

**“OUR BATTLES ALSO CHANGED”: TRANSFORMATION AND BLACK
EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARKS, 1991-2008**

by

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DEDICATION

To Tarisai Maguranyanga for her love and friendship

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ABSTRACT

“OUR BATTLES ALSO CHANGED”: TRANSFORMATION AND BLACK EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARKS, 1991-2008

by

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The dissertation explores transformation of South African National Parks (SANParks), from 1991 to 2008. SANParks organizational “battles also changed” with transition to democracy, which resulted in major political and institutional changes in South Africa. Based on a single case study, with a longitudinal dimension (study period, 1991-2008), the dissertation examines SANParks transformation through multi-disciplinary lens, and analyzes transformation strategies and initiatives related to de-racialization, black empowerment, social justice, and people-oriented conservation. Key informant interviews, archival research (documents), observational methods, and official SANParks’ organizational climate survey data set provide the data.

Confronted with increasing pressure to address the apartheid legacy, SANParks responded by reforming and advancing broader objectives of “transformation” in an effort to be legitimate and survive in the new South Africa. The dissertation argues that in the context of broader transformations, political and major policy changes, SANParks’ initiatives were predicated on “enlightened pragmatism” and recognition that its

organizational interests are secured through local socio-economic development and advancement of black empowerment. SANParks executives acknowledged that populist demands and societal expectations of the role and functions of national parks had to be tempered by moderation and pragmatism while transcending narrow conservation interests. In the process, SANParks was compelled by pragmatic reasons and “enlightened self-interests” to advance socio-economic initiatives that focus on historically disadvantaged communities living adjacent to national parks. It therefore focused its attention on aligning organizational interests with broader goals of transformation, black empowerment, and local socio-economic development in South Africa while keeping a big part of its conservation agenda and structure more or less intact.

SANParks leaders’ transcended the impasse between the narrow conservation mandate and social issues by balancing strategic objectives against situational contingencies. Such “enlightened pragmatism” enabled SANParks to mobilize resources and socio-political support for transformation initiatives. The dissertation highlights pragmatism and relativity of transformational choices, strategic policies and approaches that influenced the trajectory of SANParks transformation, which was informed by conditions on the ground - powerful ideational, political, institutional, and economic forces.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“On this road of change and transformation an enormous amount remains to be done... What the situation requires of us, on the one hand, is to give due recognition for such changes as have taken place; on the other hand, it also requires us to acknowledge that both the rate and the scope of change still leave quite a lot to be desired”¹ (Mandela 1996).

“The single issue is transformation and the pace of it. The country’s at a crucial point in the sense that everyone’s been quite patient so far – but increasingly the signs are that black South Africans are saying the pace is too slow... You’ve got to transform in line with the country’s own transformation”² p, 22 (Sunday Times Editor 2007).

I started this dissertation project out of interest to understand the social and political processes of transformation in public sector organizations. As an African student, I had been frustrated by the widespread evidence of failings of post-colonial African public sector agencies in overcoming colonial legacies. The nagging question was whether inherited public sector organizations, left by departing colonial powers, helped or hindered development in Africa. I often wonder whether inherited public sector organizations had strong colonial cultural legacy that supported the continuity of colonial social relations and undermined realization of post-colonial ideals of transformation and black empowerment. Is it possible for post-colonial public sector executives to transcend narrow interests of public agencies and navigate complex political and institutional landscapes to instigate socially progressive initiatives that have positive socio-political outcomes and mutual benefits? I was attracted to the notion of mobilizing interests to converge for a common purpose or mutual gain. For me, the question was how to

¹ President Nelson Mandela, the first black President of the Republic of South Africa speaking at the University of Stellenbosch.

² Mr. Tom Boardman, a white Chief Executive Officer of Nedbank explaining transformation as a strategic advantage and differentiator, which requires transforming the bank in line with the country’s own transformation (Sunday Times Editor 2007).

leverage the power of ideas and leadership to promote socially progressive objectives, transformation and black empowerment.

Anecdotally, I had discussions with other African scholars on whether inherited African public sector organizations have the capacity to transform and be responsive to historically disadvantaged communities or promote broader social goals without undermining their survival and sustainability. These questions prompted me to pay attention to the intersection of macro-sociological factors and organizational-level changes in structure, practices, processes and culture. What opportunities were there to transform technically oriented agencies into socially progressive (responsive) organizations? I then decided to study SANParks transformation as both an “end” and a “process.” Conceptually, I envisaged SANParks transformation as part of a broader process of change in South Africa, and transformation initiatives in the organization as connected to wider efforts to facilitate socio-economic development and black empowerment opportunities. Linking macro-level change and organizational-level transformation required that I pay attention to political and institutional context since the changes did not occur in a vacuum. I recognized the co-constitution and mutually reinforcing tendencies of institutional and organizational changes, and interaction of society, organizations and their leaders.

The process of political democratization unleashed new challenges for public sector organizations, including conservation bureaucracies, in South Africa. The shift from authoritarian apartheid to democracy widened societal expectations and allowed the ideas³ of transformation⁴ to emerge, particularly regarding how to construct a democratic society after the brutal history of oppression (Fraser-Moleketi & van Dyk-Robertson

³ Idea is defined as cluster of principled beliefs geared towards action (Lemos & Oliveira 2004).

⁴ Post-apartheid transformation in South Africa denotes the “construction of a democratic society – one that would overcome the political, social and economic problems of the past... mindful of the overall goal of building a democratic society – not only in the political sense, but also on the socio-economic dimensions – the specific objectives of the transformation process were defined to include the following: Democratizing all sectors; creating a better life for all South African people by building the economy, ensuring sustainable economic growth and distributing resources more equitably; removing all forms of discrimination and addressing the consequences of apartheid” p, 45 (Fraser-Moleketi and van Dyk-Robertson 2003).

2003; Lemos & Oliveira 2004). The black majority population had suffered substantially under white minority rule, and inevitably political democratization had to confront and overcome socio-political and economic legacies of the past. The challenges of redressing apartheid legacies and injustice weighed heavily on South African society in transition, and both its public and private sector organizations faced these challenges. I was really convinced that South African experiments with redressing apartheid legacies could offer the post-colonial world new strategies for addressing problems of transformation and black empowerment, and public sector reforms. However, I do not discount the experiences of other countries:

“South Africa is hardly the first country to experience decolonization, or even to attempt redress for racial dispossession and discrimination in the context of consolidating a new democracy. Other experiences may well suggest new perspectives, new approaches to the challenges of confronting apartheid’s multiple legacies” p. 436 (Seidman 1999).

The transition from apartheid to post-apartheid era dislodged the political and institutional landscapes of organizations, and reconfigured the interface of organizations and society. Therefore, it is important that we understand the implications of shifts in the landscape in which organizations are rooted (Scott 1995b). The fundamental changes in South Africa’s political and social climate reshaped the context. What happens to organizations when there is a fundamental shift in the landscape in which they are rooted? With political democratization, organizations historically rooted in the apartheid landscape were exposed to a new ground and faced with different socio-political, institutional and economic demands.

The core objective of this dissertation is to understand how processes of political democratization and institutional change in South Africa reconfigured the role and functions of public sector organizations, especially those organizations that had developed in colonial/apartheid era, with interests, missions, and mandate framed in and for that era. I use the case study of South African National Parks (SANParks), the national park agency, to explore how a public sector organization transitioned and changed in response to post-colonial/post-apartheid objectives of transformation, black

empowerment and social justice. I show that political transition unleashed new expectations and influenced the broadening of SANParks responsibility towards local socio-economic development, social justice and black empowerment. I argue that SANParks was motivated to move from its narrow biologically focused (conservation) interests to broader social issues through enlightened self-interest and recognition that its survival and legitimacy could be secured by promoting broader social interests. I highlight efforts by SANParks (formerly the National Parks Board) to negotiate the tensions generated by societal expectations, and minimize the conflict between the official mandate and socially expected role. Examining SANParks strategies, organizational processes and social innovations in park management, I advance the argument that SANParks transformation was driven by “enlightened pragmatism.”

In this dissertation, “enlightened pragmatism” refers to efforts to balance strategic self-interest and shared interests against situational contingencies, and recognizing the relativity of transformational choices and importance of behaving socially appropriate in the new dispensation. In other words, strategic policies and approaches to transformation have to be pragmatic⁵ and well informed by conditions on the ground rather than purely driven by ideological values and populist demands. In the dissertation, I illustrate the pragmatic inclinations of SANParks’ chief executives, and show how they were able to tweak and reform existing organizational structure, practices, policies, and management paradigm rather than replace them wholesale when they clashed with the new reality of post-apartheid transformations. Because of this approach, they had better chances at reaching workable solutions to problems. The discussion of three leadership epochs after the end of apartheid reveal the practicality of implementing transformation, black empowerment, and park management reforms incrementally and develop through successive layering. The dissertation shows this “successive layering” of transformation and black empowerment. Another dimension of “enlightened pragmatism” relates to SANParks ability to transcend the impasse between conservation and social issues, and

⁵ I use the term “pragmatism” in its common sense rather than philosophical sense. It conveys the notion that SANParks transformation is guided more by practical outcomes associated with organizational, socio-political, and economic realities on the ground and less by populist demands and ideology. The use of the term precludes the philosophical arguments and positions.

reconcile these diverse interests for common purpose and mutual gain. Pragmatism thus transcends ideological commitment to the protectionist model (narrowly focused on biodiversity conservation objectives or pure conservation mandate), and does not ignore the harsh social realities of communities living adjacent to national parks or broader social issues of empowerment, social justice etc.

The concept of “enlightened self-interest” was originally applied in the publication, *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville (de Tocqueville 2000), to explain the intricate balancing of self-interest, shared interest (mutual gain), and altruistic concern for others’ interests. Professor John Ikerd of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri examines the concept in “Rethinking the Economics of Self-Interest” (Ikerd 1999). He argues that “enlightened self-interest” recognizes that each individual or organization’s interests are linked to wider societal interests. Responsibility and conformity to higher goals and society requires balancing narrow self-interests, shared-interests, and others’ interests to create a sustainable future (Ikerd 1999, 2004, 2008). Balancing self-interests with altruistic interests provides opportunities for bridging the historical divide between park authorities and local communities, mainly black South Africans that were marginalized in nature conservation. Rebuilding this relationship and balancing those interests requires acting pragmatically in the context of deep social and political transformation.

The transformation of SANParks cannot be fully understood without paying attention to ideas about conservation, transformation, and black empowerment in South Africa. This requires paying attention to the role that protected areas (national parks) played in entrenching rural poverty, disempowerment of black South Africans, and reconfigured power relations in the country. History matters in understanding contemporary challenges, and the socio-political demands placed on the national park system to transform. Given the racial politics of apartheid, questions of race, power and control of resources are intimately intertwined with protected area management. In this dissertation, I explore processes of transformation in park management that link organizational goals to broader socio-political demands and seek to promote

organizational survival. I argue that SANParks transformation is predicated on reconciling organizational and societal interests, and accommodating new expectations on the role and function of national parks in rural poverty alleviation and local socio-economic development. The findings indicate that SANParks transformation has depended largely on the executives' ability to maneuver the political and social landscape, and galvanize political support for change initiatives and renegotiate the boundaries of transformation in ways that ensure the sustainability of national parks. The chief executives succeeded in correlating varying interests around common purpose – securing conservation objectives and integrity of national parks while creating socio-economic benefits for local communities living adjacent to national parks. The confluence of interest between SANParks, government departments, and park neighboring communities with regards to transformation and black empowerment has provided the impetus for change and socially responsive initiatives, and is nothing short of remarkable. It has been a critical ingredient in mobilizing resources for transformation initiatives and improving SANParks' legitimacy.

SANParks has linked its interests with other government departments and communities living adjacent to national parks. This has enabled it to use national parks as nodes for local socioeconomic development, help fight poverty, rural unemployment, and assist central government deliver opportunities to rural communities. SANParks has implemented socially responsive conservation projects in support of transformation objectives as well as reposition national parks to satisfy socio-economic needs of adjacent communities. In the process of pursuing common cause with other government departments and neighboring communities, SANParks has been able to improve the historical hostile relationship with adjacent communities and build structures for social engagement (i.e., park forums, joint management arrangements) to deal with common challenges. These community-oriented structures promote community projects, training, micro-enterprises, and environmental education initiatives. These initiatives have emerged drastically since democratization, and symbolize SANParks' effort to promote cooperation between parks and neighboring communities. On the other hand, the initiatives have assisted SANParks deflect rural protests and socio-political threats from

neighboring communities, which would hurt its conservation objectives and integrity of national parks.

SANParks' pursuit of shared interests and broader socio-political ideas (i.e., transformation, black empowerment, and poverty relief initiatives) also reflects an organization seeking to "heal" wounds of the past – Dr. Mabunda's era captures the importance of positioning SANParks as a "healing" organization. Notwithstanding the moral imperative for "healing" the wounds of apartheid, it is in the best interests of SANParks join forces with government and park neighboring communities in creating socio-economic opportunities and providing assistance. The sustainability of national parks is linked to turning warring interests into "a community of diverse but cooperative interests" **p, 273** (McKinney & Harmon 2004). SANParks leaders understood that sustaining national parks and adjacent communities requires creating platforms where diverse interests could coalesce and work together on common challenges - to promote rural livelihoods, local economies, and integrity of national parks and healthy ecosystems.

Based on a principled belief that transformation and black empowerment should occur and mutual interests harnessed to overcome the historical injustices of colonial and apartheid conservation, SANParks leaders were able to forge a new vision of for resolving issues facing national parks, adjacent communities, and broader society. I discuss the three different leadership periods to highlight transformation challenges and evolution of transformation strategies as the leaders sought to reconcile organizational interests and broader socio-political interests. What is particularly intriguing about the three leadership eras is how their strategies at different times in SANParks' history braided together with broader socio-political and economic interests creating a confluence of interests and ideas. This "confluence" help explain the interaction of macro-level changes and SANParks transformation or strategies available to transform park management.

SANParks' responses to societal and institutional demands are predicated on enlightened pragmatism, and strategic assessment of environmental conditions. I chose to understand SANParks transformation by looking at its array of strategies over the past 17 years, and how SANParks has responded to political and institutional changes. Looking back to history and appreciating contemporary challenges, it was possible to unpack the strategies that emerged in response to organizational context of park management, shortcomings of preceding approaches, and the building blocks of ideas of transformation and socially just conservation. In a quest to promote social responsiveness and improve legitimacy in the new South Africa, SANParks executives embarked on transformation initiatives that sought to overcome historical legacies of exclusionary conservation but ironically preserved the basic structure of conservation of the national park system. Overall, transformation has not been deep enough to radically change the core park management structure (architecture) and dominant conservation paradigm. It appears transformation initiatives and social innovations in park management have helped insulate SANParks from social and political pressure for radical transformation since it is perceived to be socially progressive.

Inasmuch as societal demands and expectations have changed with the black population becoming the key political constituency for national parks in post-colonial Africa, the structure of park management has continued to reflect colonial founding conditions and character, largely inward looking, and treating local communities as damaging ecosystems. Hence, efforts to exclude local communities from gaining authority over conservation and resource management decisions have characterized park management and bias towards managerial ecology (Bavington 2002). The assumption is scientific resource management (modern forest/wildlife science) practiced by western-oriented professionals ensure efficient management of species and wildlife habitats. This model marginalizes local practices and knowledge systems, and excludes local people from park management. As a result, it ignores the positive role that local people could play in resource management as well as their historical relationship with their habitats and biodiversity. Because of the perception that local people demand natural ecosystems, resource-dependent communities' rights have been curtailed and denied access to

resources resulting in tension and conflict between local people and conservation agencies (Neumann 1998). There is a rich literature that discusses the negative sociological consequences of protected areas on local people (Carruthers 1995; Cock and Koch 1991; West & Brechin 1991), and exposes social injustices, threats to livelihoods, cultural survival (Stevens 1997), and conflict between parks and local people that potentially threatens conservation objectives and integrity of protected areas.

The issues highlighted above are particularly important because of the growing concerns regarding poverty, underdevelopment, and environmental threats in our modern times. Both people and parks are in peril, and their interdependence and mutual benefits cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore important that we understand how a natural resource bureaucracy responds to new and multiple demands, and pursues conservation and social goals in ways that promote socio-economic development, black empowerment, and ideals of a democracy. In this sense, SANParks serves as powerful microcosm to explore organizational challenges and consequences of addressing socio-political demands, pursuing ideas of transformation and black empowerment, and ensuring organizational survival.

In this dissertation, I examine South African National Parks (SANParks) transformation⁶ from 1991 to 2008, and explore the challenges and dilemmas of transformation in transitional economies (Denison 2001a). Little attention has been paid to how public sector organizations in South Africa (i.e., conservation bureaucracies) appropriate ideas of transformation and black empowerment to address broader common problems and appeal to shared interests. How organizations frame the moral imperatives for transformation and black empowerment and simultaneously appeal to shared interests (confluence of interest) to advance organizational initiatives with positive outcomes and mutual gain requires exploration. My examination of SANParks transformation reveals executives' ingenuity and innovation in tapping into existing broader ideas and programs

⁶ SANParks defines transformation as “striving to transfer power and control of resources from the minority that has been appointed and privileged by an undemocratic system, to the majority that participates in the new democratic process” (Cock and Fig 2002; SANParks official website). The concept of “transformation” presupposes fundamental change in character and nature of the organization (Else 2004), and a sharp break with the past.

of transformation to respond socio-political and economic challenges facing park management (national parks) as well as addressing socio-economic needs of historically disenfranchised black communities.

While black South Africans' patience is wearing thin because of the slow pace of transformation, one cannot ignore efforts by public sector organizations to address apartheid legacies and accommodate external demands and institutional pressures through innovative adaptive mechanisms and strategies. Strategic and pragmatic transformation has to align organizational interests with pursuit of broader social objectives, reconcile conservation and local socio-economic development, and facilitate organizational survival and legitimacy. The agenda for transformation, black empowerment, and poverty alleviation is socially and politically appealing, and morally resonates with post-apartheid South African society such that reforms and transformation initiatives aimed at promoting those objectives are well received and rewarded by broader society.

