rates), including hunting (557.5 million USD), breeding (768.4 million USD), processed products (339.1 million USD) and eco-tourism (7.8 billion USD).² The domestic and global market demands have diversified South Africa's wildlife industry with the introduction of an intensive wildlife breeding industry (Bothma and Van Rooyen, 2005), connecting wildlife breeders with game farms, national parks and private game reserves at wildlife auctions or through wildlife capture, transporters and veterinarians in order to exchange wildlife. A whole new infrastructure of markets and institutions has emerged in the rural areas to supply game farmers with game through about 67 game auctions, as

² This figure includes a range of activities including those outside the game farm sector. It covers the tourism sector as a whole and includes transport, accommodation, cable cars, etc. Precise data on accommodation specifically on game farms is not available.

well as companies specialising in game feed and fodder (*boskos* in Afrikaans). These farm activities show similarities with 19th century ostrich domestication and attempts to domesticate buffaloes or eland (Bothma and Van Rooyen, 2005; Van Sittert, 2005). The commodity, however, is no longer skin, meat or feathers. It is an African experience as 'farmed' wild animals are introduced into private game reserves for hunting or safari purposes. Game farmers now breed species such as buffalo and sable antelope in separate enclosures. Bought on regional auctions such as those held in Great Fish River National Park, buffalo are bred for trophy-hunting purposes or to be sold. A buffalo can thus be born as a 'domesticated' animal but die as a trophy on a game farm or of old age in a nature reserve, representing the true African wilderness (see also Snijders, 2012).

4. Game farming in the public and academic domain

Game farming has been debated to some extent within the policy and academic domains, as well as within public domains such as rural villages, newspapers and websites. Various and often contrasting discourses have emerged over time. Although framed in different ways, using different concepts, there is a consensus that game farming recategorises natural resources (e.g. game and landscapes) and actively transforms these into commodities. What is considered to be a commodity, however, has shifted over time, as a result of which game, but also land, has been reclassified and revalued. This is perfectly summarised by Carruthers (2008: 160) as '[f]arming the wild or wilding the farm'. Game farming is commonly viewed as bringing about changes at the level of both social and biophysical processes that have opened up opportunities for landowners to shift from conventional, often risky and not very rewarding forms of agriculture to the keeping of wildlife for trophy and biltong hunting, eco-tourism and meat production (ABSA, 2003, 2015; Van Niekerk, 2006; Carruthers, 2008; Bothma and Du Toit, 2009; Cloete et al., 2015).

Government views game farming as a 'well-organised sector' which builds on a 'proud tradition of hunting' (Tibane and Vermeulen, 2013; Tibane, 2015). Policies were formulated not only to stimulate game farming through enacting the Game Theft Act 105 of 1991 (RSA, 1991) but also to regulate it by subjecting it to national wildlife regulations such as the Norms and Standards for Hunting Methods in South Africa, which is incorporated in the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004, and to international obligations such as TOPS (Threatened or Protected Species) (Wynberg, 2002; DEAT, 2007; Cousins et al., 2010). The government policy discourse clearly hinges on removing legal constraints and regulation at the same time. The game farming lobby discourse advances the view that agricultural development and growth rates are, or can only be, sustained by shifting farm development strategies from 'bigger is better' (i.e. scale enlargement and betting on the advantages of the economy of scale) to 'higher value per hectare' (i.e. betting on economy of scope). Several economists, farmer associations and game-farming lobby groups adhere to the assumed economic advantages of such a shift in land use for rural employment and economic viability in the long run (Barnes and De Jager, 1996; Sims-Castley, 2002; ABSA, 2003, 2015; Cloete et al., 2007, 2015; Child et al., 2012; Dlamini et al., 2012; Rossouw and Cloete, 2014). The position that biodiversity can only be maintained if an economic value is attributed to it finds much support in the literature (Prins and Grootenhuis, 2000). There is a rich and critical literature on the progress of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) projects, which combine maintaining wildlife through commoditising game with devolving rights to manage wildlife to communities (Child, 2000; Adams and

Hulme, 2001; Dzingirai, 2003; Nelson and Agrawal, 2008; Owen-Smith, 2010).