In this dissertation, I explore both durability and change in park management by exploring socio-political and institutional processes of transformation, and how these shaped SANParks' responses and development of socially oriented conservation initiatives aimed at promoting lofty goals of local socio-economic development and black empowerment (Cock & Fig 2002; Magome 2004). I then examine the influence of institution change and ideas about transformation and black empowerment in shaping organizational behavior and action (Campbell 1998, 2002; Lemos 1998). Institutions provide regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive frameworks through which organizational actors categorize activities and respond (Clemens & Cook 1999; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 1994, 1995b; Scott & Christensen 1995).

South Africa's political democratization and institutional changes resulted in major shifts in political ideology, institutional logics, and balance of power. Ideas of transformation and black empowerment emerged as a response to challenges of apartheid legacy and the need to create a democratic and just South Africa. The old logic of

apartheid was politically indefensible and morally repudiated. In other words, political democratization undermined the regulatory, normative and cognitive pillars of apartheid institutions. As a result, the demise of apartheid had profound implications for both private and public sector organizations in South Africa, including park management systems.

Race and National Parks

Apartheid South Africa was organized on race and notions of separate development. Power, control and privilege were racially determined, and so was social, political and economic organization in the country. Race mediated all social relations and service delivery, including benefits flowing from the country's national parks. The relationship between national parks and black communities reflected the tyranny of apartheid, and authoritarianism of white domination (Carruthers 1995; Cock 2007). Conservation policies and practice reinforced the country's authoritarian policies, and consciously excluded the black population from enjoying the benefits of national parks (Picard 2000, 2003). Black South Africans shouldered disproportionately the social burden of protected areas. They experienced forced removals, violent exclusions, land dispossession, and suffered from quasi-militaristic enforcement of environmental regulations and policies. Colonial and apartheid administrators viewed local communities as a threat to conservation objectives, and disrespected indigenous knowledge systems and conservation practices (Makwaeba 2004).

National parks embodied and reproduced white power and domination (Carruthers 1995; Cock 1991; Cock & Fig 2002; Neumann 1998). Because of the depth of the linkage between white socio-political and economic power and colonial national parks, the weight of colonial legacy on contemporary protected area management systems is a fascinating question for students of African environmental policy and organizational studies. National parks were a bastion of white conservationists, and advanced socio-cultural and political economic interests of the white segment of the population (Carruthers 1995; Neumann 1998). Cock and Fig (2002) argue that the National Parks

Board (now South African National Parks) reflected and symbolized the culture and practice of apartheid. The political voice of the white minority was influential in shaping park management, and the National Parks Board (NPB) closely aligned itself with Afrikaner power and Nationalist Party politics. It is therefore not surprising that apartheid social relations and authoritarianism manifested in park management, and helped institutionalize white domination and Eurocentric cultural values and ideas in park management.

In the next section, I briefly document the global practice of nature conservation and its checkered history so as to provide a background context for understanding the imperatives for transforming the culture and practice of park management authorities. Such history influenced the nature of park management in South Africa, and when political transition occurred there was pressure to change the model of conservation in the country.

“Apartheid” and Global Practice of Nature Conservation

The global practice of nature conservation, particularly systems of national parks, is characterized “apartheid” – the separation of indigenous (colonized) populations and nature. The creation of the Yellowstone National Park, which became the dominant global model for national parks, was marked by eviction of indigenous people from nature and expropriation of land rights by the colonizing government (Poirier & Ostergren 2002). In colonial Africa, the colonized indigenous populations were separated from their land by legal, political, and violent means, and total disregard for human rights and social justice. Eurocentric ideas of wilderness or “wild Africa” (Adams & McShane 1996) influenced the marginalization and exclusion of native populations in nature conservation. Human activities were perceived to be incompatible with conservation objectives and wilderness preservation, and therefore national parks and nature reserves would secure “Eden” or pristine nature from ravages of human misuse (Adams & McShane 1996; Neumann 1998; Reid 2001).

European colonizers viewed native populations inhabiting claimed territories as “savages and barbarians” – a racist justification to enforce exclusion and authoritarian park/people relationships (Manspeizer 2004; Neumann 1998; Poirier & Ostergren 2002; Zerner 2000). This enabled the colonizers to subdue native populations and appropriate rights to both wildlife (nature) and land. In the process, native populations lost resources (land, flora, and fauna) upon which their livelihood and cultural survival depended (Stevens 1997). This tempered with their spiritual connection to place and nature. The establishment of national parks dispossessed native populations physically from their land as well as spiritually disconnected them with customary cultural rights and practices (Sundberg 2003). These experiences reflect the “socio-political nuances or the harsh realities of the politics of natural resource conservation” **p, 2** (Carruthers 1995), and are linked to colonial social engineering efforts that were built on “apartheid” ideology - the notion of separating people and nature.

This form of “conservation apartheid” converged with dominant politics of racial domination. Therefore, exclusion of native (colonized) populations, social injustice, land dispossession, curtailment of rights, and denial of access to benefits of nature conservation (national parks) was strengthened by colonial politics and notions of white domination. It is not surprising that the processes would inherently be deeply racialized, and management of national parks becomes a provenance of white males (Carruthers 1995; Wu & Turner 2004). As a consequence, a racialized national park system developed and entrenched institutional racism in the practice of nature conservation. In the process “racial apartheid” reinforced “conservation apartheid” – the separation of native/resource-dependent populations from nature and wildlife. “Apartheid” tends to be a stubborn stain in the institutions, structures and practices that govern contemporary management of national parks (Wu & Turner 2004).

While political apartheid has been successfully dismantled in South Africa, it seems “conservation apartheid” a huge challenge in the country as well as being an integral element of the global practice of nature protection. This challenge is not simply unique to South Africa but prevalent in most countries that have embraced the national

park idea modeled along the “Yellowstone model.” Most global conservation efforts in national parks are premised “on exclusionist principles first illustrated in the Yellowstone model” p, 136 (Reid 2001), and premised on top-down approach and expert management (Turner 2004). Exclusion and dispossessions remain constitutive aspects of national parks in general (Geisler 2003a, b; Geisler & Letsoalo 2000; Neumann 1998, 2000). Hence, in South Africa, the practice of apartheid doubly enforced the ideology of racial domination and practice of exclusion of black communities (subordination) in nature protection.

The South African experience provides a fascinating example of the politics of race and nature, and how race shaped terrains of power and practice of nature conservation (Moore *et al.* 2003). Nadine Gordimer, in her book *The Conservationist*, argues that “the discourse of conservation readily serves as an ideological cover-up, especially in a country where the question of ownership of land is so fraught” p, 83-84 (Barnard 2007). Gordimer laments that fact that the concern about the natural environment can “become something unpleasant and almost evil” p, 84 (Barnard 2007) since it is often linked to lack of concern for black communities and the elevation of wildlife above the needs of poor people living adjacent to national parks. While national parks protected the “beauties of South Africa,” they also reflected the brutality of processes of exclusion, dispossession, authoritarianism, and “apartheid” practices in nature conservation (Chatty & Colchester 2002). As a dimension of apartheid social engineering, the Nationalist Party government instituted policies that resulted in forced removal of people along racial and ethnic lines. Black communities were removed from land that contained rich biodiversity resources, needed for park establishment or incorporation into protected areas (Fabricius & Koch 2004).

Democratization and Nature Conservation in New South Africa

The discussion of the history of nature conservation is far from exhaustive, and only serves to demonstrate how conservation initiatives entrenched “apartheid.” However, following political democratization, African governments instigated new policies that improved the rights of historically disenfranchised black communities. In

South Africa, the new environmental policies recognize the rights of black South Africans and seek ways of linking biodiversity conservation to socio-economic needs of rural communities, and promote access and benefit sharing. Other policies have sought to resolve historical land claims and create institutional arrangements for resource management. Policymaking has therefore focused on land ownership, tenure and access to natural resources as well as local participation in resource governance. As a result, protected area authorities have had to confront the historical reality of conservation initiatives that entrenched poverty through land dispossession, curtailment of local rights and access to resources, and threaten livelihoods and cultural survival of local communities. The legitimacy and survival of protected areas in the new dispensation depended on their ability to be relevant and overcome the tainted history of nature conservation. These realities stared SANParks in the face, and there was also increasing pressure from black majority population and “human rights and justice-oriented critiques, questioning the moral basis for expropriation and exclusion in the name of biodiversity” p, 163 (Turner 2004).

To understand SANParks transformation and how the organization has been dealing with the apartheid legacy, I situate the discussion in the context of broader social, political, institutional, and economic shifts in South Africa, and most notably the dynamic interplay of macro-level changes (democratization and economic liberalization) and organizational transformation of the national park system.

The transition to democracy⁷ or democratization in early 1990s brought major changes in the political standing of the white minority, and the shift of the balance of

⁷ Transition to democracy in South Africa denotes political efforts that began in 1991 through CODESA to remove apartheid laws and introduce a reconstructed social and political system through a power sharing deal. According to Singh (1992), it is a paradigm of change that describes political processes such as “transition from military/authoritarian rule to civilian rule: (e.g., South American countries), “transition from authoritarian socialism to ‘market democracy’” (e.g., Eastern and central Europe), and/or transition from racist, authoritarian apartheid to democratic post-apartheid era (e.g., South Africa). In all these contexts, new political regimes emerge characterized by liberalizing and democratizing measures, and movement between different conjunctures. In the South African context, the fundamental question is the extent to which the transition to democracy (political democratization) has emancipated historically disenfranchised communities from the shackles of apartheid and shifted balance of power from the white minority to the black majority in all spheres of social life.

political power to the black majority (Singh 1992). It also dismantled apartheid political structures, and opened space for change. The 1994 democratic elections ushered in democratically elected African National Congress (ANC)-led Government of National Unity in power, and paved the way for major policy and institutional changes, and reform of apartheid institutions and structures to suit the new political dispensation.

South Africa began undertaking major revisions of environmental policies and institutions in an effort to redress social and economic injustices associated with wildlife conservation and establishment of protected areas during apartheid era (Coates *et al.* 1995; Cock 1991; Honey 1999b; Picard 2003). Political democratization opened space for rethinking both colonial/apartheid conservation and the role of national parks in a democracy. The National Parks Board could no longer be a preserve for white minority interests and continue to exclude black South Africans from enjoying the benefits of national parks.

The Constitution of 1996 and Restitution of Land Rights Act 1994 provided the legal basis for addressing the rights of historically disadvantaged South Africans. For example, the Constitution spell out the Bill of Rights, and set the foundation for the post-apartheid government to “give meaning” to environmental rights of all South Africans through legislative frameworks (Government of South Africa 1994; Government of the Republic of South Africa 1996). The framework had to pursue conservation and sustainable development simultaneously in order to advance socio-economic development of previously disadvantaged communities (Picard 2002; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). The African National Party (ANC) government began to institute processes to transfer power and control of resources to black South Africans through empowerment initiatives including land reform. Legislation such as Restitution of Land Rights Act 1994 and Communal Property Association Act of 1996 became important vehicles in restitution of land to previously dispossessed black communities (Reid *et al.* 2004).

The ANC government instigated several dramatic policy changes that focused on the rights and socio-economic interests of black South Africans, many of which have consequences for protected area management (Reid 2001). Pressure also mounted on national parks to become “community friendly” **p, 379** (Reid *et al.* 2004), and transfer power and control of resources from the white minority to the black majority population. The objective was to correct the balance of power between historically white-dominated conservation authorities and poor neighboring black communities (Reid 2001). It was becoming increasingly difficult for the National Parks Board (now SANParks) to narrowly serve interests of conservation and the privileged whites but had to recognize the “need to integrate human needs more with conservation and make the country’s national parks of relevance to the majority of South Africans, so that effective conservation can continue” **p, 138** (Reid 2001).

However, this “transfer of power and control of resources from the minority that has been appointed and privileged by an undemocratic system, to the majority that participates in the new democratic process” (SANParks 2000) is not without challenges. It is contested and fraught with contradictions. While rhetorically it seems simple and straightforward, the process of transforming park management and power relations embedded in it is a complex and daunting task. This dissertation provides an opportunity to explore and understand the transformation of inherited public sector organizational structures, racist practices, and procedures (Miller 2005; Ramphela 2008) as well as shed insight on efforts to overcome apartheid legacy (Miller 2005). I focus on SANParks transformation and link it to political and institutional changes, and broader ideas of transformation and black empowerment. This allows us to understand how the national park bureaucracy that lacked legitimacy and served narrow interests was able to adapt to changing environmental conditions and deliver benefits to black South Africans that it had historically marginalized. The organization deviated from its narrow conservation mandate to promote broader social goals in a manner that secured its organizational interests. It had to grapple with the tyrannical legacies of colonial/apartheid conservation and politics of exclusion (Moore *et al.* 2003), and realign its agenda and interests with government/societal interests to advance socially progressive conservation.

Democratization in South Africa triggered decolonization of resource management (Adams & Mulligan 2003) and de-racialization of top management structures but failed to transform the powerful middle management that remains white-dominated. It has resulted in partial democratization of park management by introducing community-oriented structures (i.e., park forums, joint management arrangements) and socially progressive conservation initiatives. This has been possible because the South African government made explicit its intentions to transform the national park system and conservation sector to better serve the needs of society and respond to new realities (Nyambe 2005). Unlike during apartheid era, the national parks are expected to increase the participation of historically disenfranchised sectors of society as well as be institutionally and socially responsive to policy imperatives and adjacent communities respectively (Nyambe 2005). The expectation is that national parks devise partnerships and cooperative relationships with neighboring communities and stakeholders. In addition, the government also spelt out a new legal framework for national parks, and the need for conservation agencies to improve their financing mechanisms. These changing societal expectations and policy demands have engendered pressure on SANParks to pursue new strategic directions and transform operations.

The contextual changes have required new ways of “doing business” and functioning. SANParks thus has had to adapt and respond to emerging institutional demands and policy imperatives. In this dissertation, I examine how SANParks has attempted to reflect aspects of its environment in its structure, strategic focus, policies, mission, and approach to conservation and park management. I show that its strategic directions, organizational responses and operational practices have produced contradictory outcomes. SANParks has been able to fearlessly defend its “bureaucratic authority” and mandate in ways that preserve the integrity of its park boundaries while adhering to socio-political pressure to settle land claims and provide restitution. SANParks’ pursuit of socially responsive conservation has also relied on government-funded programs rather than promoting community-based natural resource management in the traditional sense. In some instances, it has passionately defended its protectionist

strategies and objected community demands for harvesting wildlife resources in national parks. It has translated discourses of transformation and black empowerment into operational programs, and implemented commercialization to improve SANParks' financial sustainability or sustainable funding to meet conservation expenses. The commercialization program has incorporated government objectives on black empowerment.

In these circumstances, SANParks has implemented transformation initiatives based on an understanding that its legitimacy and survival can be improved by better understanding the wider socio-political and institutional demands and leverage SANParks goals and conservation efforts to support them. It has pragmatically implemented strategies that sustain transformation objectives and innovations that integrate conservation and development – changing its conservation business philosophy to balance the need to promote biodiversity objectives and apply government policies related to transformation and black empowerment. This has entailed implementing strategies that support the “spirit of mutuality with the broader society” p, 21 (Nyambe 2005).

Role of Leadership in Transformation

In this dissertation, I detail how park executives (leadership) pre-empted externally imposed transformation through proactive organizational responses and alignment with broader socio-political expectations. This enabled SANParks to define the conditions and trajectory of its transformation process without waiting for heavy-handed government intervention. In each leadership period, I examine closely the strategic policies and approaches of the Chief Executive, and the role of the leader in promoting SANParks' conservation objectives, addressing financial challenges, and delivering benefits to society, including park-neighboring communities. Because of the enormous political and institutional changes that have occurred in South Africa, SANParks chief executives face huge challenges of adapting the organization to the market or liberalized economy and meeting expanding societal expectations (Carruthers 2003; Hall-Martin &

Carruthers 2003; South African National Parks 2000b). It is therefore not surprising that entrepreneurial leadership has gained currency in SANParks, and business-oriented and socio-economic skills are now more accepted than previously (Nyambe 2005). In the dissertation, I discuss the paradigm shifts in SANParks since democratization, and show factors that have prompted these changes from purely protectionist to multiple conservation approaches (including sustainable use); growing currency of business principles and commercialization rather than primary dependence on public funding; rethinking exclusionary conservation and moving towards partnerships with diverse stakeholders, and building social and political constituency for national parks.

I discuss the organizational change and paradigm shifts in relation to specific leadership strategies and period. The various aspects of the conservation “business model” of each leadership period, “whether funding, policies, stakeholder engagement or indeed the management of protected areas are increasingly open to the changes underway in the external environment at local, national and global levels” p, 34 (Nyambe 2005). The influence of democratization, institutional change, and wider societal interests on transformation and black empowerment has to be accounted, and linked to SANParks initiatives that garner political support, social approval, and financial resources. How SANParks performs in the wake of political democratization, institutional and major policy changes is an important question. Because of the significance of the external environment, I draw upon institutional perspectives to understand the environment within which SANParks exist, how context influences it, and what trade-offs emerge as the organization pursues its interests for legitimacy, survival, and relevance. This requires focusing on both internal and external forces, understanding what happens internally in response to external dynamics, and coming to terms with historical influences.

Research Questions

I have laid out the foundational conditions or history of the park management system, and political and institutional context within which national parks are rooted. With political democratization in the early 1990s, the wider socio-political and

institutional landscape in which the National Parks Board (now SANParks) was rooted started going through radical changes as apartheid crumbled and democracy emerged – including the shift from white minority domination to black majority rule. Organizations historically rooted in the apartheid ground have experienced fundamental shifts, new political and multiple institutional demands since democratization in South Africa. The changes reconfigured power relations, dislodged the context, and brought about new expectations. Bearing in mind these factors, I was interested in understanding how the role of public sector organizations, in this case SANParks, changed in a democracy and the organization sought to advance the ideals of democracy such as social justice, land restitution, local socio-economic development, and black empowerment.

In this dissertation, I explore the following questions:

1. What factors explain the post-apartheid model of park management in South Africa? What drives transformation in South African national parks?
2. How has transformation been defined, framed and implemented in SANParks, 1991-2008?
3. How does transformation relate to race, socially progressive and business-oriented conservation?
4. What forms of “apartheid” and colonial legacy still persist in conservation in post-apartheid South Africa?