Ecologists, in contrast, look at game farms as the pivot of competing priorities between conservationists and farmers in their attitudes towards predators, hybridisation, overstocking and the introduction of exotic or non-native species, as well as their biases with regard to trophy species, fragmentation through fencing, intensive management and national regulation (Green and Rothstein, 1998; Bigalke, 2000; Castley et al., 2001; Boone and Hobbs, 2004; Langholz and Krug, 2004; Lindsey et al., 2005, 2006; Steenkamp et al., 2005; Cousins et al., 2008, 2010; Child, 2009). This puts game farming at the centre of emotive and polarised discussions on the ethics of trophy hunting between animal welfare and rights groups and ecologists on the one hand, and hunters and pragmatic conservationists on the other (Swan et al., 2000; Lindsey et al., 2006). Game-farming lobbyists and associations (e.g. Wildlife Ranching SA/Wildbedryf SA) actively cultivate a discourse that conservation entails more than simply the protection of species (Janovsky, 2015). This in turn feeds the debate over whether game farming is just a conservation strategy expanding into conservation areas on or next to farmland, or a purely economic and profit-driven activity that is closer to agricultural farming (Botha, 2001; Krug, 2002; Langholz and Krug, 2004; Carruthers, 2008).

A more critical view on game farming has so far received little attention, notably in the public domain. How game farming is experienced more widely in the region, on the game farms themselves as well as in the surrounding villages, is not well researched. Contributions to a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* published in 2014 (Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014) aimed to fill that gap by dealing with the impact of game farming on farm dwellers and situating its dynamics in the context of the ongoing land and agrarian reforms in South Africa and competing claims on land and labour. Game farming was also raised as a concern at the National Land Tenure Summit 2014, held in Johannesburg from 4 to 6 September of that year. Delegates from various regions pointed to the shift in land use from farming to game farming and problematised it as leading to a reduction of rural employment, to the foreignisation of landownership and to potentially negative long- and short-term impacts on both regional and national food security.

5. Game farming in the Eastern Cape

The dominant form of land use in the Eastern Cape has long been arable farming, often combined with extensive rearing of livestock (sheep, goat and cattle), slowly transforming the landscape and degrading the subtropical thicket vegetation (Kerley et al., 1995; Beinart, 2003). Since 1996 the region has experienced an unprecedented increase in game-based farm operations. Some 12% of the land in the province has been converted into wildlife ranching. Anyone who frequently travels through the Eastern Cape will observe that much of the land is being converted from crop to game farming. Many farmers combine game farming with crop production and livestock rearing. The number of game species on these farms is substantial. Smith and Wilson (2002) recorded 41 species on the 63 game farms they surveyed. The average game-farm size Smith and Wilson covered in their survey was 4496 ha, with a median of 2506 ha. Hunting for game meat, trophy and recreational purposes is the main way in which game is utilised. The relatively buoyant foreign eco-tourist market and the hunting market have been strong driving forces behind the introduction of extralimital species in this region. Game farming in the Eastern Cape today has diversified into various combinations of activities (Van Niekerk, 2006). These are embedded in diverse organisational structures and on variable property sizes, ranging from small individual game farms to large, private nature reserves owned by international investors

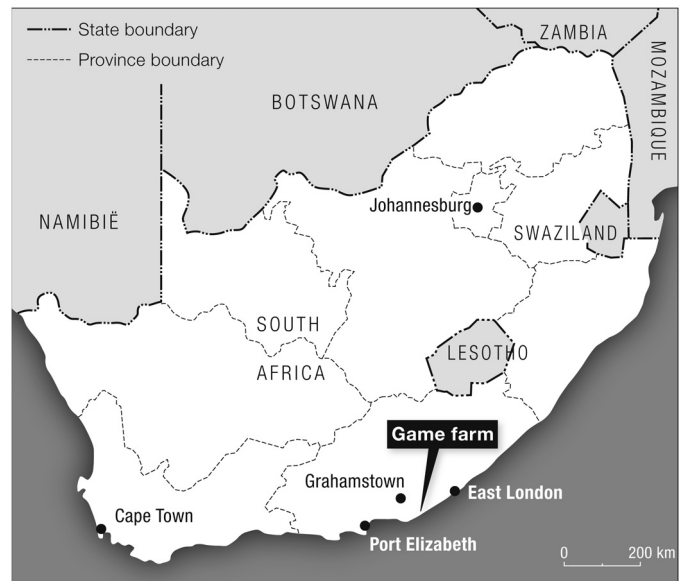


Fig. 1. Map showing the case-study game farm location in South Africa.

(Smith and Wilson, 2002) and functioning as mixed game and cattle farms, or as landowners managing their wildlife and/or land collectively in conservancies (Downsborough et al., 2011).

5.1. Game farming in practice: Descriptions from the field

A case study of a game farm was conducted as a useful reference for the socio-ecological and landscape transformations that game farming brings about in the region and beyond. Located along the Great Fish River on the 19th century frontier of what was the British Cape Colony (Mostert, 1992), the game farm is on former pineapple and cattle land, bordering the local Kap Nature Reserve and other farmland. It comprises 600 ha where game is extensively managed for local (biltong) and commercial (trophy) hunting. The farm also has several separate, 10–15 ha enclosures where buffalo and sable antelope are farmed intensively for breeding purposes. The enclosures are supervised to ensure the permanent exclusion of poachers, predators and noxious plants (Figs. 1 and 2).