The questions are concerned with understanding the intersection of society and organizations, and the dynamic interplay of macro-sociological factors and organizational-level changes. A critical examination of institutional change and socio-political demands sheds light on their influence on the trajectory of transformation, and organizational responses to wider challenges. In addition, the process of political democratization or nature of political transition in South Africa has implications for transformation and continuity of colonial/apartheid residues in park management systems.

Conceptual Contributions

South Africa's transition to democracy changed the social, political, and institutional landscape in the country. Expectations of black people began gaining attention as political democratization tilted the balance of political power towards the black majority, and redistribution of power and control of resources from the white minority to the black majority became a political issue in confronting apartheid structures of privilege (Cock 2007; Cock & Bernstein 2002; Singh 1992). In political terms, transformation became synonymous with efforts to effect such changes. The concern was dismantling apartheid structures, policies and practices at macro and organizational levels.

As stated above, in this dissertation, I examine organizational responses to wider transformation imperatives, and show how the park bureaucracy developed socially-responsive conservation initiatives and did undergo fundamental transformation in its operating style in order to meet the core objectives, emerging regulatory and legal frameworks of post-apartheid society. I use institutional theory (Clemens & Cook 1999; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 1994, 1995b, 2008; Scott & Christensen 1995) to understand how the institutional environment, incentives, and institutional change influence organizational behavior and performance (Hoffman & Ventresca 2002; Prato & Fagre 2005; Presber-James 1999). Examining the interface of the organization and institutional context provides opportunities for comprehending their intricate intertwining and the embeddedness of national parks in particular histories and social-political power relations. As transformation occurs at the macro-level, there is an expectation that organizational level transformation would ensue, helping the organization move in accordance with institutional change. This is particularly important when we take into account the demise of apartheid institutions following political democratization, and expectations of post-apartheid institutions and organizations that are more responsive and developmental in providing services and benefits to the historically disadvantaged black population.

SANParks transformation reflects efforts to ensure synchronicity between organizational strategic objectives and ability to meet organizational goals as well as respond to macro socio-political interests and institutional changes. I argue that responsiveness to broader socio-political issues and synchronizing interests and agenda (confluence of interests) is a strategic and pragmatic organizational response with implications for organizational legitimacy and survival. This dissertation reveals how SANParks transformation was predicated on securing organizational interests by aligning them with macro-level transformation initiatives. Legitimacy is essential for the survival of public sector organizations.

Institutional theory informs us that individual and organizational behavior is influenced by incentives or disincentives determined by the institutional context and financial and technological constraints (North 1990; Prato & Fagre 2005). This implies that organizations make “rational” decisions in ways that maximize their organizational interests subject to relevant constraints (Prato & Fagre 2005), and such rational behavior might be premised on “enlightened self-interest.” In other words, SANParks’ response to socio-political and institutional changes as well as promoting people-oriented conservation reflects the intertwining of self-interest, mutual interest, and recognition of the need to pursue moral (social) goals. For example, next chapters highlight SANParks’ efforts to secure the integrity and sustainability of national parks by responding to social issues of poverty and underdevelopment through local socio-economic development and constituency building initiatives. I discuss social ecology, “people and conservation”, land restitution, black empowerment, and local socio-economic development initiatives to illustrate transformation efforts linked to macro-transformation objectives.

As the discussion unfolds, it becomes clear that SANParks assumes a new role in a post-apartheid South Africa and advances ideals of democracy through initiatives that address land restitution (reform), social justice, black empowerment, and socio-economic rights and entitlements. By pursuing interests that resonate with post-apartheid South Africa, SANParks is able to find its place in the new South Africa, and gain legitimacy

because of its perceived commitment to shared interests as well as moral responsiveness to doing what is appropriate and “right” in the new dispensation. However, we should not assume that its “rational behavior” always produce desirable results considering some of the contradictory outcomes of transformation initiatives.

I explore the relationship between institutional change and SANParks’ organizational behavior by focusing on changes in its operating style, park management policy and approach, and careful examination of transformation initiatives focused on creating opportunities for previously disenfranchised groups. Organizational-level change initiatives reflect SANParks’ adaptation and responsiveness to macro-level transformation, socio-political issues of black empowerment, social justice, land restitution, and local socio-economic development. SANParks transformation process and initiatives demonstrate efforts to alter the organization’s core including “fundamental change in strategy, core values, or corporate identity” **p, 603** (Newman 2000) in response to political, major policy and institutional changes in post-apartheid South Africa.

The large-scale shifts in political ideology, macro-economic policy, and changes in social expectations regarding the role of national parks in democracy have influenced SANParks’ leadership to focus on “enlightened self-interest” through strategic and pragmatic efforts that advance the agency’s legitimacy and survival. The leadership has been able to fortify organizational interests, including the integrity of national parks, through social and political engagement. Navigating social and political landscape of park management requires leadership with political astuteness and capable of defending the agency’s technical expertise or independence while promoting conservation objectives. Whenever SANParks bureaucratic power is threatened, it redefines its independence by focusing on technical issues or invoking its legislative mandate of conservation of biodiversity and heritage assets rather than socio-political issues. As a consequence, it is able to buffer its decisions from the socio-political processes, and espouse a conservation paradigm that is supposedly apolitical and purely technicist. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa where environmental policy making is politically charged and socially contested, decision-making in park management often

claims to be predicated on technical efficiency and “purely conservation goals” as a way of insulating it from political contestation, public accountability and participation (Lemos 2003).

However, SANParks has managed to decrease the criticism for not radically transforming its core structure of park management or dominant conservation paradigm by expanding socio-economic opportunities for historically disadvantaged communities through anti-poverty initiatives and empowerment projects. Community oriented and socially responsive conservation programs emphasize local socio-economic development and poverty alleviation, creation of temporary employment, and black-owned business enterprises. These programs encourage community involvement in conservation but largely indirectly since local communities do not participate in decision-making processes in park management. SANParks created structures such “Social Ecology” Unit or “People and Conservation” Department to coordinate park-people relations and implement community-oriented and government-funded programs linked to public works and poverty relief. These initiatives reflect an innovative aspect of SANParks’ socially responsive conservation and transformation approach, which seek to address challenges of rural poverty and underdevelopment. SANParks tapped into government-funded programs to facilitate local socio-economic and black empowerment opportunities while simultaneously increasing funding for its infrastructure development and conservation initiatives.

Critics may argue that the “social ecology” or “people and conservation” function is a “detached” structure that lacks real influence in transforming core park management practices and only serve to deflect criticism of lack of meaningful involvement of adjacent communities in decision-making structures. The argument is that “detached structures” (Brechtin *et al.* 2003) only signal change but in reality there is little real or fundamental change in practice. The dissertation details this concern by examining the tension between reform-oriented black managers who advocated for transformative social ecology and conservative white managers who embraced social ecology as an outreach program (Dladla 1995, 1998).

SANParks transformation also illustrates pragmatism in negotiating and accommodating external demands on the organization, and shows enlightened leaders' acknowledgement that SANParks' legitimacy and survival rest on bridging past divides (forging new relationships), reform, and connecting organizational interests with government objectives and socio-political agenda of transformation and black empowerment. Singh states "transformation also houses what might be interpreted as accommodatory strains brought on by the negotiations moment, as radical theory and practice are forced to redefine themselves against that 'pragmatic' pull" **p, 52** (Singh 1992). This dissertation suggests that "enlightened self-interest" and pragmatic pulls guide transformation efforts. SANParks transformation depicts "enlightened pragmatism" in accommodating socio-political demands and institutional pressures through proactive, self-orchestrated change initiatives that promote broader objectives of transformation and black empowerment.

Political democratization reconfigured SANParks' role in society since it was expected to leverage its power and influence to open "the door for alleviation of persistent, natural-resource-based poverty" **p, 417** (West 1994) and improve parks-people relationship through empowerment initiatives. Findings of this dissertation offer new ways of looking at transformation of conservation agencies through nuanced analysis of transformation initiatives linked to black empowerment and socially progressive conservation, which support broader social interests and transcend narrow conservation interests. Natural resource bureaucracies are not necessarily narrow-minded organizations and selfishly resist change. This dissertation portrays "hope" in the transformation of inherited public sector organizations by showing how a conservation bureaucracy was able to instigate organizational-level changes and socially responsive conservation programs aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of black rural communities living adjacent to national parks.

For example, national park-related legislation, the National Parks Act 1976 and Protected Areas Act of 2003 state clearly that the national park's mandate is conservation

of biodiversity, landscapes and associated heritage assets of South Africa, and not local socio-economic development (Magome 2004). This imposes institutional constraints on the ability of national parks to pursue a developmental role:

“We will always struggle to promote rural development and local empowerment – that is not our mandate. The responsibility for rural development and socio-economic development is now with the municipalities, and it is actually in terms of Chapter 7 of the Constitution. Chapter 3 of the Constitution talks about cooperative governance and what we should do to cooperate. But no agency should assume for itself the mandate of another agency. So under that you actually have a durable constraint in terms of doing what you would like to do apart from limited resources. It is an institutional constraint dictated by the law, the Constitution, and the legislation of the country” (Interviewee).

However, SANParks executives have not allowed the organization to be restricted by these institutional constraints, and chose rather to exploit existing institutional incentives, government-funded programs, and black empowerment-related policies to instigate specific organizational adaptive responses and promote socially progressive and community-oriented conservation initiatives. The executives were enlightened and fully aware that the institutional constraints have to be navigated, and SANParks creatively harness wider socio-political goals and ideas of transformation and black empowerment to transcend its narrow legislative mandate and facilitate local socio-economic development opportunities. From a pragmatic standpoint, its organizational interests and survival are predicated on responsiveness to contextual challenges. It therefore made sense to frame strategic policies and approaches in ways that appeal to wider responsibility – balancing self-interests with broader social interests:

“I think to present an argument within the context where there is tremendous legacy of unaddressed needs, tremendously high level of unemployment, high Gini coefficient⁸, and all the indicators indicating that there is an enormous developmental challenge – in the context – to present the argument that those parks should not be instruments for development is really and can be a self-defeating argument. I think if one doesn’t promote the notion of parks as nodes

⁸ Gini coefficient refers to a measure of statistical dispersion used in measuring inequality of income distribution or inequality of wealth distribution. It is defined as a ratio with values between 0 and 1; a low gini coefficient indicates more equal income or wealth distribution, while a high gini coefficient shows more unequal wealth distribution (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_coefficient).

for development in rural areas, the very existence of those protected areas in the long-term may be threatened. Far from a moral obligation to address developmental needs, it is also in the interest of conservation that impoverished communities surrounding protected areas should benefit from these areas. Otherwise the day will come they will simply walk in and take over protected areas” (Interviewee).

This suggests that the park executives understood the intertwining of organizational self-interest and moral/social responsibility, and the survival of national parks to their ability to generate development benefits. The dissertation highlights that efforts by SANParks executives to engender a broader social mandate beyond narrow conservation, and infuse new values in park management was aimed at promoting socially responsive conservation and improving park-people relations for mutual gain. The morality of the mutual gain ideology rests on the ideal that park and people win in their exchange, and shared interests rather than self-interested action should guide action (Fay 2007). I show how progressive park executives revisited organizational interests or ideological orientation of the park bureaucracy when there were fundamental shifts in the ground in which the organization was rooted, and began pursuing new ideas and interests that were perceived to be socially appropriate and politically plausible. In the process, SANParks’ social interventions in land restitution and local socio-economic development were constructed on the premise of mutually beneficial relationships (South African National Parks 2000a, b) or “mutual gains ideology” (Fay 2007).

Moreover, organizations can leverage the social and political ideology of transformation and black empowerment to promote socially progressive conservation initiatives and stimulate local socio-economic opportunities. I explore three leadership periods (Dr. Robinson 1991-1996; Mr. Msimang 1997-2003; and Dr. Mabunda 2003-2008) in SANParks to illustrate the intersection of macro-sociological changes and organizational-level transformation initiatives, and leadership responses to political, major policy and institutional changes in national park management in South Africa. In each leadership period, I show how the chief executive pursued specific “brand” of transformation and navigated the socio-political landscape of park management.

One extremely noticeable shortcoming of the “brands” of transformation of the park executives is the failure to inspire a “fresh national park philosophy” **p, 29** (Carruthers 2003), which rests on a fundamentally different structure of park management. The core architecture of park management has not changed, but agendas have changed to incorporate “people and conservation” and business-oriented approaches. It remains to be seen whether the post-apartheid South Africa will dismantle the current dominant park philosophy steeped in protectionist goals and political economic interests. Critics would argue that the national parks rest on western conservation ideology, colonialism, and “ideals and visions of people other than Africans” **p, 817** (Carruthers 2006).

Leadership and organizational learning play an important role in facilitating the progression to new conceptual destinations of organizations. They shape capabilities and determine resources needed to move the organization from one archetype to another. Leaders design “new organizational structures and systems, learning new behaviors, and interpreting phenomena in new ways” **p, 1046** (Greenwood & Hinings 1996). Pettigrew suggests that we understand theoretically how organizations and/or organizational actors interpret and act upon contextual pressures (Pettigrew 2001), and therefore we can use organizational theories to explore SANParks transformation and response to environmental challenges.

The findings of this dissertation indicate the dynamism of SANParks behavior and response to socio-political, economic and institutional changes as well as leadership’s ability to exploit contextual opportunities to advance park management reforms and organizational transformation. Dr. Robinson anticipated profound changes in the landscape of national parks and leveraged the transition phase to knee-jerk the National Parks Board into “transforming” and transitioning to the new South Africa “screaming” (Magome 2004). Mr. Msimang seized the moment of financial crisis in SANParks to undertake organizational restructuring and cost reduction measures through “Operation Prevail” and commercialization initiatives. Several innovations emerged as a result of organizational restructuring.

Dr. Mabunda consolidated previous leadership achievements and learned from past mistakes by driving a business-oriented approach and strategically aligned SANParks transformation agenda with government's programs on transformation and black empowerment. He undertook calculated opportunities to leverage institutional incentives and make SANParks an implementing agency of choice for government-funded projects earmarked for poverty relief, black empowerment and local socio-economic development. In the process, SANParks secured its interests and gained in terms of infrastructure development, social support and political legitimacy. Dr. Mabunda implemented the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) to specify goals, measure strategy and organizational performance. Therefore, BSC has enabled SANParks to determine organizational efficiency and effectiveness in delivering service and benefits to external constituencies, including political patrons. The findings provide insights on leadership epochs within an era of political democratization and black empowerment.

In this context, ideas about conservation, transformation and black empowerment become a source of change and drive organizational behavior and responses (Campbell 1998, 2002; Lemos & Oliveira 2004). Ideas as “theories, conceptual models, norms, world views, frames, principled beliefs” **p, 21** (Campbell 2002) have profound effects on the trajectory of transformation and organizational events, and direct organizational interest and action. I discuss this interplay of ideas and interests (Campbell 1998, 2002; Lemos & Oliveira 2004) in my close analysis of confluence of interests and agendas between macro-level transformation and organizational-level transformation initiatives. The focus on transformation and black empowerment is aimed at demonstrating the interplay between transformation/black empowerment ideas and interests. I present ideas of transformation espoused and held by SANParks and show how they have defined and mediated organizational interests, and reconfigured to align with broader ideas of transformation and black empowerment in order to advance self-interest and mutual gains.

While the nature and scope of SANParks transformation remains contested (Cock 2007; Magome 2004), I argue that SANParks transformation is an incomplete and ongoing process aimed at creating new and fundamentally different organizational structures and practices that deviate from a pre-reform system that existed since 1926. I suggest that transformation and reform initiatives in SANParks have created a different organization, and this is based on the examination of various “units of transformation” that have emerged. When these “units of transformation” are amalgamated, they amount to a relatively large-scale transformation that reflects SANParks that deviates fundamentally from the apartheid institution inherited in 1994.

Notwithstanding the continuity of apartheid residues in park management, one cannot discount transformation initiatives that have developed new structures, processes, policies and practices ushering a new direction. Transformation entailed efforts to create a demographically (racially) representative park bureaucracy, and opened space for a new socially oriented approach to conservation and park management. It also involved addressing the legacies of apartheid in terms of park management practices, systems, policies, approaches, and culture. Organizational restructuring and efforts to improve financial viability of park management were also focus of transformation. These efforts have focused on improving organizational performance and efficiency, changing values, attitudes and business approach to park management in order to turn the way SANParks works inside out. Dr. Mabunda’s era (2003-2008) reflects targeted efforts to implement changes in the way SANParks does business and deliver the conservation mandate.

However, the findings showed the challenges in transforming organizational culture. Despite SANParks’ success in promoting socially progressive conservation initiatives by expanding its action beyond the narrow conservation mandate, it has struggled to shed of its inherited strong culture and relatively rigid employee attitudes towards social ecology or “people and conservation” programs. I argue in the dissertation that the relative rigidity of SANParks’ culture continues to influence its capacity to adapt and respond to emerging challenges. Nyambe argues that “change is inconceivable without a deep understanding of organizational culture as a strong

determinant of behavior, with considerable implications for adaptation and responsiveness” p, 199 (Nyambe *et al.* 2007). I discuss the elephant culling controversy to highlight the constraints imposed by SANParks culture and “fortress mentality” on its ability to interact with stakeholders and build coalition for elephant culling. I advance that SANParks culture predisposed the agency to rigidity and insularity, which worked against meaningful engagement with stakeholders and undermined creative mobilization of social support for the culling decision. When it proposed culling elephants, SANParks was caught in a public nightmare and stiff opposition from stakeholders. However, this experience should not be taken in its entirety to mean that SANParks culture has not changed, and several cultural aspects have undergone changes.

It will be a misrepresentation to treat SANParks culture as monolithic inasmuch as will be erroneous to regard SANParks as “one homogenous, monolithic bastion of traditional, conservative conservationists” (Interviewee). A park executive succinctly captures the changes in SANParks culture:

“...There has been a tremendous cultural shift as a consequence maybe of taking on things which historically we have not been managing. And if you move from east to west across the country, you will probably find that shift where the Kruger tradition really is fences, animals, people that side, and entrance gates. If you walk in the park, somebody with a rifle accompanies you, like two people rifled – one at the back and another at the front (laughs). As you go west where biodiversity imperatives are even greater, into the fynbos biome and succulent Karoo biome, one gets a blurring in the landscape as to what a national park is, what is not a national park, and what your role outside the park boundary and so on. As we do more and more of that, we have to adapt our approaches and our policies, and basically move with the times” (Interviewee).

Certainly, SANParks culture is undergoing gradual changes, with the “Kruger model” giving way to alternative models of protected area management that do not have fences, celebrate cultural heritage (e.g., Mapungubwe National Park), and allow sustainable use of resources within proclaimed protected areas.

Studying Transition and Transformation in South Africa

In this dissertation, I examine the dilemmas of South Africa's transition, and its impact on the pace and scope of transformation in the country as well as in public sector reforms. There has been growing criticism of the pace and scope of transformation (Mandela 1996; Sunday Times Editor 2007), and I believe this dissertation contributes to the "vigorous debate" **p, 1** (Marks 2005) and understanding transformation in the conservation sector.

The non-revolutionary nature of South Africa's transition to democracy has influenced the trajectory of transformation in SANParks. The transition emerged from a compromise between the conservative Afrikaner allies and nationalist African movements that created an elite pact. As part of the compromise, radical demands for addressing socio-economic rights of the black majority were watered down as they were perceived a risk to the delicate balance on which the political settlement rested (Ramphela 2008). This made socio-economic transformation a daunting task, and compounded by the ever-moving targets for performance as expectations of the black majority rose. Ramphela (2008) argues that these dilemmas complicate efforts to address historical socio-economic inequities and undertake transformation while keeping the public sector system going.

South Africa's transition to democracy followed a pattern of negotiated political settlement that structured the context for reforms. The Coalition for Democracy in South Africa (CODESA)⁹ framed reforms and major changes but inhibited fundamental transformation (revolutionary change). Rather than replacing old structures, it ensured their survival (and of the bureaucracies and bureaucrats defining the policy arena) for a period of five years. Such mechanisms, known as "sunset clauses"¹⁰ guaranteed the

⁹ Coalition for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) talks took place in 1991 in Kempton, South Africa, and signaled the formal end of the apartheid state. They lead to a power-sharing arrangement or interim government and "set out time lines and power lines for the transition to a broad-based South African electoral democracy" **p, xii** (Herwitz 2003).

¹⁰ The "sunset clauses" were agreements reached between the ANC alliance and Nationalist Party that stipulated that all public servants would be guaranteed security of tenure for five years. The agreement

survival of some apartheid residues, cadres and bureaucrats within the new regime (Miller 2005). The negotiated political transition conditioned South Africa to non-revolutionary reform or “transformation through reform.”

While negotiated transitions expedite changes and avoid the most costly aspects of violent regime change, they may limit the extent of the transformation of post-transition institutions (Lemos 1998; Lemos & Oliveira 2004; Linz & Stephan 1996; O'Donnell *et al.* 1986). Because the “old” negotiated its place in the new dispensation, the impact of the colonial/apartheid legacy on the capacity of post-apartheid public sector organizations to contribute effectively to transformation, black empowerment, and service delivery to the black majority remains an issue of concern. It is a dilemma that deserves attention. In such circumstances, it remains to be seen how post-apartheid public sector organizations and executives transcend the divisions and values inherited from apartheid (Ramphela 2008).

There is a sharp theoretical distinction between transformation and reform (Saul 1992; Singh 1992). However, empirically it is difficult to ignore the interconnectedness and mutually reinforcing tendencies of processes of reform and transformation, which may not necessarily be clear-cut in the “real world.” Paradoxically, transition unlocks “new areas for limited reform implementation” **p, 78** (Lemos 1998) as well as potentially weakens or closes off transformation by accommodating remnants of the old order that might stifle radical change (Singh 1992; Cock & Fig 2002). These are the contradictory outcomes of negotiated transitions (O'Donnell *et al.* 1986). These contradictory outcomes play out in South Africa where there was never a revolutionary seizure of power in the transition to democracy (Cock 2007), and the negotiated settlement called for pragmatic reforms and accommodation of diverse interests in non-revolutionary ways (Singh 1992).

provided job guarantees to white public servants. This retained an apartheid public service (sector), and challenged new dispensation with transforming it through reform as opposed to dismantling it. As a result, it was impossible to have sharp break with the past and create a new path for the public sector.

This dissertation sheds light on the influence of political transition on transformation of public sector organizations. It reflects both opportunities and constraints of wider political transformation and institutional change on organizational-level changes. An analysis of macro-level transformation, a socio-political and institutional change offers a background upon which we can comprehend meso- and micro-level dynamics. I use SANParks transformation as a microcosm of transformation in South Africa. Therefore, I locate SANParks transformation in the context of political democratization and wider project of shifting power and resources from white minority to the black majority in democratic (Cock 2007). Interestingly, SANParks defines its transformation as striving to transfer power and control of resources from the minority (white) that has been appointed and privileged by an undemocratic system, to the majority (black) population that participates in the democratic process (Cock & Fig 2002; SANParks 2000). This confluence of agenda of transformation becomes the vehicle for reconciling interests between the park agency and society (government). It is on this basis that this dissertation advances the argument that SANParks and societal (government) ideas of transformation coalesce to drive and organize interests that allow responsiveness to broader processes of political democratization and black empowerment in South Africa.

SANParks had historically played a significant role in the enforcing authoritarian, racist conservation policies that undermined socio-economic rights and opportunities of the black majority population. Political democratization set in motion processes to construct a democratic and socially just South Africa. In such a context, the national park bureaucracy was confronted with demands to “heal” the country of its painful past and overcomes the social injustices¹¹ that characterized colonial conservation. For this

¹¹ There are numerous examples to illustrate the “painful” history of nature conservation and sociological impact on black communities. In 1931, the San were forcibly driven out of their land after the proclamation of the Gemsbok National Park. In 1969, the Makuleke community was forcibly removed at gun-point, and made to burn their settlements in an effort to extend the Kruger National Park. Between 1973 and 1974, about 1500 members of the Reimvasmaak community (the Nama, Damara/Herero pastoralists, colored pastoralists, Xhosa) were forcibly uprooted from Reimvasmaak and relocated to the uninhabited fringes of the Namib Desert and parts of the Eastern Cape and Kakamas (Mogome 2004). This land was integrated into the Augrabies National Park, which was proclaimed in 1966 and used for military interests such as training troops and weapons use by the South African Defense Force (Reid *et al.* 2004) in spite its status as a contractual national park status. The Nama community originally inhabited the area designated the

reason, SANParks conceived a vision whereby “national parks will be the pride and joy of all South Africans” (SANParks official website). It became apparent that SANParks had to find its “place” in the New South Africa, create a new image, and be legitimate and relevant in a changed society. This required transforming conservation and park management to align them with ideals of post-apartheid South Africa, and reformulating ideas about park and people in an African democracy.

In this dissertation, I shed light on organizational adaptive management capabilities and responsiveness to changes in broader socio-political values and institutional prescriptions in post-apartheid South Africa. I show that organizational “battles” changed with the transition to democracy, and the national park authority could no longer focus narrowly conservation of biodiversity and heritage assets but had to address socio-economic needs of the historically disadvantaged communities as well as respond to socio-political demands of transformation and black empowerment. I make the argument that organizational-level changes interact with wider socio-political and institutional changes, and identifying transformation as an idea provides us with opportunities for unpacking regulatory, normative, and cognitive aspects that influence organizational behavior and interests. I reinforce this analytical thinking with institutional perspectives.

Dissertation Methodology

This dissertation uses a case study of SANParks transformation to explore socio-political processes and institutional change dynamics in South Africa. The case study provides deeper understanding of influence of leadership practices and ideas in instigating change initiatives that are socially progressive and contributing to realization of broader socio-political objectives of transformation and black empowerment.

Richtersveld National Park in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, and lost their land in a “long history of dispossession from Afrikaner farmers, mines and racially discriminatory land policies” p, 383 (Reid *et al.* 2004).

I chose a case study because of my interest in in-depth understanding of an ongoing contemporary phenomenon within its real context, where multiple sources of evidence are useful and the researcher has no control over events (Yin 1994). SANParks is a large, complex conservation bureaucracy. I felt that a case study would provide an opportunity to glimpse something of the universal through the particular (Coyle 2007), understanding transformation through SANParks experience. This was particularly important given my interest in understanding transformation of public sector organizations through nuanced analysis of the power of ideas of transformation in shaping organizational interests and response to broader societal objectives of transformation and black empowerment in South Africa.

My interest in meaning and deep understanding of the idea of transformation and black empowerment made a case study methodology appropriate since I had no means of manipulating organizational variables and behavior (Yin 1994). A case study appeared useful in examining both historical and contemporary events nested in context (Miles & Huberman 1984) as well as how the research subjects (organizational actors) constructed specific accounts of transformation. A case study methodology allows studying complex processes and explaining interconnectedness of events (Yin 1994). A detailed methodology section appears in the Appendix.

Overall Dissertation Structure

The dissertation is organized into following chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the study and provides a background to the research questions. This section of the dissertation offers the problem statement, research objectives, and contributions of this study.

Chapter 2 examines the literature on political democratization and institutional change, and lays out the analytical framework of ideas and interests shaping organizational behavior. This chapter provides the analytical foundation upon which the

dissertation rests, and SANParks transformation examined. The chapter highlights how large shifts in socio-political and institutional ground in which the organizations are rooted affect organizational responsiveness and adaptation, triggering organizational-level changes and realignment of ideas and interests.

Chapter 3 explores the challenges of managing national parks during transition to democracy, from apartheid to post-apartheid era. It highlights organizational efforts to ensure the relevance and legitimacy of national parks under black majority rule. Several social innovations emerged that reflected the need to balance macro-level transformation pressures and organizational interests. It examines Dr. Robinson's (1991-1996) leadership period.

Chapter 4 examines transformation and leadership challenges of SANParks' first black Chief Executive, Mr. Msimang (1997-2003). It highlights how transformation became synonymous with race, particularly changes in racial composition of management levels, without addressing the systemic roots of inequalities in park management. It also explores contradictory outcomes of transformation initiatives. The chapter discusses how financial crisis in SANParks was leveraged to restructure the organization and implement black empowerment initiatives linked to commercialization activities in national parks.

Chapter 5 explores Dr. Mabunda's (2003-2008) leadership period and discusses the "healing" and business-oriented approaches to transformation. The "healing" approach reflects an acknowledgement of the painful legacy of national parks, and the need to create social benefits and mutually beneficial relationship between "people and conservation." The chapter examines how Dr. Mabunda has used the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) to implement a transformation agenda that seeks to make national parks business-oriented and performance-driven. It sheds light on changes in SANParks business model, and the focus on financial, conservation, and social performance management.

Chapter 6 offers concluding reflections on SANParks transformation and implications for practice and future research. It highlights the dissertation's contribution to the wider debate on political transition, institutional change, and transformation of inherited colonial institutions. It provides alternative ways of thinking about behavior of public sector organizations when there is a profound socio-political and institutional shifts in the ground in which they are rooted. The chapter reiterates the limits to pragmatism and constraints of trade-offs in transformation of public sector organizations, and links these to the nature of South Africa's negotiated transition to democracy.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING TRANSFORMATION

This chapter presents an overview of institutional theory and organizational change, and analytical framework to understand political transitional and institutional change that have shaped trajectory of SANParks transformation. An inter-disciplinary approach is applied since organizations cannot be explained by any single theory (Hatch 1997), and hence studying organizations requires wide range of conceptual models and perspectives. Courrau argues that “there is no one encompassing theory nor is there a most accepted theoretical approach to use to study organizations” **p, 67** (Courrau 2002).

The political and institutional context provides the background for analyzing organizational transformation and theorizing the interplay between macro-level transformation and organizational-level changes. This helps make sense of the intersection of society and organizations. Institutional theory provides lenses through which we can examine the influence of major policy and institutional changes on shifts in public sector executives’ thinking and organizational behavior (Hoffman & Ventresca 2002; North 1990; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 1995b; Scott & Christensen 1995).

I pay particular attention to the influence of ideas in shaping organizational interest regarding transformation and black empowerment in South Africa, and examine the convergence of transformative agenda and interests between SANParks and South African government. I argue that this confluence of ideas and interests provides the impetus for transformation and black empowerment initiatives in SANParks that contribute to the realization of broader socio-political objectives.

Role of Ideas and Interests in SANParks Transformation

SANParks transformation illuminates efforts by a public sector organization to leverage institutional incentives and socio-political ideas to instigate organizational change and socially responsive conservation. It confirms opportunistic calculations or “seizing the moment” (contextual opportunism) in advancing ideas that facilitate desired organizational gains and noble societal objectives. I argue that the national political discourse of transformation and black empowerment sets important normative limits on options as well as offer a framework for those options. Campbell argues that “ideas facilitate policy-making action not just by serving as road maps, but also by providing symbols and other discursive schema that actors can use to make these maps appealing, convincing, and legitimate” **p, 381** (Campbell 1998). With political democratization and institutional changes occurring in Africa, one wonders whether inherited African public sector organizations can instigate fundamental changes in their operating style and effectively respond to socio-economic challenges of historically disadvantaged populations. The perceived slow pace of transformation in African public sector organizations, poor performance, and populist demands on public sector organizations threatened their viability. Given these realities in South Africa, it was important to understand how public sector organizations accommodated the strains of particular socio-political demands, including ideas about transformation and black empowerment and be able to pursue socially driven goals through strategic and pragmatic change.

Organizations and organizational actors can self-consciously devise solutions to their problems by maneuvering explicit ideas of transformation and black empowerment, and appropriating “already available and legitimate concepts, scripts, models, and other cultural artifacts that they find around them in their institutional environment” **p, 383** (Campbell 1998).

The discussion of SANParks transformation highlights interplay of organizational enlightened self-interest and pursuit of broader socio-political ideas of transformation and black empowerment. In understanding the ideas of transformation and black

empowerment, we begin to see how they have shaped organizational actions and triggered policies and practices that fit with underlying societal norms and values. In the process, the ideas of transformation and black empowerment have set a precise direction by which SANParks undertakes specific courses of action, which are normatively acceptable and politically plausible solutions to problems in park management and post-apartheid South Africa. New structures and institutions are constructed in socially and politically acceptable ways, and often appear consistent with ideas about transformation and black empowerment. I argue that ideas about what are socially appropriate actions rest on public sentiments and constituent pressures that delineate acceptable options. My argument is that policy options or organizational agendas that coincide with important societal values and public sentiments set the stage for confluence of interests and agendas that could instigate socially responsive initiatives.

The ideas of transformation serve as conceptual and theoretical frameworks that foreground policy debates, and reflecting normative and cognitive aspects. For example, at the cognitive level, ideas about transformation entail “descriptions and theoretical analyses that specify cause-and-effect relationships whereas at the normative level ideas consist of values and attitudes” **p, 384** (Campbell 1998). While this distinction makes analytical sense, in reality, cognitive and normative ideas intertwine. In addition, the ideas are routinely contested in spite of being taken for granted. I find ideas about social ecology (people and conservation) and business-oriented conservation as examples of “self-interested, strategic efforts” **p, 389** (Campbell 1998) by SANParks to deliberately change endogenously as well as respond to broader socio-political challenges of transformation and black empowerment in South Africa.

In all the three leadership periods, SANParks focused one way or the other on building a business-oriented and commercially viable national park system that could fund operational costs of conservation. Technical and professional ideas and neo-liberal economic paradigmatic thinking influenced the programs designed to address financial challenges facing SANParks. SANParks commercialization strategy fits the dominant

paradigm of neo-liberal economic thinking, and particularly South Africa's government economic policy framework of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR).

Both Mr. Mavuso Msimang (1997-2003) and Dr. David Mabunda's leadership periods (2003-2008) embraced paradigmatic principles of neo-liberal economics in driving organizational restructuring ("Operation Prevail"), commercialization strategies, and business-oriented approach in park management. This period is critically defined by the influence and hegemony of neo-liberal economic principles that dominated the discourse of sustainable financing and funding of conservation initiatives. For example, South Africa's neo-liberal economic policy (Growth, Employment and Redistribution or GEAR) provided opportunities for SANParks to pursue market-driven strategies of revenue generation to enable it to fund conservation (Child *et al.* 2004b; Reed 2000), and hence made it acceptable to inject the entrepreneurial spirit in park management (Courrau 2002; Presber-James 1999; South African National Parks 1998).

I argue that the changes in SANParks' business model, policy, and responsiveness to market conditions stem from emerging neo-liberal economic ideas and principles that called for adjustment and innovation (Campbell 2002). It is therefore not surprising that Mr. Msimang's "Operation Prevail" and commercialization strategy, and Dr. Mabunda's ongoing business-oriented approach reflect the translation of neo-liberal principles of market competition, deregulation, and reduction of government funding into practice. The paradigmatic principles of neo-liberal economics set the range of solutions to SANParks' financial challenges, and opened reinforced the notion that markets enhance the ability of economic actors to pursue self-interests, and competition serves as a source of innovation and growth. It is not by coincidence that SANParks requested the assistance of the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Private Sector Advisory Services in structuring concessions and implementing the commercialization strategy. National economic policy and political discourses of GEAR influenced the process of commercialization in SANParks. These policy ideas were then translated into practice (Campbell 1998, 2002).

Faced with funding challenges, financial crisis, and changing market conditions, SANParks executives were attracted to commercialized and business-oriented programs that were economically/financially logical and conform to acceptable neo-liberal economic principles of GEAR. There were also other contingent factors that made commercialization and business-oriented ideas attractive. They appeared to offer solutions to the financial challenges and problems, potential vehicle for promoting black empowerment and socio-economic development, and consistent with the country's economic policy. In addition, the organization examined its capacity, and realized that commercialization would leverage organizational interests. Ideas and interests interact (Campbell 2002), and this is evident in SANParks' "means and ends" - commercialization as a vehicle for improving financial viability and promoting black empowerment.