5.2. Reordering land

Involved in farming for several generations, the family that owns and manages the game farm made their land suitable for pineapple production and cattle. These forms of land use created open areas on the top of the plateaus, turning vegetation into grassland and low-growing bushes. The cover changes are influencing current game farm practices, since open places function as ideal hunting places and are used by the game farmer to guide his clients on the farm and to monitor game populations. Certain animal species, especially trophy species such as nyala or impala, also use the areas to graze, making them easy to spot and providing a clear view for hunters to take a shot. These open areas are thus an important part of the game-farm landscape, functioning as the place where animals and humans interact through management and hunting activities. This landscape is, however, actively constructed and maintained. Newly erected fences and regular patrols for holes or other damages, keep 'owned' wildlife in and unwanted people, who are usually labelled as 'poachers' by the game farmer as well as nature conservationists, out. Bushes and young trees are cut regularly to give grass a chance to grow as a source of food for grazers such as impala. Situated atop the hills, grasslands provide a panoramic view of the surrounding farms, hills, river and ocean,

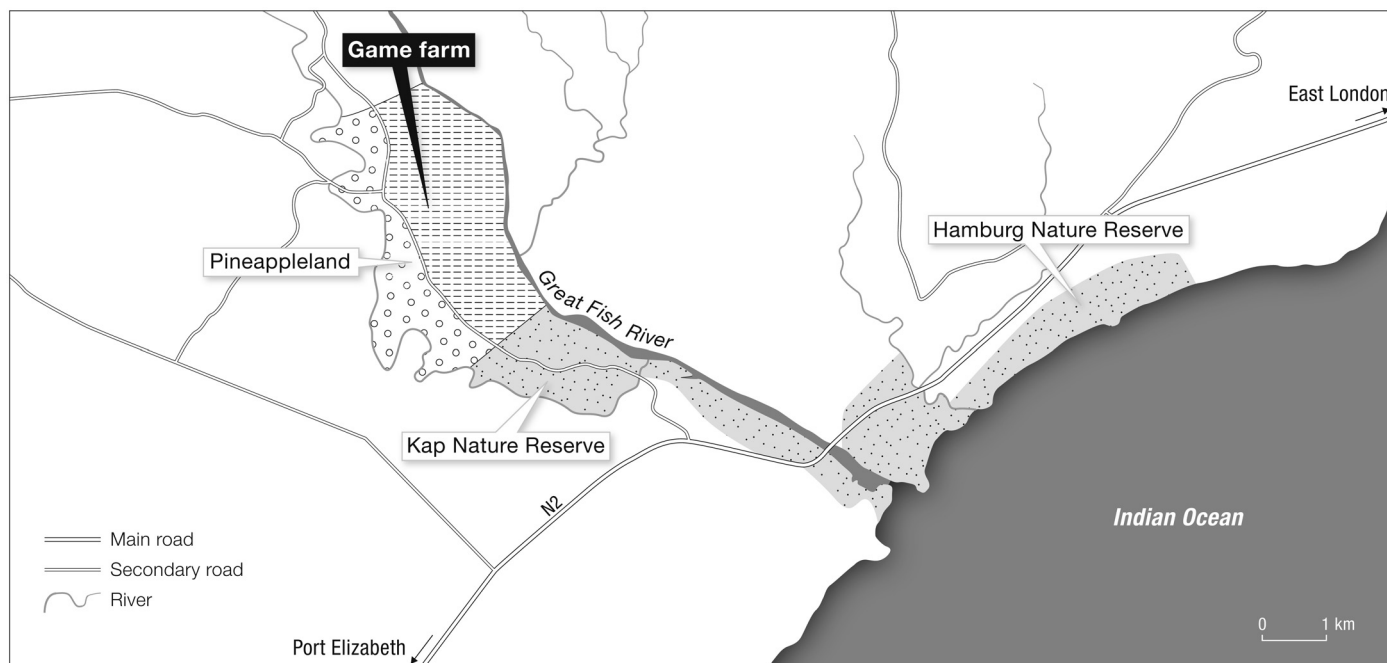


Fig. 2. Game farm location bordering agricultural fields and nature reserves.

which is much appreciated by both farmer and visiting hunter. The remaining vegetation and the landscape have thus gained an aesthetic value, creating an attractive surrounding for hunters to shoot their trophy and adding to a 'true' hunting experience. Land, previously classified as unproductive by the game farmer, has now been incorporated and commoditised as part of a hunting and ecotourism experience.

5.3. Reordering animal species for trophy hunting

Legally owned animal species on the game farm now include impala, waterbuck, zebra, kudu and nyala. Owning these species requires having sufficient land (not less than 400 ha in the Eastern Cape) that is adequately fenced, depending on the game species held (DEDEA, 2008). These legal regulations 'paradoxically' (Snijders, 2012: 508) prescribe how 'wild' animals should be kept and classifies them into administrative and legal categories according to their behaviour, size and weight, or their relative threat to humans—categorisations that are continuously debated between ecologists, farmers and the government. On the case-study game farm, the game farmer fenced his land with 2.4 m high fences, adequately enclosing the big and jumping animals like kudu that he chose to keep exclusively, rather than smaller animals like duiker – as will be explained below – or grysbok, which require only 1.4 m high fences, but also additional netting.

However, animals on the game farm can be put into further specific scientific, legal and functional categories. From an animal-ecology perspective, bushbuck and kudu are classified as indigenous species (Skinner and Chimimba, 2005). They are categorised as being native to the area, in balance with the original vegetation biome and not causing any degradation. Impala and nyala are not considered indigenous to the coastal areas of the Eastern Cape (Skinner and Chimimba, 2005). Their transportation from more northern savannah or dry thicket vegetation biomes gives them a different diet and behaviour, which disturbs the original ecosystem on the game farm. The presence of these non-indigenous buck can also influence the movement and feeding behaviour of indigenous species that are thus 'forced' to live in the same habitat

with new species. However, both the indigenous kudu and bushbuck and the non-indigenous nyala and impala are legally owned by the game farmer and function as trophy species. Nyala, in particular, are popular and expensive trophy animals and therefore an important asset on the farm.

There are, however, more game-farm species than those listed on a certificate of adequate enclosure. Bush pig, warthog and blue duiker are able to get through the fences. Being already present in the area and not belonging to any private landowners, these animals are legally classified according to national and provincial legislation either as damage-causing vermin (bush pig and warthog), or as rare and scarce species (blue duiker) that are listed as threatened or protected species (TOPS) (DEAT, 2007; Province of the Eastern Cape, 2011). Their use, and human interactions with them, is fixed in legal documents giving farmers rights to shoot them anywhere at any time, or only during hunting seasons, or only after the issue of a special permit per individual animal (DEAT, 2007; Province of the Eastern Cape, 2011). The arrival of international trophy hunters has, however, given game farmers and hunting outfitters opportunities to appropriate these animals. We will provide two examples to illustrate how such activities classify these animals into formal and informal categories.

Blue duiker is one of southern Africa's smallest antelope species, weighing about 4 kg, with mature adults standing 30 cm at shoulder height. Although widespread throughout the western and central regions of the continent, their distribution in southern Africa is limited to the coastal zones of the Eastern Cape and parts of KwaZulu-Natal (Skinner and Chimimba, 2005). The blue duiker is classified as an endangered animal and human use or interference is therefore restricted (DEAT, 2007). Although difficult to spot, blue duiker are considered 'quite common' by the game farmer. He does not understand why the blue duiker is on the endangered list. 'It has been on there since I was a child. But there are plenty of them around here. Contesting ecological classificatory schemes that inform the TOPS legislation, he argues that 'if they'd come and do research' they would find out that the species is not as 'scarce' as presented. Being rare, however, creates a lucrative trophy animal for international hunters. Compared to the more widely

distributed duiker species, the blue duiker has 10 times more economic value than the common duiker in the Eastern Cape (Van Niekerk, 2006). However, obtaining legal ownership would require the game farmer to invest in new fencing and the introduction of single animals. Instead, the game farmer uses his knowledge of the animal's behaviour, as he knows the densely vegetated bush areas where it hides and the best strategy to find it. Answering the demand for trophy blue duiker, he now receives trophy hunters and their outfitters who have already obtained a blue duiker hunting permit, which saves him both cost and trouble. Although he does not agree with the classification of the blue duiker as an endangered species, criticising both legislators and scientists for not making an effort to study what is happening on his farm, and although he neither actively introduced it, nor intended it to become a trophy animal in the first place, the farmer actually 'do[es] not mind'. The 'threatened' status of the blue duiker only increases its trophy value, which is to his advantage.