SANParks' ideas about commercialization, transformation, and black empowerment offered solutions to instrumental problems and neatly fitted government interests and public sentiments. This confluence of interests becomes a powerful source of change. When different stakeholders share general principles of transformation and black empowerment, such convergence of interests provide a platform for galvanizing support and resources to implement of reform initiatives. In South Africa, political imperatives have driven ideas of transformation and black empowerment with the objective of redressing the apartheid legacy. There is broader consensus among reform-oriented politicians that democracy in South Africa would be threatened as long as apartheid structures of privilege and disadvantage persist. Even within the conservation sector, park executives and conservationists have recognized the need to reform nature conservation and park management so that they become relevant to society and take into account broader political and economic processes in South Africa. Therefore, the shift towards socially responsive conservation cannot be understood in isolation from the "wave of democratization and adoption of neoliberal economic policies worldwide" **p, 179** (Turner 2004).

Political Transition and Institutional Change

It has been suggested that “the most obvious area where South African scholarship promises new insights lies in the general area of democratization” p, 429 (Seidman 1999) and how to deal with the painful memories of colonial and apartheid authoritarianism. The negotiated political settlement allowed apartheid residues and economic interests to secure their place in the New South Africa through compromises in the structure of governing processes. The compromises left the core elements of apartheid privilege and power intact (Cock & Fig 2001). The governing elites agreed to pursue non-revolutionary transformation and proliferation of free market ideology as part of structural compromise (Francis 2005).

Ramphela (2008) argues that the elite-pact led South Africa’s transition to explicit and implicit compromises on socio-economic rights of the black majority population on grounds that they would pose a risk to the delicate balance on which the political settlement rested. This has implications for how South Africa addresses the demands of park neighboring communities and transforms the national park system.

Democratization in South Africa produced political transformation, and uneven economic and institutional changes in the country. Formal de-racialization of policy occurred in the polity and public sector establishment (Turner 2004). However, substantial constraints were imposed on South Africa’s capacity to transform, and the interim constitution reflected the limitations that characterized the negotiated political settlement or transition to democracy. The context of political transition is important in understanding the political environment in which reform-oriented initiatives in SANParks occurred as the country transitioned from apartheid to post-apartheid era. The goals underlying South Africa’s transition affected SANParks’ process of transformation and how it would address land issues, social equity, and black empowerment. South Africa’s transition during the initial post-apartheid years was characterized by market liberalism – efforts to enhance opportunities for investment, increase investment flows into South Africa, and create the climate for internal enterprise development. Black economic

empowerment strategies focused on expanding business opportunities and participation of historically excluded populations in business ownership (Farmbry & Harper 2005).

Reconciliation was also another aspect of South Africa's transition. The transition embraced the "spirit of national reconciliation and forgiveness" **p, 680** (Farmbry & Harper 2005). President Nelson Mandela and others who steered the transition acknowledged the need for institutions that promote reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing of "apartheid wounds." This required confronting past injustices, and ensuring that people who suffered under apartheid-era policies gained restitution. President Mandela undertook a pragmatic approach to reconciliation, forgiveness and restitution (Farmbry & Harper 2005). In the dissertation, I examine land restitution or the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994 as an attempt to deal with the injustices of the past and the consequences of the Native Land Act of 1913, which restricted the black majority population to owning only 13 percent of the country's land (Magome 2004; Magome & Murombedzi 2003). Therefore, restitution has a "healing" effect. In the next chapters, I examine the implications of restitution of land rights to communities who had been dispossessed of such rights by racially discriminatory practices and apartheid policies as a transformation issue and challenge in South Africa's transition phase. Given that some national parks were established on land black communities had been forcibly removed from, it is not surprising that land claims and restitution remain thorny issues in park management in South Africa. The land question has been an issue of concern for many nations engaged in transition from colonial control, and the African National Congress (ANC) government had to find ways of reconciling nationalist promises of land reform and pragmatic constraints of redistributing land. These challenges would manifest in efforts to redress land claims in national parks.

The history of national parks had been tainted by racism, authoritarianism, forced removals, exclusion, and social injustice against the black majority population (Beinart & Coates 1995; Carruthers 1995). Apartheid reinforced authoritarian processes, and thus further compromised the legitimacy of nature conservation. Therefore, SANParks had to deal with legitimacy questions in the transition as well as implement policies that would

target the black population, which had been disproportionately shouldered the social costs of nature conservation during apartheid. Building social and political support for national parks among the black majority population offered opportunities for legitimacy and survival in during the transition era. Therefore, the political discourse in South Africa focused on building institutions to enable transformation, and making sure that the “spirit of transformation existed within a context of ensuring justice and forgiveness” **p, 684** (Farmbry & Harper 2005). Transformation efforts targeted reconciliation, inequity and past injustice through policies, processes and institutions. The processes of democratization in South Africa “fueled efforts to transform SANParks’ internal management and its relationship with communities” **p, 179** (Turner 2004), and opened space for communities to seek restitution for past injustices.

Since the process of democratization began in the early 1990s, South Africa has evolved from an authoritarian, discriminatory racist regime to a constitutional democracy. In 1994, a democratically elected ANC-led government inherited a country characterized by poverty, inequality, and resource disparities along racial lines. The new government instigated major policy changes regarding the rights of black South Africans, some of which would affect management of the country’s national parks (Reid 2001). The policy and institutional changes during the transition resulted in shifts in perceived role of protected areas in a new democracy. Parks were expected to incorporate developmental concerns by broadening their efforts beyond biodiversity conservation. The post-apartheid government identified biodiversity as an economic strategy, and conceptualized several initiatives to link socio-economic development objectives with biodiversity conservation.

At a macro-level, government policy, the Reconstruction and Development¹² (RDP) policy framework, focused on addressing socio-economic challenges of poor communities. However, in 1996, the government shifted to GEAR, neo-liberal “macro-

¹² The Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) was a development policy that emphasized redistribution of resources and provision of basic services to the poor, mainly the black population in an effort to redress historical injustices and racially biased service delivery associated with apartheid. It focused on socially equitable redistribution with the aimed of redressing past imbalances.

economic policies of fiscal austerity, ostensibly under great pressure from international funding institutions that have embraced the so-called “Washington Consensus” **p, 155** (Francis 2005). The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) promoted the adoption of the neo-liberal macroeconomic policy, and encouraged South Africa to liberalize the economy.

GEAR espoused government policy of “free markets and globalization, including the opening of domestic markets to foreign competition, privatization of state-owned industries, and restrictions on government spending” **p, 157** (Francis 2005). Within this context, the government embraced policies of cost recovery, cost cutting, and mantra of fiscal responsibility. Trickle down economics and private sector investment were viewed as beneficial to poor people. This ideological shift from RDP to GEAR reflected a major departure from early institutional commitments to redistribution and social equity to embracing neo-liberal orthodoxy. The liberalization of the South African economy through adoption of GEAR has implications for both SANParks market-driven approaches and socially responsive conservation initiatives. The government introduced market incentives for management of national parks, and SANParks’ commercialization strategy reflects a response to changes in the organization’s marketplace as well as efforts to improve financial streams in face of reduced government funding.

The next chapters show that market liberalism produced both opportunities and constraints on SANParks, it had to innovate ways of generating resources to promote socially progressive conservation initiatives. Community engagement efforts require resources, and therefore new institutional arrangements that allow the flow of resources to communities living adjacent to national parks had to be devised. For example, various partnership arrangements such as Working for Water Program, Expanded Public Works Program, and Coast Care initiatives highlight efforts to leverage institutional incentives for change and mutual benefit – getting SANParks, government departments, and poor rural communities to generate benefits from national parks.

Cock and Fig (2001) examine the impact of neo-liberalism on environmental management in South Africa. They argue that GEAR impacted environmental management through cuts in budgets for environmental services resulting in departments decreasing their expenditure on nature conservation. GEAR affects conservation estates, tourism revenues, and local multiplier effects (Cock & Fig 2001). Therefore, SANParks has to bridge the funding gap through commercialization of biodiversity and park assets (Cock & Fig 2002).

Cock and Fig (2001) also express concern with the growing tendency towards exclusionary environmental policy, which departs from early years of democratization and post-apartheid environmental policy formulation that emphasized transparency and participation. They argue that neo-liberalism has reversed the spirit of participation espoused in the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), No 107 of 1998 (Cock & Fig 2001; Fig 2000). NEMA emphasizes community involvement, cooperative governance, conflict resolution, fair decision-making, and people's rights to refuse to work in harmful environments. It gives effect to environmental rights embedded in the Bill of Rights in South Africa's 1996 Constitution (Cock & Fig 2001).

Notwithstanding Cock and Fig's (2001) negative assessment of the impact of neo-liberalism on environmental management, it is possible that neo-liberal ideas about market-driven approaches could be leveraged to promote opportunities for black economic empowerment. The next chapters explore how SANParks used commercialization initiatives to promote socio-economic objectives of transformation and black empowerment through structuring concessions and outsourcing of services to be sensitive to the needs and interests of black communities. In the process, SANParks was able to promote socially progressive initiatives with transformative outcomes and transcended its narrow conservation mandate. Therefore, it is simplistic to argue that the implementation of neo-liberal principles and market-driven policies in park management undermine social justice aspirations. Rather, there has been convergence of SANParks' commercialization strategy with the neo-liberal principles of government's GEAR policy

and efforts to promote cost recovery, cost reduction, privatization, and liberalize the market.

Apart from the being influenced by processes of democratization and liberalization, SANParks transformation has been driven by financial challenges, institutional changes, and wider socio-political discourses of transformation and black empowerment in the country. The South Africa's model of transformation clearly articulates the need to transfer power and resources from the white minority to the black majority population. The idea of transferring power and resources from the white minority to the black majority is also reflected in SANParks transformation statement (see Appendix). Transformation and black empowerment emerged from South Africa's history deeply intertwined with white privilege, domination, injustice, and politics of exclusion of black South Africans. Macro-level changes and socio-political ideology of transformation molded SANParks' policy commitments to rights of black South Africans. The socio-political environment shaped behavior of the organization and its executives.

The fact that democratization occurred through a negotiated transition means that SANParks transformation will be characterized by competing agendas, and conflict between reform-oriented employees and conservative technocrats loyal to the old agenda (Cock & Fig 2001; Lemos & Oliveira 2004). In a context where apartheid-linked conservationists and technocrats continue to command influence in the organization, their ideas shape organizational policy and action. Because they hold much power, they are able to oppose reforms that hurt their interests. It is therefore important to pay attention to entrenched interests that resist reforms that fundamentally alter the balance of power and create new institutional arrangements. While progressive bureaucrats and reformist technocrats might push the organization towards reform, the influence and interests of entrenched elites have to be acknowledged and negotiated. The next chapters highlight the tension between white conservatives and reform-oriented black managers, which is expected in a context where "the old and emerging cadres" work within the same system (Lemos 2004).

The pattern of transformation within SANParks illustrates the struggles between old and emerging/new cadres; and this was particularly evident in efforts to institutionalize social ecology or socially responsive conservation initiatives. When values of organizational actors converged with the government agenda on transformation and black empowerment, opportunities for implementing socially responsive conservation emerged and social issues got into SANParks' agenda. Arguably, this enabled the mobilization of socially responsive conservation and transformation in SANParks to assume organizational and political currency.

Inasmuch as the general principle of transformation seems to be shared by entrenched conservative cadres and reform-oriented new cadres, there is divergence in ideas of implementation (Lemos 1998; Lemos & Oliveira 2004). For example, within SANParks the idea of implementing social ecology as an instrument of transformation diverged from white managers' views of social ecology as an outreach initiative to channel benefits to neighboring communities. While black managers pushed for broader black empowerment and local participation in park management decision-making, the conservative white park managers were weary of losing power and control over park management, and thus wanted to retain their historical bureaucratic power and authority over conservation and park management decisions. The resistance towards transformative social ecology by white park managers reflects a failure to understand that reconciliation and transformation imply changing deep-rooted apartheid principles and ideas of authoritarian conservation and white domination.

However, simply because the old cadre survived the transition process relatively unscathed, and were able to negotiate their power in the new dispensation does not necessarily mean that they can ignore the social values of reform-oriented actors or new cadre (Lemos 2004). The black managers have been able to push for socially responsive conservation initiatives by linking their efforts with government's political agenda of transformation and black empowerment. Therefore, political democratization, reforms and institutional changes in the country have provided a window of opportunity for reform-oriented executives to overhaul the national park system and implement

community-oriented projects that historically were never conceived possible in national parks. They have been able to experiment with new ideas and social innovations in park management, which allow park-neighboring communities to participate and benefit from national parks. I argue that this has been possible because of the executives have been able to embrace new ideas of community involvement in park management activities, socially just conservation, and redressing past injustice.

Therefore, the emerging model of socially responsive conservation reflects the deep convictions of the new cadre and reform-oriented park managers who are able to linked conservation to broader social and political issues in the country. I discuss the three leadership periods in SANParks to demonstrate the centrality of reform-oriented park executives in shaping the nature of park management policy. I also highlight that their ideas of transformation and role of national parks in a new dispensation influenced their choices and actions taken in steering organizational behavior and response to environmental challenges. In each leadership period, I present the chief executive's convictions and ideas in relation to transformation strategy and park management reforms and policy.

Institutional Theory and Organizational Transformation

Understanding organizational transformation in transitional economies is an important research question (Keister 2002; Newman 2000; Newman 2001). Institutional perspective emphasizes the importance of the wider social context, and organizations as products shaped by interaction with their context. Institutional approach calls attention to environmental influences, including present influences and pressures as well as past circumstances (Scott & Christensen 1995). Organizations are treated as both technical and social systems, molded by cultural forces and meanings.

Institutional perspective offers opportunities to explore historical, non-local, cultural, and relational forces shaping organizations (Scott 1994). For example, the American "Yellowstone model" shaped the dynamics of national park establishment and

management in South Africa, and greatly influenced ideas and organization of the national park system. International environmental and development agencies affect the policies and strategies of SANParks, and this is understandable given that SANParks participate in wider arenas of interdependent relations and forces at a societal or global level.

Institutional approach provides opportunities to understand the role of historical and relational influences on organizations. Earlier I presented a brief examination of the history of nature conservation and conditions of emergence of national parks globally and in South Africa. Those conditions of emergence tend to have a lasting influence on organization structure and operational mode – Stinchcombe refers to this dimension as “organizational imprinting” (Stinchcombe 1965). The concept of “imprinting” is relevant in understanding enduring structure, values, and practices of an organization. In the dissertation, I explain the shortcomings of SANParks transformation on the basis that contemporary transformation efforts have failed to erase all trace of “apartheid” structures, values, and practices that historically defined the organization and its mode of operation. Therefore, the current organizational structure embodies residues of earlier ones, which remain present. As a consequence, the current SANParks reflects a complex synthesis of previous existences and new formations (Scott & Christensen 1995). Inevitably, there is continuity of old remnants, which illustrates historical influences and outcomes of the negotiated transition in South Africa that constrained radical transformation and therefore secured a place for apartheid remnants in the new South Africa.

In essence, post-apartheid South Africa inherited a national park system built on colonial and apartheid values but embraced it for economic reasons without dismantling it. Instead, the country opted for gradual reforms and new initiatives to reconfigure the national park systems and social relations in park management. In the dissertation, I highlight how SANParks devised new organizational structures to improve organizational performance and relationships with adjacent communities. SANParks had to build social ties with black communities – an important social and political constituency for national

parks in post-apartheid South Africa. The importance of social relations cannot be overemphasized considering the history of hostility between parks and adjacent black communities.

Cultural values and beliefs are also important factors to consider in understanding SANParks transformation. Cock and Fig (2002) argue that the National Parks Board (now SANParks) reflected and symbolized the culture and practice of apartheid. This implies that apartheid institutions and structures largely shaped organizational culture, practices, policies, and park management. These cultural influences have to be reexamined in the context of transformation in South Africa. Any failure to re-orient the cultural environment of SANParks potentially leads to a gap between the ideologies of new policy and legislation and the implementation of new approaches. A careful examination of cultural premises of apartheid park management provides insights on how cultural influences continue to mediate current transformation efforts. I detail the challenges of cultural influences in the next chapters. There is recognition within SANParks that organization culture needs to be changed in order to realize transformation objectives. I find the institutional perspective of great value in providing “a wide-angle lens approach to organizations” **p, 313** (Scott & Christensen 1995). It offers opportunities for understanding organizations in their proper context, and acknowledges that they are constituted, restricted, and sustained by their social and cultural environments (Scott & Christensen 1995).

Therefore, one has to pay attention to institutional environment of organizations, including the influences of history, context, cultural forces, and relations. Institutional theory presents different conceptions of institutions – normative, regulative, and cognitive elements (Clemens & Cook 1999; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 1995a; Scott 1995b, 2008). This dissertation examines the trajectory of SANParks transformation in relation to political, institutional, and major policy changes. It shows SANParks executives were motivated by “enlightened pragmatism” to implement organizational changes and transformation initiatives that embrace institutional demands and socio-political expectations in the new South Africa. The political and institutional

changes required that the executives made sense of those changes and undertake practical action as well as behave “reasonably” by taking into account the socio-political realities of the new dispensation (Tusenius 1988). Democratization in South Africa introduced new political values and social objectives, and therefore setting expectations on organizations’ responses to wider ideologies and value commitments linked to transformation and black empowerment. This constructs a notion of appropriate behavior and common agreements or shared objectives. Failure to function within the accepted institutional framework would raise legitimacy concerns whereas conformity to prescribed processes (institutional criteria) increases opportunities for gaining material resources, legitimacy, and survival (Scott & Christensen 1995).

SANParks transformation illustrates how an organization conforms to institutional criteria, gains incentives, and instigates organizational changes and initiatives that transcend its narrow self-interest while maximizing social and political support. In other words, conformity to institutional criteria may not necessarily be inconsistent with self-interest or concern for organizational efficiency. Institutions then define the actors and their interests – shaping what is “the ends for action and the criteria for success” **p, 305** (Scott & Christensen 1995). A closer analysis of SANParks response to institutional demands shows how the institutional environment mediated the pursuit of certain interests, and framed the boundaries of what is acceptable organizational action or evidence of efficiency or effectiveness. However, a looming question remains whether regulative institutions, which mandate transformation and black empowerment, actually facilitated SANParks transformation or not. At what cost can an organization ignore pressures to adapt to new regulations and major policy changes? The case study demonstrates clearly that SANParks had to adopt certain patterns of behavior to gain legitimacy and obtain resources (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; DiMaggio & Powell 1991). Meyer and Rowan argue that organizations that devise structures that match closely to institutional requirements maximize their legitimacy and increase their survival and resource capabilities (Meyer & Rowan 1977). Therefore, institutional survival often depends on conforming to current political and environmental conditions.

Another way of understanding SANParks transformation process is in terms of coercive, mimetic, or normative isomorphic processes (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). The shift towards socially-responsive conservation initiatives and engaging adjacent communities in park management could possibly be a function of formal and informal pressure exerted on SANParks by other environmental organizations and cultural expectations within its organizational field that social issues have to be addressed. This represents coercive isomorphism. It is also possible that SANParks could merely be mimicking other park agencies that have been successful in dealing with challenges in park management in a democracy. Scott and Christensen (1995) view mimetic isomorphism as a response to uncertainty, and emerge when an organization models itself after similar organizations in the field that it views to be more successful or legitimate.

The preceding theoretical points provide insights on institutional environment-organization interaction. My analysis of SANParks transformation stresses the importance of this interaction, and explores this transformation as emerging from macro sociological processes in South Africa. Because context matters, I trace how changing institutional orders have shaped and defined the problems, solutions, actors, and interests in park management. Following this line of thinking, I argue that the trajectory of SANParks transformation and organizational structure are products of institutional order and socio-political changes in the country. I also point out that organizational interests are institutionally defined and shaped (Friedland & Alford 1991), and therefore it is important to pay attention to organizational responses to institutional demands as well as efforts by organizational actors to take advantage of the environment to further their own organizational interests. However, studying transformation of an organization also requires reflecting on both continuity and change, and understanding the persistence of residuals in face of great challenges and changes.

The case study clearly suggests that SANParks is an institutionalized organization, and this possibly explains why it has been able to sustain some old residues despite the transformation efforts. The South African context allows us to explore how both private and public organizations historically embedded in apartheid have had to

function in a radically different political and institutional landscape. The “normative embeddedness of an organization within its institutional context” **p, 1028** (Greenwood & Hinings 1996) presents challenges for organizational transformation. I argue that the nature of South Africa’s negotiated political transition compounds the challenges of transformation by imposing constraints on the nature and scope of change - it restricts radical transformation and allow apartheid remnants to survive in the new dispensation. I buttress my analysis by incorporating the role of ideas or “principled beliefs” (Lemos 2004) in influencing both institutional change and organizational transformation. I postulated that SANParks transformation would reflect the evolving patterns, models, and socio-cultural elements of its institutional and political environment.

South Africa’s democratization and institutional changes posed challenges to the historical practices of colonial and apartheid park management. Black majority rule brought about fundamental shifts in societal values and expectations on the role and functions of national parks in a new democracy (Child 2004; Honey 1999a; Magome 2004). In addition, there was also a growing movement of pro-people conservation advocates who were against coercive conservation in Africa and beyond (Neumann 1998; Picard 2000, 2003), and objected to the notion of national parks that exclude local people in park management. As a result, authoritarian and exclusionary conservation, particularly “protectionist” ideas, practices, and policies had become politically and morally questionable in post-colonial era. Protected area authorities were therefore “forced” to search new capabilities, adapt to new socio-political realities, and be relevant to the needs of historically disadvantaged communities.

My focus on SANParks was driven by an interest to understand how national parks were institutionalizing and accommodating the narratives of transformation and black empowerment since democratization in South Africa. The political, regulatory, and institutional changes in South Africa make “radical organizational change and adaptation central research issues” **p, 1022** (Greenwood & Hinings 1996). Because of the expectations of democratic practices, inclusive structures, and new organizational forms that characterize ideals and visions of new South Africa, an analysis of SANParks offers

insights on organizational responses to evolving institutional demands and the influence of post-apartheid institutions (laws, policies, constitution, regulations, and property rights) on organizational behavior.

It is also clear that leadership, political ideas, and interests are central features in transformation efforts and have molded the trajectory of SANParks transformation. SANParks executives (leadership) pursued organizational self-interests by exploiting contextual opportunities, conforming to institutional demands, advancing broader social objectives of government, and meeting the socio-economic needs of local communities neighboring national parks. This “enlightened self-interest” demonstrates a clear understanding of the connectivity of national parks’ legitimacy and survival to broader social interests. SANParks has been able to operate according to the logic of moral or social appropriateness (Campbell 2002), and act in the interest of transformation and black empowerment. Given the demands and pressures for transformation and black empowerment, SANParks is confronted with an option of succumbing to populist socio-political demands without due consideration to the long-term risks posed to organizational interests and conservation objectives or pursuing “enlightened pragmatism” in satisfying social interests and institutional demands while securing both short-to-long-term organizational interests.

The dissertation shows that the concept of “enlightened pragmatism” explains the reason why SANParks chose to implement socially responsive initiatives that promoted transformation and black empowerment objectives. It also explains how SANParks executives implemented practical interventions and strategic policies and approaches to deal with environmental challenges. Such enlightened pragmatism is evident in executive efforts to bring together interests of government, adjacent communities, and SANParks in pursuit of transformation and black empowerment objectives. Such confluence of interest was instrumental in promoting socially responsive conservation initiatives.

For example, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), and Department of Trade and

Industry (DTI) created institutional incentives for funding programs related to broader objectives of transformation, local socio-economic development and employment creation, and black economic empowerment. The findings show that SANParks strategically leveraged government-funded projects (e.g., DWAF's Community Water Efficiency Project; Expanded Public Works Programs; Working for Water; Coast Care; DTI's Small Enterprise Development Agency Community Empowerment Partnership Projects) to further broader societal objectives of transformation as well as own self-interests. SANParks executives perceived transformation, black empowerment and poverty alleviation as morally and politically compelling issues such that they aligned organizational initiatives and interests with those ideas. This helped SANParks transcend its narrow conservation mandate that historically defined its operations. In the process, SANParks forged a new identity of a socially responsive organization, and undertook initiatives that had the potential to increase legitimacy, political support, and bolster its organizational interests.

SANParks has aligned its initiatives with government's transformation project and black empowerment efforts to satisfy regulative and normative obligations in a new democracy. Racial transformation (changing the racial composition of management levels) in SANParks entailed appointment of black managers in accordance with political expectations and dictates of Employment Equity legislation. Ironically, the appointment of black managers has not brought about fundamental changes in the core structure and practice of park management. It has fallen short in transforming the critical operational layers (specialists and conservation experts) that significantly influence park management philosophy despite the success of racial transformation or "Africanization" at the executive management level (Magome 2004). Here racial transformation is a "quick fix" guided by political expectations and institutional prescriptions regarding employment equity and black empowerment but overlooks the importance of overhauling colonial park-people relationships and core structure of park management. It appears "Africanization" of park management reflects an attempt to satisfy regulative and normative imperatives of transformation in South Africa.

The institutional changes and socio-political demands provided impetus for organization-level transformation initiatives. Institutional and political changes provided an opening for SANParks to explore new opportunities through “shock therapy” on old ways of doing business and managing parks. It had to search for new capabilities and mobilize resources to facilitate realization of socio-political objectives of transformation and black empowerment. Political democratization and “institutional upheaval” have exposed SANParks to new ways of doing business and public accountability, and be relevant and legitimate in a new dispensation. These exogenous shocks have effects by altering the organization or its relationship to domains of social life (Clemens & Cook 1999) such that it seeks ways of promoting transformation and socio-economic development of historically disadvantaged black population (Cock 2007; Honey 1999). The institutional analysis of SANParks transformation reveals the rules, norms and meanings that arise in the interaction between SANParks and environmental context, which impose requirements and/or constraints on the organization (Scott 2008). Politics, major policy, and institutional prescriptions induced interests around transformation and black empowerment, and in some instances legitimating models of transformation and black empowerment that would shape patterns of action and organization (Clemens & Cook 1999; Meyer & Rowan 1977). Therefore, institutions become guides for practical action (Clemens & Cook 1999; Scott 1995).

Normative and regulative aspects were reframed and couched with rational (efficiency-based) arguments to instigate new ways of acting (Scott 2008). Because the South African environment contains multiple institutional demands, SANParks has been able generate a “hybrid” organizational form – conservation focused and socially oriented – to satisfy those competing demands. These contradictions offer opportunities for transformation, organizational learning and innovation to deal with environmental demands (Clemens & Cook 1999). In addition, the multiple institutional demands provide SANParks executives with flexibility to negotiate multiple sets of expectations or embed their transformation and black empowerment projects more firmly in selected institutional foundations that suit them. This allows them to align SANParks

transformation initiatives and organizational form with societal rules (Clemens & Cook 1999) or embed them within accepted models.

SANParks served as an attractive case study to explore institutional change and organizational transformation. Given its publicly stated transformation efforts (Corporate Plan 1998) and strategic change initiatives deemed transformational (South African National Parks 1998), I wanted to examine the “fundamental change in strategy, core values, or corporate identity” p, 603 (Newman 2000) in SANParks against shifts in political and institutional context. Therefore, the study itself was not so much about park management, or conservation, as about institutional and organizational transformation.

Some scholars expressed concern with SANParks’ slow pace of transformation, and characterized as incomplete and tantamount to “shallow restructuring” (Cock & Fig 2002; Magome 2004). These conclusions were reached with limited application of organizational and institutional analysis of SANParks transformation. The shortcoming of these authors’ conclusions is that they treated transformation as a “static condition” or “end-point” rather than a “product of processes” and ongoing phenomena embedded in changing interplay between intra-organizational dynamics and macro-contextual forces. I regard SANParks transformation as a product of ongoing social and political processes. This fits neatly with Brechin *et al.* (2002) emphasis that nature conservation is a social and political process¹³, which entails human organizational efforts and responses to contextual challenges.

“Enlightened Pragmatism” and Transformation

The dissertation builds an argument that “enlightened pragmatism” has largely informed SANParks transformation. The concept has appeal because SANParks has not only responded to political and institutional changes but has been able to advance broader

¹³ Brechin *et al.* (2002), the article ‘Beyond the Square Wheel’, argued that conservation is a social and political process that requires attention to questions of human organizational effort. Attention to organizational processes associated with nature conservation, especially fundamental concepts, methods and modes of organization (Brechin *et al.* 2002).

social interests that transcend its narrow conservation mandate through alliances with government departments and neighboring communities. SANParks has tapped into ideas and programs that favor collaborative efforts in promoting transformation objectives and black empowerment. The search for common purpose has helped diverse interests to coalesce into partnerships for transformation and black empowerment. SANParks recognized pursuing desirable social objectives through mutually beneficial arrangements and collaborative efforts, and harnessing ideas and initiatives that favor partnerships could secure its self-interests. Such enlightened pragmatism was more than “a feel-good approach” but rather strategic in the sense that it increased legitimacy and survival capabilities of SANParks. SANParks has chosen to focus on finding ways to improve its responsiveness to institutional changes and socio-political demands, and promoting mutually beneficial arrangements.

Contrary to the rhetoric of “win-win” outcomes of transformation, there have been winners and losers, continuity of imbalances in power relations between parks and adjacent communities or white managers and black managers, and conflicts of interest that have historical roots. I point out these issues to show that “transformation and black empowerment” is not a magic wand that can easily erase the painful history of national parks. As one goes through the description of the three leadership periods, I reveal the powerful ideational, political, economic and institutional forces that have shaped the ongoing process of transformation in SANParks and South Africa.

The discussion in the next chapters reflect an organization and its executives attempting to come to terms with changing context by adapting park management practices to societal expectations, political and institutional demands in a pragmatic manner. Inasmuch as societal expectations regarding the role and function of national parks change in the context of democratization and liberalization, SANParks’ strategic policies, approaches, and transformation initiatives portrayed pragmatism in park management practices and operation – they were driven by “what works” and less ideological in orientation. Therefore, I argue that SANParks transformation has been predicated on “enlightened pragmatism” – mitigating the perverse effects of colonial

conservation while strengthening the organization to leverage incentives generated by democratization and liberalization. SANParks has managed to harness the complementary capabilities of private sector to achieve greater impact on black empowerment as well as improve its financial sustainability. It has also entered into collaborative institutional arrangements with other stakeholders (government departments and neighboring communities) to promote local socio-economic opportunities. These partnerships make sense given the major policy changes, institutional reforms, and ideological shift towards liberalization in South Africa.

The upshot of my proposition is those leaders' values, beliefs and ideas, or what Lemos (2002) calls "principled beliefs" gear organizations towards particular courses of action. For this reason, I examined the attributes, ideas, strategic policies and approaches of the chief executives to show how these shaped SANParks transformation. Interestingly, it appears the chief executives had internalized values of "transformation" and socially responsive conservation, and recognized that democratization and liberalization set in motion new dynamics that national parks could no longer afford to ignore. Socio-political and market forces were reconfiguring the landscape of national parks; certainly park management practices had to be responsive. In such context, "enlightened pragmatism" seemed logical to guide SANParks transformation and ensure survival – only "what works" served as the guiding motto to avoid the pitfalls of ideological and populist demands on SANParks.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have examined institutional perspectives, role of ideas (principled beliefs), and negotiated transition as conceptual lenses to understand SANParks transformation. I drew insights about ideas and institutional change from Campbell (2002), Clemens and Cook (2002), and institutional perspectives (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 1995b; Scott & Christensen 1995). The concept of ideas and institutional change was attractive because specific institutional and organizational approaches that emerge as solutions depend on the power of particular ideas. In addition, it also depends

on how those ideas become embedded, gain currency or influence as well as traction. When the ideas are accepted in the institutional/organizational settings, they are able to influence policy and action. It is also possible that the ideas may be resisted or contested in existing institutional settings.

Ideas of transformation and black empowerment are contested. I discuss these contestations in the next chapters, and point out the contradictions that emerge in the implementation of ideas of transformation and black empowerment particularly in a society historically divided along racial and ethnic lines. The apartheid legacy seems to impose heavy weight on transformation efforts. Given the history of racial divisions, it is apparent that contest over implementation of ideas of transformation is inevitable along racial lines despite possible consensus on the principle of transformation and black empowerment in post-apartheid South Africa. Understanding these issues require paying attention to institutional pressures and macro sociological processes of change in the country. Institutional perspectives are useful in explaining the interaction between an organization and its environment, and organizational responses to institutional forces. The organization's survival depends on ability to satisfy political and institutional conditions, and infusing the organization with value deemed socially and politically acceptable by society.

Therefore, institutional theory offered me the conceptual lens I needed in order to examine how SANParks devised organizational structures, promoted socially progressive conservation initiatives, and instigated park management reforms that conformed closely to institutional requirements and broader socio-political objectives of transformation. The pursuit of black empowerment, land restitution, and local socio-economic development served to maximize SANParks' legitimacy, survival capabilities, and resource mobilization. In exploring institutional demands on SANParks, I am able to demonstrate how SANParks transformation was pragmatic and linked to enlightened self-interest – hence I propose the concept of “enlightened pragmatism” to explain the implementation of strategic policies and approaches that were deemed practical and working in the interest of SANParks' survival. The scope and pace of SANParks transformation reflects

pragmatism and informed assessment of socio-political and institutional consequences of organizational action or inaction.

In the next chapter, I examine leadership, strategic policies and approaches, and organizational responses to transition to democracy. I explore how SANParks confronted the challenges of democratization and institutional changes in the country. The chapter illustrates the leader's ideas - normative and cognitive presuppositions – that structured SANParks transformation, and link them to broader socio-political, institutional, and major policy changes. I argue that SANParks transformation reflects the particular ideas, visions, and “messiness” of their execution.

CHAPTER 3

MANAGING TRANSITION: PARKS, POLITICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

This chapter explores leadership challenges and politics of race in the transformation of the National Parks Board during the transition to democracy. It provides a backdrop of transitional challenges encountered by the National Parks Board in addressing apartheid legacies. Politics and race have historically shaped the trajectory of South Africa's national park management (Carruthers 1995). In this chapter I explore "transformation" initiatives and organizational changes in the National Parks Board under Dr. Robinson, a white Chief Executive responsible for the transition of the organization from apartheid to post-apartheid era. Dr. Robinson had to deal with racial, historical and political tensions that characterized both parks and society in transition. Based on a review of official publications, consultancy reports, and secondary material (books, dissertations and published articles) that document change initiatives during Dr. Robinson's leadership epoch, this chapter describes retrospectively the National Park Board's transformation processes and initiatives. It highlights the intersection of history, politics, race, and park management in transitional South Africa. The chapter reiterates the view that national park management priorities mutate with social and political changes in society (Carruthers 2003; Honey 1999b; Murphree 2004).

Understanding Transition

Since 1994 South Africa has taken steps to redress the apartheid legacy, including dealing with issues of race and black empowerment in protected area management. Tom Boardman states that black South Africans' expectations on transformation and black empowerment have not been matched by reality, and there is increasing frustration with the pace of transformation in the country – this has increased skepticism about

transformation, which potentially threatens the fruits of democracy (Sunday Times Editor 2007). Fourteen years after South Africa's first democratic elections, the attainment of transformation objectives of black empowerment, social justice, poverty alleviation and equity remains elusive. It is imperative therefore that we understand conditions impeding opportunities for the realization of these objectives in the conservation sector. The history of national parks is characterized by negative sociological cost of nature conservation and the disproportionate burden carried by black South Africans (Magome 2003, 2004; Ramutsindela 2004). In order to overcome this apartheid legacy, transformation of the national park system has to navigate the tensions between the old and the new, and ensure that national parks are relevant to socio-economic realities of neighboring communities.

However, the realities of South Africa's transition to democracy were such that radical rupture of the old and creation of new systems, institutions, and practices was relatively impossible and thereby allowing continuity of apartheid relics in park management (or conservation sector) in South Africa (Carruthers 1995; Magome 2004).

It is important that we understand the nature of political transition in South Africa, and how it disposes society and public organizations to incomplete transformation. The negotiated political transition greatly influenced the trajectory of organizational change and reforms in the conservation sector. Without a complete break with the old, it has been difficult for post-apartheid park executives to create a new vision or model of conservation and park management that is embedded in ideals of post-apartheid South Africa. As a consequence, local communities or historically disfranchised black communities continue to experience marginalization in core decision-making processes in park management.