Lynx or caracal is another popular hunted species. Lynx have a long-standing negative image as animals causing damage to livestock (Skinner and Chimimba, 2005; Els, 2012). The establishment of game farms has turned the natural prey of the lynx into a farming resource and hence continues the conflict between farmer and predator. Game for trophy hunting and/or wildlife breeding makes predator control an important activity on the game farm. Each morning the game farm is patrolled by hunting dogs and staff in search of lynx. Officially categorised as a vermin species, farmers are allowed to shoot a lynx anywhere and anytime (Province of the Eastern Cape, 2011). Like the blue duiker, the lynx is a shy and seldom seen animal. Although widely distributed throughout the southern Africa region (Skinner and Chimimba, 2005), its nocturnal activity, as well as its habits of not abandoning and returning to a kill and of ignoring put-out bait, make it a very difficult animal to spot or hunt. Its instinctive reaction is to flee up a tree where it feels naturally safe when threatened; this makes the use of dogs to chase it up a tree the best possible manner to hunt it (Els, 2012). Once tracked and 'treed' by a pack of hunting dogs, successfully shooting the lynx is almost guaranteed, making it more suitable as a trophy species than the fleeing jackal, another common vermin species on the farm. Although still classified and hunted as a vermin species, the emergence of international trophy hunting has given lynx hunting a new meaning and function. Once a lynx has been tracked and chased up a tree, a telephone call will contact a hunting outfitter in town to check if there is a potential client interested in shooting a trophy lynx. If a client is able to make the journey, a lynx can be hunted as a vermin species in the morning, but shot as a trophy in the afternoon.

6. Contextualising and problematising game farming

Game farming generates new values and opportunities that allow game farmers and their families to make a living in the Eastern Cape. However, what the expansion of the game farm sector means for broader rural development processes and agrarian transformation in the area is critical, and requires unpacking. We argue that game farming is on the one hand a 'strategy for a new way of farming' that may indeed generate new opportunities through the creation of new forms of value adding. But, on the other hand, it simultaneously and continuously generates exclusive spaces that dictate not only who is included to share some of the benefits that game farms produce and who is not, but also who decides, and how, that exclusiveness shapes the social relationships between those that are included and those that are excluded. Fencing people out allows game farmers to make a living but simultaneously forms the basis for contesting the exclusiveness.

In this section we investigate the dynamics that are generated by the expansion of game farming in the Eastern Cape against the background of the state of affairs in rural development in the province as well as against the claims of the game-farm lobby, which were elaborated earlier in this article. The Eastern Cape is known for a continued racial and unequal distribution of land, wealth and power. Food and nutritional insecurity is widespread; incomes in the former homelands of the Ciskei and the Transkei are low, and largely derive from state grants and remittances (Fay, 2013; Hebinck and Van Averbek, 2013). From the early 1900s onwards, labour migration to the mines and major cities, which was heavily regulated by the apartheid state, was the major source of rural livelihoods. While incomes from migrant work initially led to an extension of cropping and livestock production, agriculture gradually declined in varying degrees: crop land became predominantly fallow and livestock numbers dwindled. Nowadays, home gardens are the predominant form of agricultural production in the former homelands of the Eastern Cape (Hebinck and Lent, 2007). When the controls on labour were gradually removed and a new democratic government came to power in 1994, the dynamics of migration from rural villages fundamentally changed. Migration became more permanent, with whole families leaving the village in the hopes of making a living in town (Bank and Minkley, 2005; Hebinck and Lent, 2007; De Wet, 2011). Tapscott (2016) reveals that the outmigration from one of the bigger districts in the Eastern Cape, Amathola, to elsewhere in the country is about 7% of the total population. Unemployment rates in the province are invariably high and are estimated at an average rate of 43% in 2016 (Stats SA, 2016). The unemployment rate in the industrial metropole of Port Elizabeth, which has recently grown substantially because of investments in the industrial and port sectors, is about 33%.

Rural development can be said to be in fundamental crisis, at the level of both practice and policy (Nel and Davies, 1999; Nel and Hill, 1996; Bank and Minkley, 2005; De Wet, 2011; Hebinck et al., 2011; Westaway, 2012; Hebinck and Cousins, 2013; Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014; Sender, 2015). The agricultural sector, which is still the backbone of many rural-development planning initiatives at national and provincial level (ECDARD, 2010; NPC, 2011), is in crisis to the extent that the badly needed creation of paid jobs is not materialising. The industrial and the service sectors appear to be unable to absorb the unemployed and recently retrenched job seekers. The province is in dire need of a dynamic growth engine. Whether agriculture can be that growth- and employment-generating engine is questionable. The agricultural growth rates in the province are invariably low and the productivity per hectare per labourer is among the lowest in the country (Liebenberg, 2013: 195). Only the citrus agricultural subsector in the Eastern Cape (and in South Africa as a whole) is an exception. The production of citrus and similarly labour-intensive crops in South Africa expanded in response to favourable export conditions, generating in turn more employment on farms (Genis, 2016; Meyer, 2016). Generally, the impact of continued mechanisation and the increasing sophistication of farming enterprises translates into a reduction in the number of unskilled labourers employed. Land reform in the Eastern Cape has not made a significant impact on the growth of production and employment. Aliber et al. (2006) found a drop in productivity (relative to that of the previous owners) alongside modest improvements in the livelihoods of those who now own and work the land. The current market-based 'willing buyer-willing seller' approach to land transfer has proven to be an extremely slow process (Lahiff, 2003, 2005, 2007; Hebinck et al., 2011). To date, the transformations set in motion by land and agrarian reform policies have neither provided more jobs nor improved security for farm workers and communal farmers (Atkinson, 2007; Cousins, 2013, 2016).

6.1. A new way of farming, but for whom?

To analyse game farming as a strategy and the role that agency plays, we draw on Long's (2001) conceptualisation of agency as the capacity to anticipate and create opportunities by forging new connections between a wide range of heterogeneous elements (human and non-human, social and material) into a new configuration that works. Li (2007: 265) emphasises that 'a feature of assemblage is its potential to finesse questions of agency by recognising the situated subjects who do the work of pulling together disparate elements without attributing to them a master-mind or a totalizing plan'. In game farming in South Africa, it is predominantly the private landowners who, with support from the state and WRSA expertise, use their agency to reorder land and animal species to (re)create opportunities for the production of new products that allow the farmer to make a (new) living. For many conventional farmers, game farming was the answer to what is referred to as the 'squeeze of conventional agriculture' (Marsden, 1998, 2003). This 'squeeze' stands for the narrowing gap between product value and costs, which threatens the sustainability and continuity of the agricultural sector, farm enterprises and the future of farmers' families (Van der Ploeg, 2010). As a response to the 'squeeze', farmers began to explore new and multiple strategies to create more and other benefits from land and wildlife. One should bear in mind that all this occurs in a legal context that protects private ownership of land (Hebinck and Cousins, 2013). The Game Theft Act 105 of 1991 (RSA, 1991; Snijders, 2012) makes an additional provision that if land is adequately enclosed, the owners of land legally own the game on their land. At the same time, structural changes in South African agricultural policies from the 1990s onwards confronted conventional farmers with the need to respond to challenges such as deregulation, the reduction of state support, the decline of their political power, increased land claims and new labour legislation (ABSA, 2003; Hall, 2009; Cloete et al., 2015).

As pointed out earlier, the way in which agency is deployed and works out depends on the local context and how relationships between farmers and farm workers evolve over time. There is no optimum model for wildlife management; farmers generate a mix between the selling of meat or of live animals, trophy hunting, eco-tourism and mixed farming with livestock. Similar processes and choices occur in Europe. European farmers are actively searching for ways to reduce monetary costs and to build new types of relationships with consumers. The revaluing and reordering of existing resources are clear manifestations of farmers' responses to the squeeze on agriculture (Roep and Van der Ploeg, 2003; Van der Ploeg et al., 2012).³ However, whereas in Europe cost reduction plays out well in terms of broadening rural development, creating jobs, intensifying connections with consumers and enlarging the rural economy for enhanced quality of life, in the South(ern) African context more generally, and in the case of game farming specifically, the agency that game farmers deploy in increasing the value added per unit of game and land, in lowering their monetary costs and in changing their monetary cost structure has its downsides. Those who do not own the land or capital to join the game-farming sector are not able to drive its development and can potentially be incorporated only as farm workers. Others, notably those who live in surrounding villages, can only observe from a distance through

the gates and fences, or engage in 'poaching'. The shift from crop and livestock production to game farming has, in contrast to what the game-farm lobby argues (Cloete et al., 2015), contributed to a reduction in the farm workforce. Once established, game farming requires far less intensive management in the form of external inputs, labour and wages than, for example, pineapple farming. The new labour policies of the post-apartheid government, which introduce minimum wages, have also motivated some farmers to seek ways of reducing their labour force.

In addition to this, the work and jobs that remain require people trained in the skills of tracking and skinning game. Luxury eco-tourism lodges require employees trained in tourism and the hotel and catering business. The local taxidermist, also a game farmer, explained that '99% of the game farmers I know' switched to game farming because of the labour costs and problems associated with pineapple farming. On the case-study game farm, the switch to game farming reduced the number of employees from 15 pineapple pickers, to one or two trained game 'trackers' and 'skinners' who 'know what to do' according to the game farmer. Detailed studies on the relation between labour and game farming by Brandt and Spierenburg (2014) and Mkhize (2014) confirm this trend. The size and composition of the labour force is changing throughout the southern African region, including Zimbabwe (Wolmer et al., 2003; Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014). We now return to how farmers' decisions and changes in labour relations evolve into the creation of an exclusive space that denies agency to some actors, who therefore have to deploy it in different ways.