South Africa's transition to democracy has a profound bearing on the trajectory of transformation in public sector organizations. As a negotiated settlement, which was far from a radical overthrow of the apartheid system, gradualism and less disruptive processes of change were embraced. This gave existing public sector organizations and the old cadres the necessary time to adjust to new environment through "sunset clauses."

In the absence of a revolution or total rapture of the apartheid system, “transformation through reform” **p, 234** (Dierkes & Zhang 2001) characterized South Africa’s transition to democracy but triggered political, ideological and socio-economic contradictions because it left the old system partially and unsatisfactorily changed thereby inheriting apartheid relics.

Apartheid was able to negotiate its existence in post-apartheid South Africa, and its ghosts were never laid to rest (Ramphela 2008). Because of the compromises reached in the negotiated political settlement, the reform nature of transformation (transformation through reform or negotiated transition) in South Africa inherently limits the capacity for radical change and creation of completely new systems. The “New” South Africa had to content with “transformation through reform,” “non-revolutionary form of transition” or what Picard (2005) refers to as “transition without transformation.” In view of the negotiated political path of South Africa’s transformation, “transformation through revolution” was not possible.

The country’s path to transition had implications on public sector organizations’ “transformative capacity” and targets of transformation. At a macro-level, “fundamental changes in the structures, institutional arrangements, policies, modes of operation and relationships within society” **p, 13** (Ramphela 2008) were anticipated. Ramphela states that transformation in South Africa had to “be characterized by the antithesis of all that was bad about the apartheid system” and involve “radical changes in values, attitudes and relationships at all levels” **p, 13** (Ramphela 2008). She suggests that transformation has to involve rapture with “past values and practices defined by racism, sexism, inequality and lack of respect for human rights” **p, 13** (Ramphela 2008). However, the negotiated political transition failed to provide enough stimuli for radical change.

Transformation through reform secured the old guard in the National Parks Board, which was never entirely replaced by a new cadre of socially progressive conservationists. They continued to exercise authority over conservation policy and practice. Without a new, strong cadre to replace the old, dominant conservationists, the

colonial conservation and park management paradigm continued to influence the exclusion and marginalization of local communities. This guaranteed perpetuity of “apartheid” in conservation and alienation and exclusion of local communities (Hall-Martin & Carruthers 2003). I speculate “transformation through revolution” would have fostered new thinking and institutions built on ideals of revolutionary transformation.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of negotiated political transition on ushering radical change, the process nevertheless assisted a shift from authoritarianism to democracy as well as created an impetus for change in the conservation bureaucracy and park management. For this reason, it crafted an environment that could both aid and impede transformation. Through an examination of Dr. Robinson’s leadership epoch (1991-1996), I describe and explain the opportunities and impediments in reforming a national park system during the transition phase, and under a white chief executive and black majority rule (Honey 1999). Dr. Robinson shepherded the national park authority during the transition to black majority rule and dealt with transitional challenges of making national parks legitimate and relevant to the emerging politically powerful black constituency. He dealt with broader social and political questions of transition, pressures to make the organization socially and politically relevant, and adapt the organization to environmental demands and changing institutional (legislation and policy) context. A myriad of new legislation was emerging and redefining the institutional landscape of park management.

Ignoring the legislative and political prescriptions of transformation would be suicidal for any public sector executive. While the euphoria on political transformation was high, societal expectations on the fruits of democracy were growing and so were fears about populist demands on the post-apartheid government, which others felt would cripple public sector organizations, create instability, and undermine the transition to a fully-fledged democracy in South Africa (Ramphela 2008). These social and political anxieties crept into the conservation sector, and Dr. Robinson’s strategy was to pre-empt the growing social and political demands on national parks and attempt to mitigate the

perceived threats to the future of the national park system. He strongly believed that the NPB and national parks were under siege.

Anticipating Black Majority Rule

This chapter explores macro-level changes and conditions that were perceived to influence NPB's organizational responses and Dr. Robinson's strategic focus. Understanding parks and leadership during the transition era is important because it sets the stage for appreciating challenges of organizing conservation under black majority rule in South Africa. Dr. Robinson's leadership epoch (1991-1996) focused on building the legitimacy of the national park authority (National Parks Board) and making it relevant to the New South Africa. To understand the challenges of transformation, I explore the processes of transformation at two levels; the first level being macro-level transformation initiatives ushered by transition to democracy, national political discourses, the Constitution and legislation; and the second level being organizational level changes in the National Parks Board (NPB) that sought alignment of organizational strategic objectives with external environmental factors and organizational efforts to meet strategic goals and enlightened self-interest objectives.

In February 1990 President FW de Klerk changed South Africa's political arena when he unbanned the ANC and other black South African nationalist movements, and promised the release of political prisoners (including Nelson Mandela) in order to begin political negotiations that would usher transition to democracy (Marks 2005; Picard 2005; Ramphela 2008). This set a path for a New South Africa to emerge from a negotiated political settlement. The following year in April, Dr. "Robbie" Robinson became the Chief Executive of the NPB. With the promise of political change sweeping across the country and a negotiated transition on the cards, the question of managing national parks under black majority rule became increasingly distressing for the old guard. Just a year before the 1994 April elections, Dr. Robinson wrote in the NPB's official journal, *Custos*, expressing anxieties about the challenges of transition. He stated

the need to reposition the national park authority to survive in socio-political changes emerging from political transition:

“Ever since I assumed the post of Chief Executive Director of the National Parks Board in April 1991, I have attempted to position the National Parks Board in such a way that it will be accepted by the ‘New South Africa’....Political factors and financial stringency are two new forces that are now threatening the Board’s future” p, 6-7 (Robinson 1993).

He recognized the implications of political transition on organizational survival and legitimacy. As a consequence, he felt that his leadership challenge was negotiating the transitional landscape. The national park system had to find its place in the new South Africa, and overcome its tarnished image associated with Afrikaner nationalism (Carruthers 1995). As the key institution mandated by the National Parks Act (1926) to manage South Africa’s national park system, the NPB’s transformation challenge was to rid itself off the apartheid legacy and build legitimacy and trust among the black constituency, whom it had treated unjustly during apartheid. Therefore, repositioning for change, democracy and social acceptance in the new South Africa was a matter of organizational survival. The NPB had established itself as bastion of apartheid, a racialized and Afrikaner-dominated organization.

The NPB was a conduit of Afrikaner dominance and expropriation of African land, and essentially reflected the culture and practice of apartheid (Cock & Fig 2002). Its racist organizational policies and practices favored Afrikaners and whites in management and technical positions, and were biased against blacks that were subjected to menial and low-wage positions (Carruthers 1995). As a result of strong political connections with the Nationalist Party (an Afrikaner nationalist party), the NPB fared well and was able to draw political appointees to its Board of Curators. With political connections to the Nationalist Party, the NPB became militarized and its national parks often used during covert military operations. Consequently, national parks and Afrikaner politics merged seamlessly, and mutually reinforced apartheid, authoritarian racist policies in nature conservation and park management. National parks became a symbol of

white domination and subjugation of blacks South Africans. The NPB was unsympathetic to the plight of neighboring black communities.

This was the history and legacy that Dr. Robinson had to confront during the transition, and at the same time create opportunities and space for historically marginalized communities and individuals to benefit from national parks as well as participate in park management. The transition to democracy was accompanied by a transformation agenda that required both South African society and organizations to reinvent themselves and confront the apartheid legacy. As I stated earlier, the compromises (the sunset clauses) reached during the negotiated political settlement curtailed the possibility of revolutionary change in the public sector, and left “intact much of the institutional culture and personnel of the old order” **p, 92** (Marais 1998). For this reason, white leadership and privileges survived during the transition because of “sunset clauses.” This left management and technical levels dominated by white South Africa, which became a thorny issue among blacks who expected opportunities in senior park management structures. The transition to democracy increased the sense of uncertainty and insecurity in the NPB, and this reflected a sense of being under siege. Dr Robinson describes the challenges:

“The National Parks Board is facing a new, uncertain environment. A future, predominantly black electorate in South Africa could place significant demands on the organization to create employment opportunities for blacks while government funding could be difficult to obtain...” **p, 12** (Robinson 1994).

He felt that the NPB “finds itself in a potentially high-risk situation” **p, 8** (Robinson 1993). The agency had to define its “value-addition” to the New South Africa, and demonstrate the importance of national parks to political leadership and policy-makers (Robinson 1994). Dr. Robinson attempted “to sensitize the organization to the social and political realities of the post-apartheid era” **p, 12** (Magome 2004). He recognized that national parks could no longer be managed in isolation from the socio-economic realities of blacks South Africans. The “fortress mentality” was counter-

productive to building legitimacy among neighboring communities that determined the long-term survival of national parks.

Repositioning NPB in light of transitional challenges was a compelling tactical and strategic issue. The social issues in park management began gaining currency both internally and externally. Racial representation in management positions was an obvious issue, and societal expectations for racial transformation to reflect the demographics of the country were growing. However, the “sunset clauses” that emerged from negotiated political transition made it difficult to radically overhaul racial composition of management since jobs of white employees were secured by the political settlement.

In addition, “sunset clauses” ensured that the NPB continue to function according to many of the determinants of apartheid, whether in terms of race, management practices and culture, and structures. For this reason, Dr. Robinson struggled to overhaul the national park system because of the weight of negotiated political settlement, “sunset clauses,” and apartheid legacy on his change efforts. He had to balance two competing interest groups, the historically dominant white constituency that demanded security of national parks in their old state and an emerging politically powerful black constituency that was demanding the NPB’s responsiveness to issues of redress, land restitution, socio-economic opportunities, and access to resources in national parks.

Dr. Robinson also had to confront the transformation agenda and evolving environmental context. Institutional and socio-political changes were creating turbulence and exerting demands on the NPB. The prospects of black majority rule increased fears of political turbulence, social unrest, and unrealistic societal expectations on national parks **p, 8** (*Custos*, April 1993).

Anxieties in the NPB deepened when the 1993 interim constitution “envisioned nature conservation as a concurrent mandate whereby national parks were accountable to national government, while other PAs were the responsibility of the provincial government” **p, 123** (Magome 2004). Dr. Robinson objected regional control:

“The national park system must be kept out of regional politics and above all regional concerns at all costs. South Africa’s national parks must continue to be managed by a single, nationally recognized authority according to guidelines laid down by the IUCN” p, 12 (Robinson 1993).

This institutional turbulence generated by political choices in the transition influenced the NPB’s behavior. However, the 1996 Constitution’s Schedule 4 reaffirmed the legality of national parks and carried over its apartheid legal status (as defined by the National Parks Act 1926) to post-apartheid era (Magome 2004). Without change in legal status or mandate, the national park authority forged ahead with its core mandate and was “saved” from re-conceptualizing its park philosophy to incorporate new vision of socially just (progressive) conservation paradigm. Thus the 1996 Constitution reaffirmed a false sense of security within NPB, and caused its management to remain “confused by not knowing what, why, when, and how to change” p, 123 (Magome 2004). Without radical changes in legislation related to national parks to integrate the responsibility of local socio-economic development to the core mandate of conservation, the NPB was not compelled to undertake aggressive social innovations in park management. Instead it undertook shallow restructuring (Cock & Fig 2002) and continued to accommodate the old order. Dr. Robinson devised strategies for change (See Table 3-1: 1992 NPB Strategies for Change) to ensure adaptation and responsiveness to transition to democracy.

Table 3-1: 1992 NPB Strategies for Change

Strategy Purpose and intended outcomes	
Strategy 1:	Create an organization that will be recognized by the majority of South Africans as legitimate for managing national parks on their behalf.
Strategy 2:	Develop and launch a sound affirmative action program that is assessed through targets and performance.
Strategy 3:	Develop a national park system that will provide local communities on the border of national parks with meaningful opportunities to influence and to share responsibility for biodiversity conservation.
Strategy 4:	Develop a comprehensive and clear corporate social responsibility for the NPB and ensure that it is applied effectively.

Source: Robinson (1992) and Magome (2004)

The strategies highlight efforts to build legitimacy and appeal to the black majority, which was a critical factor for future survival of the NPB in a new political dispensation (Honey 1999; Murphree 2004). This required building relationships with poor communities neighboring national parks (strategy 3) and creating meaningful opportunities for socio-economic development of local communities through corporate social responsibility (strategy 4). Strategy 3, the “Neighbor Relations Strategy” essentially recognized the need for social approval and trust among neighboring rural communities. Given the social and political history of national parks (Carruthers 1995), the negative perceptions of black communities towards the NPB, there was need to forge new relationships and build trust between parks and adjacent communities.

The above strategies reflect NPB’s enlightened self-interest, and how it couched community participation in instrumental terms to build legitimacy and galvanize community support for conservation. Interestingly, community participation was narrowly defined in terms of “counseling and consultation with local communities and interest groups” or keeping “local interest groups informed about planning and management actions undertaken by the National Parks Board, in order to respect their contributions and interests” **p, 10** (Geldenhuys quoted in *Custos*, April 1993). Community involvement in environmental management, despite narrowly defined, was politically expedient.

In addition, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) set a framework for people-driven programs and “active participation of people in empowerment process and in the implementation of growth and development initiatives” **p, 171** (Harrison-Rockey 1999). Dr. Robinson understood political currency of public participation, and therefore framed strategies for NPB change to reflect this imperative.

Just before the 1994 elections, the NPB’s Board of Curators approved Dr. Robinson’s agenda and management approach for the NPB. It envisioned a new era, in which the NPB had to function. It identified key drivers (See Table 3-2: 1994 NPB

Agenda and Management Approach) that would reposition the NPB in democratic South Africa and secure its legitimacy as well as relevance in a changing environment.

Table 3-2: 1994 NPB Agenda and Management Approach

Key Driver	Rationale
Vision:	South African national parks to become the pride and joy of all South Africans; The national park system to represent the widest spectrum of biodiversity and unique natural assets in South Africa; The NPB to cooperate with all South African groups and be recognized as a world leader in national park management and ecotourism development.
Structure:	The NPB to be apolitical, financially independent, business-oriented and decentralized; the NPB to be an equal opportunity organization.
Culture	The NPB to be visitor-friendly and enthusiastic, with an unquestionable image of high environmental ethics and social responsibilities; the NPB to emphasize greater individual initiative and calculated risk-taking; NPB employees to reflect the best of South Africa.
Performance:	NPB staff members to demonstrate ability, enthusiasm, motivation and teamwork as well as exhibit high morals and principles, and standards of performance for commercial, professional, research, maintenance, conservation and technical activities.

Source: Adapted from Robinson (1994, p.10-13); *Custos* (1994, p.31); Magome (2004)

A closer scrutiny of the NPB agenda and management approach outlined above reveals its inspirational nature and somewhat ambiguous direction (Magome 2004). It highlights the NPB’s attempt to de-politicize itself and nature conservation despite the long-history of political connection with Afrikaner national politics. The NPB’s historical connection with the apartheid Afrikaner Nationalist Party was an uneasy identity in the new political dispensation, and the executives repeatedly argued that post-apartheid NPB be apolitical (*Custos* 1994). Mr. Mokoatle, the NPB’s black HR director comments that:

“...the biggest threat lies in misguided political games...[and the NPB] must position itself to be apolitical and serve all population groups because everyone in South Africa has a stake in this country’s national parks” p, 22 (*Custos* 1994).

Politics had historically defined the NPB and its park management approaches, and apartheid permeated organizational strategies and practices. Apartheid politics delineated parks-people relations, and racially determined access to national park benefits (recreational, aesthetic and employment) and resources, and land rights. Cock and Fig (2002) argue that the NPB symbolized culture and practice of apartheid because of its racist and authoritarian policies that grossly violated the rights of black rural communities. Because of this experience, while sounding logical to depoliticize the NPB,

its authoritarian policies, racist legacy, and historical baggage make it difficult to easily discount politics in redressing these challenges.

The call for depoliticization of the NPB helps cushion the organization from public scrutiny, which potentially guarantees that it can remain relatively untransformed under the false assumption that conservation is apolitical and a technical endeavor. It is therefore not surprising that some key informants (especially the technical experts and old guards) stated “our business is a business of nature conservation and management of national parks, and has nothing to do with politics” (Interviewee). Conservation is a social and political process, and therefore technocratic discourses camouflage political dimensions and politics of nature protection.

In the next sections, I examine the NPB’s response to macro-social, political and institutional pressures. I discuss below the NPB’s intra-organizational changes spurred by macro-level transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Promoting Organizational Adaptation

“The National Parks Board, like virtually all other institutions, has had to adapt to South Africa’s changing socio-political environment. Although national parks have traditionally been perceived as untouchable islands and area associated with the peace and tranquility of nature, the outcome of the political debate, demands for land, a decline in domestic and foreign tourism due to the violence and financial restraints are all factors that will determine their future. The National Parks Board has therefore made strategic changes to its structure, financial systems, its human resource policies and its neighbor relations” **p, 4** (*Custos* January 1994).

The above statement highlights the importance of internal adaptation and responsiveness to macro-context events. I follow Harrison-Rockey’s (1999) conceptual analysis of transformation processes in the South African public sector, which identifies the interplay of “key transformation and reform initiatives developed post-1994 at a macro and at an organizational level” **p, 170** (Harrison-Rockey 1999). Macro-level and organizational-level changes interact to shape organizational outcomes. The macro-level

transformation includes changes in political and institutional context (Picard 2005). The second level transformation is “organizational level – the changes that have been initiated within the organization so as to ensure synchronicity between the strategic objectives of the organization and its ability to meet those objectives” p, 170 (Harrison-Rockey 1999). To explain organizational transformation and broader challenges facing the national park management system in post-apartheid South Africa, it is fruitful to analyze the interplay of macro-level and organizational level transformation (Harrison-Rockey 1999).