6.2. Exclusive rural development: Fencing game in and people out

The fencing requirement has contributed to creating a situation whereby game, hunters and eco-tourists are fenced in and unwanted people are fenced out. In many situations, this implies the creation of a luxury and exclusive space in rural South Africa, often close to impoverished villages. Game farming is exclusive in addressing an elitist market for trophy hunting and wildlife breeding and in producing an empty or decontextualised conceptualisation of wilderness (Draper et al., 2004; Brooks, 2005; Wolmer, 2005). This implies excluding those local actors who potentially can, and sometimes actively do, claim ownership and rights to land and wildlife resources (Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014). The social consequences of this 'third nature wilderness' (Brooks et al., 2011) are often 'decontextualized' for visitors (Brockington and Duffy, 2010; Carrier, 2010). When international clients hunt for trophy, wildlife turns into a commodity that hinges on the consumption of the drama, scarcity and romanticism (Debord, 1995; Brockington and Duffy, 2010) that is associated with hunting and wildlife-viewing in Africa. Witnessing a trophy hunt, one can observe and feel, as one of the authors did on the case-study game farm, the excitement and anxiety that is related to this show. It builds up from the moment the hunter receives a call that 'a lynx has been treed' with the help of trackers and hunting dogs until he has eyed it himself and has shot his trophy. A farmworker is present to collect the trophy. After that, the hunter looks relieved, as if pulling the trigger has released all the energy that has been growing before. However, trophy hunting is not simply a sensational experience. It is a game based on a '(racial) hierarchy, domination and exclusivity' as Brandt (2013: 182) notes. 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. Furthermore, rumbling through the landscape in search of a trophy, one seems to enter into the world of frontier wilderness where the strongest – the hunter with his rifle and vehicle – controls and uses nature as he pleases. This 'hidden' and 'extra-ordinary' nature, different from the 'real world', creates

³ The changes that ensue from such new practices reconstitute rural development as a kaleidoscope of new and robust practices and novel institutional arrangements. Multifunctional agriculture combines agricultural production with providing a range of services, including environmental services such as providing space for nature production and leisure. Multifunctional farming has gradually become the backbone of rural development and the regional economy in Europe (Roep and Van der Ploeg, 2003; Van der Ploeg, 2010; Oostindie, 2015).

an atmosphere of exclusiveness which Harvey (2005) describes as a class division between those who are able and allowed to enjoy conservation benefits and those who are not.

6.3. Changes in local employment and continuities in labour relations

The exclusive character of the game farm is enacted not only via fencing, hunting fees or the presence of international trophy hunters. Land-use change, from conventional farming to game farming, has also influenced livelihoods of people living and/or working on the farm (Brooks et al., 2011; Brandt, 2013). An often-heard argument in favour of the wildlife industry is its employment potential (Sims-Castley, 2002; Langholz and Kerley, 2006; Cloete et al., 2015) and recently also the inter-sectorial economic linkages that game ranching induces (Rossouw and Cloete, 2014; Cloete et al., 2015). It is true, as Sims-Castley (2002), Smith and Wilson (2002) and Langholz and Kerley (2006) show, that especially private game reserves with eco-tourism facilities have created new types of employment. However, on the case-study game farm two workers are involved with hunting lynx, tracking trophy animals for clients and patrolling the fence. Professional hunters or hunting outfitters bring their own skinnners and workers to take care of the shot animal and the taxidermist employs various teams of skilled people at various stages of mounting the trophy. The game farmer claims that his workers are 'motivated and enjoying their work', receiving bonuses from visiting trophy hunters, which provides them with better means to support their families than if they were ordinary 'pineapple pickers'. The paternalism that the tips and bonuses embody if the work is done well and which characterises much of the labour relations on large farms is reproduced, albeit in a different form than previously.

6.4. 'Poaching' as contesting game farming

Those without the ability to legally enter a game farm or make use of its resources, appropriate game through 'illegal' hunting for bushmeat. Hunting for bushmeat in Africa's tropical regions has been widely documented (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Robinson and Bennett, 2000; Manika and Trivedi, 2002; Milner-Gulland and Bennett, 2003; De Merode et al., 2004; Lowassa et al., 2004; Fa et al., 2005) and predominantly discussed in the context of threatening conservation (Brown and Williams, 2003). Relatively few studies focus on hunting for bushmeat in southern Africa on or close to game farms (Carruthers, 1993). It is noteworthy that game farming, but also natural parks and reserves (Carruthers, 1993), has created a new source of bushmeat in the Eastern Cape. In most cases this also means the importation and conservation of new game species. Bushmeat hunting supplements locally produced and purchased food with protein from the environment, but also satisfies an urban market demand for game meat motivated by preference, or by cultural needs. Hayward's (2009) case study in the Dwesa and Cwebe forest reserves of the Eastern Cape illustrates that bushmeat hunting is significant, quantitatively and socioculturally, and supports rural livelihoods. Shackleton et al. (2007: 125) calculated a 'mean mass consumption per year of 210 and 119.8 kg per user household' for bushmeat in, respectively, the Ntubeni and the Cwebe areas of the former Transkei region. This rate was later also measured for the Mount Frere region in the Eastern Cape, where Kaschula and Shackleton (2009) calculated an annual off take of 268.6 kg/km²/year, or 3 kg/person/year, with a monetary value of ZAR307.

Hunting for bushmeat also takes place on and around the case-study game farm. Both the game farmer, and the adjacent municipal nature reserve manager 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'. Both perceive 'poaching' as a threat and a crime and game farmers and hunters specifically consider it 'unethical' and 'illegal'; in other words, only hunting with a rifle on privately owned land, hunting privately owned game, is considered ethical and legal. Motivations for hunting bushmeat in southern Africa are not necessarily related to poverty. Hayward (2009: 79) suggests it is the 'relatively wealthy city dwellers who are seeking reminders of their traditional lifestyles', or that the demand for bushmeat is driven by its low prices relative to domestic meat, or by a preference for its taste, as Barnett (2000) shows for Mozambique. Kaschula and Shackleton (2009) argue that bushmeat hunting holds great socio-cultural value for the rural poor: hunting is of social, as well as nutritional importance (McGarry and Shackleton, 2009).

Regardless of the motivation for hunting bushmeat, it potentially involves more than a 'wildmeat crisis' (Milner-Gulland and Bennett, 2003). The 'poaching' on the game farm can be interpreted as a specific contestation of game farming. It is different from the violent contestations against game farm owners in KwaZulu-Natal, which have resulted in open conflict over land claims (Brooks and Kjelstrup, 2014) or the 'silent' contestations over game farming in the Karoo, which have resulted in a 'process of displacement' of farm dwellers (Brandt and Spierenburg, 2014: 234). Game farms in the Eastern Cape have created a new source of bushmeat that is appropriated by 'poachers'. Preliminary findings of recent, but as yet unpublished studies of a rural village in Venda, and of villages near a game farm and nature reserve in KwaZulu-Natal, underline that bushmeat hunting is not solely driven by poverty. The excitement of hunting, satisfying cultural needs and exercising one's natural or birth right to harvest natural resources such as game explain the continuity of bushmeat hunting despite its being criminalised. 'Poaching' may thus be interpreted as a contestation against the 'fencenization' of the rural Eastern Cape and the changes in the nature of fencing. 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 in 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 to 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 sociocultural rights to wildlife. This is a break with the past, when black people hunted freely, their livelihoods a combination of growing crops, keeping cattle and hunting game.

'Poaching' affects game farm management and pushes landowners to erect more and higher fences and to step up patrolling. The case-study game farm and the nature reserve both order their workers to patrol daily for snares and fence damage to prevent 'poaching'. Being a mobile resource, game is difficult to control and, when they jump the fence, it is legally impossible to own them. At the same time, the reality of 'poaching' is not hidden or denied by the game farmer and the wider farming community. On the contrary, it is publicly discussed and spoken of as a 'criminal', 'unethical' activity that threatens the game farm and biodiversity. Game farmers thus make references to 'poaching' and the presence of 'poachers' to legitimise their drive to continue and even intensify the securitisation of the rural areas close to game farms and national parks.

7. Conclusion

Game farm assemblages are not fixed human-wildlife relationships or isolated spaces enclosed behind a fence. New uses and

values are actively produced and reproduced by game farmers as part of their overall strategy to continue farming. For farmers, game farming has created new opportunities for, and added value to, their activities. However, the agency that keeps them 'in farming' and the socio-legal context in which game farming emerges, keeps out those out who are not in a position to join the game-farming industry; their roles and positions are relegated to that of being part of the workforce, or to looking for work elsewhere, or to trying to appropriate game in the form of 'poaching'. One of the arguments made in this article is that game farming assemblages in the Eastern Cape generate exclusive places that are well connected globally, but that at local level often manifest in developments contained within and constrained by social relationships embedded in racial inequalities that have been present in the Eastern Cape for a long period of time. Trophy hunting and the arrival of international clients create a space for global and local elites to enjoy hunting and an African wilderness experience. Usages of land and/or forms of ownership other than private are ignored. Moreover, the promised rise in rural employment has not materialised; instead, 'poaching' has manifested as a form of contestation. This is the tension that game farming continues to generate in rural development. Without a transformation of the existing social relationships, and in the absence of conducive agrarian transformation processes, the new opportunities that game farming assemblages seemed to promise for all, are unlikely to be realised.

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