Courting Black South Africans

As part of the broader transformation agenda, the South African government adopted legislation to diversify the racial and gender composition of the workforce. The 1996 Constitution and Bill of Rights stipulated that government institutions increase the participation of historically disenfranchised social groups in leadership and management positions. Post-1994 South Africa experienced a spate of policy documents, including the 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, which stated the need to transform the public sector to become an instrument for implementing government policies and improve service delivery. It proposed the need for representation of historically disadvantaged social groups in public sector management structures as well as commitment to democratic ethos and human rights.

Legislation and constitutional imperatives dictated changes in public sector organizations, and the national parks were no exception. The dominance of Afrikaners within senior management and all managerial levels presented legitimacy challenges for the NPB among the new black political constituency. Transition to democracy intensified pressure on recruitment of blacks into management positions and development of community-oriented conservation programs. Dr. Robinson realized that organizational survival and legitimacy depended on “strategic changes” to meet macro socio-political challenges.

NPB sought legitimacy among the black constituency by devising affirmative action initiatives aimed at changing the racial profile of the agency. Through affirmative action, the NPB appointed black managers to head the Human Resources function and the Social Ecology Unit. For example, Mr. Ben Mokoatle, a black executive, was appointed in 1991 as the Head of Human Resources with the brief to “help mould the Parks Board so that it finds its niche in a changing South Africa” p, 22 (*Custos* 1994). He regarded affirmative action as “a rational exercise tackled without emotion and accepted without fear” p, 22 (*Custos* 1994) to diversity staff profile.

However, critical operational layers and executive management remained dominated by white employees and this raised eyebrows among black employees and political leadership. Field park managers were overwhelmingly white, and had strong influence on the NPB’s policy black park neighboring communities. Because of white dominance, the perception that the NPB was not transformed at all remained intact. The park managers or wardens (rangers) are the “face” of the national park, and determine the interface between national parks (NPB) and rural communities. The predominantly white “face” of the park management structure mirrored apartheid through dominance of whites in management positions. As a consequence, the NPB continued to be viewed as bastion of apartheid and Afrikaner dominance despite political transition. This inevitably plugged national parks into national politics of race in South Africa. Race strongly featured in discussions of change, and this is understandable given the weight of apartheid legacy.

In a letter to Dr. Robinson, the ANC-aligned black senior managers expressed their frustration with the pace of racial transformation in the NPB, and copied the letter to the Minister of Environment and Tourism (Magome 2004). The Minister then later appointed a new Board reflecting the racial and ideological (political allegiance) diversity of the New South Africa, differed fundamentally from the predecessor Boards that were mainly drawn from white-male Afrikaner nationalists (Carruthers 1995; Cock & Fig 2002). This effort represented the “spirit of national unity” embodied in the transitional Government of National Unity.

Restructuring the Board of Curators to make it more representative of South Africa's diversity became a visible way of projecting "transformation." The writing was on the wall, and public sector organizations, including the NPB, needed to restructure and undergo transformation (Magome 2004). In October 1995, Mr. Enos Mabuza became the first black chairperson of the NPB's Board of Curators. Interestingly, the cabinet portfolio of Environmental Affairs and Tourism was assigned to the Nationalist Party (former apartheid ruling party) because it was not considered a powerful portfolio. The "sunset clauses" also ensured that public sectors agencies and government departments were not radically overhauled, and this enabled both the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and the national park agency to continue to being staffed by bureaucrats from the old guard (Cock & Fig 2002). This process secured continuity in organizational practices.

Nevertheless, the new Board had some socially progressive whites, including environmental sociologists (activist scholars) such as Dr. David Fig and Professor Jacklyn Cock. The new Board members included those with diversity of expertise on conservation, human rights, business and social issues (Magome 2004). In addition, the appointments reflected the compromises of negotiated transition in South Africa. According to Cock and Fig, it was "a negotiated settlement that involved many explicit and implicit compromises that left key elements of apartheid privilege and power intact" **p, 134** (Cock & Fig 2002). The appointment of liberal whites and Board members supportive of socially oriented conservation helped in shaping the NPB's social thinking on protected area management. The new Board fashioned NPB's co-management and initial policy on land claims to facilitate restitution and transfer of land ownership to black communities under certain conditions.

"Neighbor Relations" and Search for Legitimacy

The transition to democracy triggered NPB's responsiveness to social issues and unlocked new avenues of engaging communities neighboring national parks. Historically, the NPB had paid scant attention to social concerns and needs of local communities

living adjacent to national parks (Carruthers 1995; Honey 1999). Legitimacy and survival of the NPB was closely linked to responsiveness to societal expectations and addressing socio-economic needs of black communities.

The “Neighbor Relations Strategy” reflected organizational efforts to formalize community involvement and reposition the NPB to integrate the needs of neighboring communities in park management (See Table 3-3: 1994 Neighbor Relations Strategy). By professing to contribute toward local socio-economic development, the NPB was attempting to redeem itself of its past history (Magome 2004).

Table 3-3: 1994 Neighbor Relations Strategy

Key Driver	Background, desired outcomes and implications
Rationale:	The NPB has for many years involved local communities neighboring its estate in the activities of the NPB. Chief amongst these has been the focus on employment. However, the NPB recognizes that poverty in South Africa is the greatest threat to biodiversity and environment integrity. It has therefore formalized a draft neighbor relations policy to integrate conservation and the aspirations of its neighbors.
Purpose:	The policy proposes a re-orientation of the objectives of the NPB in keeping with contemporary thought. At an organizational level we propose to revise the approach to our mandate to expand our existing objectives (biodiversity conservation and tourism and recreation) to encompass social concerns. We also propose to establish an appropriate corporate identity that will place less emphasis on the law enforcement profile of the NPB, and more on its contribution to human needs.
Target:	At a local and sub-regional or neighbor relations level we propose to conduct or facilitate programs to contribute to economic, institutional, technical and educational development. It is through these areas that the wider expertise and fund-generating ability of the NPB can be harnessed to the greater benefit of all South Africans and in particular our largely disadvantaged neighbors. We propose in this respect also to network with our more affluent neighbors, some of them are already implementing their own neighbor relations programs.
Strategy:	In order to accomplish this, the NPB will need to establish a neighbor relations division manned by appropriately orientated and skilled staff and of a size adequate for the fulfillment of the objectives of the division and of the NPB. Finally, set aside the necessary funding to conduct a meaningful neighbor relations program.

Source: Robinson (1994); Magome (2004)

The NRS reflects the NPB’s enlightened self-interest, and the need to face the challenges of rural poverty, which are considered the greatest threat to biodiversity and environment integrity. Social responsiveness secures organizational survival in the new political dispensation. New organizational structures were put in place to deal with social issues and public image of the NPB. The NPB appointed high-profile ANC-aligned black managers in corporate office and politically “strategic” functions to manage neighbor and public relations. Such “strategic changes” were nothing more than cosmetic change

designed to appeal to the black constituency by having black faces in management positions. In reality, these black managers were marginalized from the core activities and key decision-making functions in the organization, which remained white-dominated. This reinforced the perception that black managers were merely “window-dressers” (Magome 2004). Out of frustration, most black managers resigned.

The NRS was abandoned in favor of social ecology, which was conceptualized by Dr. Yvonne Dladla, a black female social scientist at the NPB. The Social Ecology Unit (SEU) “was created ostensibly to involve local communities adjacent to all national parks so that they could, in turn, support its national conservation” **p, 130** (Magome 2004). From an “enlightened self-interest” perspective, the NPB started focusing on community-oriented support programs that helped forge a new public persona of a “community-oriented” agency. It created new structures at corporate office and national park level to spearhead community involvement:

“With the integration of a Social Ecology Department in the organization’s key activities in August 1994, a community involvement policy was formalized to integrate the needs of neighboring communities in South African National Parks' conservation mandate. The objective of this Department was to seek to enable stakeholders to derive optimum and equitable benefit from opportunities created through the national parks system, thereby promoting a national conservation ethic” **p, 47** (*Custos* March 1998).

The official objective of the SEU was to harmonize conservation objectives and development of neighboring communities. Interestingly, Dr. Dladla envisioned social ecology as a transformative initiative aimed at radically changing the NPB’s culture and practice. She believed that the SEU could effect organization-wide transformation, and redefine the dominant paradigm of conservation. However, she faced resistance within the NPB since the conservative male leadership in the organization was not ready for that kind of change. Dr. Dladla’s agenda for transformation was perceived a threat to core philosophy of park management within the agency, and “associated with suspicions of hidden political agendas, general uncertainty, and also anxiety about the future” **p, 129** (Magome 2004).

Historically the NPB had never regarded itself as socially progressive or community-oriented conservation agency but rather an institution mandated by the National Parks Act to conserve biodiversity. Despite overwhelming rural poverty and underdevelopment surrounding national parks, the NPB believed single-mindedly that its legislative mandate was to defend nature conservation rather than promote socio-economic development and broader transformation objectives. This contradicted Dr. Dladla's social science views inclined to community issues and needs of historically marginalized groups in park management.

The weak of position of SEU when pitted against other directorates (i.e., Conservation, Parks and Commercial Development) resulted in it being marginalized in the organization's policy development. Social ecology was treated as an "add-on" function, whose activities were not seamlessly integrated into core functions of the NPB. As a consequence, its influence in the organization was compromised from onset.

Dr. Dladla's aggressive approach on "transformation" and demand for radical change in racial profile of management and meaningful engagement with African communities neighboring national parks made her unpopular among white leadership. She felt strongly that the SEU should be treated as an agent of transformation. She became frustrated with the marginalization of SE in organization-wide initiatives, and resistance to using SE as an instrument of organization-wide transformation. Ironically, she continued to face similar resistance under SANParks' first black Chief Executive. She finally resigned in 1999 (Magome 2004).

Dr. Dladla's experience highlights organizational challenges in attempting to infuse values of social ecology and bringing about organization-wide transformation. Both Dr. Robinson and Msimang were reluctant to transform dominant conservation philosophy, and Dr. Dladla wanted social ecology to overhaul park management practice. Dr. Robinson, the Chief Executive, did not embrace social ecology as a transformative initiative but rather as a "survival tactic" **p, 127** (Magome 2004) or political gesture to "project" organizational commitment to ideals of social justice or community

involvement in park management. Unfortunately, Dr. Dladla and Dr. Robinson had different visions of social ecology and its role in transformation of the NPB. These differences reflected the tensions between the professed policy (rhetoric) and actual practice.

Bear in mind that post-1994 South African government emphasized participatory approaches, cooperative governance, transformation, and socio-economic development. Therefore, the Neighbor Relations Strategy (NRS) and social ecology (SE) were meant to project an image of a progressive agency committed to government programs and transformation imperative. In reality, the organization struggled with social issues in park management, which were largely perceived as straining organizational resources. Interestingly, the external expectation was that the NPB had to balance its conservation objectives with an obligation to “address the specific needs of the historically deprived communities neighboring the park, in line with established reconstruction and development principles” **p, 11** (*Custos*, January 1997). In pursuit of this obligation, the NPB would further its legitimacy by facilitating the flow of benefits to black rural communities neighboring national parks through community-based tourism ventures and local socio-economic development.

Dr. Robinson regarded local socio-economic beneficiation and commercial exchanges with adjacent communities were important vehicles for enhancing the NPB’s legitimacy and conservation objectives. With the help of an NGO, the Group for Environmental Monitoring, the national park agency established public forums representing national parks and neighboring communities to promote public participation in the formulation of management strategies by the NPB (*Custos*, January 1997). The Group for Environmental Monitoring had mounted pressure on the NPB to be sensitive to community issues, and helped conduct “a series of community forums linking communities along the borders of the Kruger National Park” **p, 142** (Cock & Fig 2002). Ironically, the park agency committed very few resources to the functioning of these liaison structures (Magome 2004).

Dr. Robinson tried to sensitize the park agency to community issues, and was personally involved in the establishment of the first contractual park (community-owned), Richtersveld National Park in 1991. He used this experience in efforts to systematize community relations and seek ways to improve relations with neighboring communities. The NRS and SE symbolize such efforts to formalize the interactions between national parks and neighboring communities. For example, during Dr. Robinson's era, structures to engage communities in park management issues were created and these included the Richtersveld Management Plan Committee and several community forums adjacent to the Kruger National Park (Cock & Fig 2002). These structures dealt with a wide range of issues affecting parks and communities. They showcased the NPB's efforts in promoting participatory processes in park management.

The post-apartheid political landscape set a new tone for the NPB's interaction with neighboring communities. The structural changes were an important first step in creating structures for managing demands and relationship with local communities. The SEU reflected organizational efforts to systematize relations between rural communities and national parks, and advancing social issues. NPB's approach towards neighboring communities was an "arms-length" outreach approach that did not seek to alter radically parks-people relations and empower rural communities to be active participants and decision-makers in the conservation endeavor. It sought public acceptance (social approval) through community outreach initiatives that sustained rural livelihoods without changing agency domination and colonial social relations between parks and black communities. Park-neighboring communities were not active participants in park management decisions but rather passive recipients of parks' outreach programs.

Political changes in South Africa had a profound impact on conservation thinking and forced protected area authorities to confront park-people issues. In a context where neighboring black communities had been marginalized in park management and displaced to create national parks, the future of national parks was closely tied to the "goodwill" of adjacent impoverished communities, and the extent to which they were prepared to improve "neighbor relations" through beneficiation (Honey 1999b; 't Sas-

Rolfes 1995). Ultimately, the success of biodiversity conservation and protected areas is contingent on rural communities' support and participation (West & Brechin 1991).

Social ecology was conceived as a strategy and process to imbue a new philosophy and approach on interacting with neighboring communities as well as create mutually beneficial partnerships and dialogue. This sounded great at a level of rhetoric, but the National Parks Board struggled to figure how best to harness the transformative capacity of social ecology in overhauling park management practices. There was strong resistance within the organization to embracing social ecology, and park managers generally did not see it as an integral aspect of their core activities and thus social ecology was kept at the fringes of park management and dealing with outreach social issues.

The National Parks Board had brilliant strategies; the 1992 Four Strategies for Changing the NPB, 1994 Agenda and Management Approach for the NPB, the 1994 Neighbor Relations Strategy, and social ecology approach but “implementation remained a daunting task” (Magome 2004).

Internal Transformation Politics

In January 1995, the NPB set up a Transformation Task Group (TTG) to monitor and review organizational policies, procedures and practices that were discriminatory in an effort to promote non-racist and non-sexist policies within the organization. This process marked a watershed of change in the NPB. This internal structure was responsible for driving the “transformation process through participatory, sensitizing, and value-sharing workshops through which racist and sexist incidents have been drawn to the attention of management” **p, 141** (Cock & Fig 2002). According to Tema:

“...the Board appointed a Transformation Task Group (TTG) to monitor and evaluate the transformation process within South African National Parks and to develop strategies for the transformation of the organization. At the same time the TTG would facilitate the transformation process within the organization. The

TTG acknowledges that there is a need to develop a common shared vision of what needs to be transformed, and also to identify all the key stakeholders, to ensure that the key fully participate in the transformation process” **p, 52** (*Custos*, March 1998).

NPB realized that its current organizational culture, policies, and employee attitudes had to change (Magome 2004). The TTG was theoretically an important organizational structure but it lacked clout and “leadership.” Dr. Robinson did not provide the leadership nor did he act as the champion for the transformation agenda. He shirked the responsibility over transformation to Dr. Dladla, the SEU general manager. Organizational change literature informs us that the Chief Executive should be the primary “champion” of transformation in an organization in order for it to be taken seriously by employees. In the absence of Dr. Robinson’s championing transformation, resistance to transformation and social ecology spread and this signaled lack of seriousness in changing the organization’s *modus operandi* (Magome 2004).

In previous sections, I argued that Dr. Dladla envisioned the SEU playing a key part in the NPB transformation since she believed that SE objectives would be realized to the extent that the NPB was radically changed. She understood that a racially and culturally “untransformed” NPB would limit opportunities for creating mutually beneficial relations between national parks and neighboring black communities (Magome 2004) since it would lack legitimacy in the eyes of rural people. However, the Chief Executive was not offering leadership for the transformation process driven by SEU and Dr. Dladla. As a consequence, the social ecology unit and Dr. Dladla were marginalized at the operational level, and park managers did not buy into their vision of transformation. Magome states “Dr. Robinson’s managerial neglect further alienated the SEU from park managers who argued that SEU knew insufficient about national parks to influence them” **p, 133** (Magome 2004). Interestingly, the operational park managers were overwhelmingly white while black employees dominated the SEU. This was a classic example of a clash of two racial worlds and competing visions of transformation and conservation.

The experiences of the TTG and SEU reveal the problem of separating structure and action, and not according them the organizational power to undertake the mandate meaningfully. Simply because the structures lacked the visible backing of the chief executive and did not command the organizational power to effect transformative change within the National Parks Board, they were marginalized and resented by park managers. Rather, they functioned as a “detached structures” (Brechin *et al.* 2003) or somewhat “politically-correct” structures to appease internal and public expectations without the organizational influence to implement meaningful transformation.

I argue that both TTG and SEU were structures created to fend off criticism of lack of transformation, and thus politically motivated organizational structures reflecting tactical responses and a strategic attempt to secure legitimacy. According to Brechin *et al.* (2003), these structures often typically suffer capacity deficiencies to perform effectively in practice. It is therefore important that structures dealing with social and political processes of park management are well conceptualized and seamlessly integrated within core functions as well as command organizational power and resources to perform their respective functions. The shortcomings of TTG and SEU were an indictment of leadership weaknesses that played a part in creating structural incapacity and lack of commitment of transformation goals of both TTG and SEU.

Changes in Corporate Identity and Cultural Artifacts

The NPB was renamed the South African National Parks (SANP) in 1997 following a public consultation process which the Board had approved in 1996. The new name was symbolically important in terms of forging new identity recognizing that national parks belonged to all South Africans. The “majority of the blacks called for changes in everything that resembled apartheid South Africa, including staff uniform and its kudu head logo enclosed in an emblem labeled *Custos Naturae* or ‘custodian of nature’” p, 131 (Magome 2004). Some of the changes included replacing the military-style uniform and allowing “casual clothing, but only staff at head office mostly enjoyed

this change, particularly senior black employees who had always rejected the khaki-style uniform” p, 131 (Magome 2004).

The kudu “bull head” logo was changed, the enclosure emblem removed as a symbolic reflection of freedom in post-apartheid era (Magome 2004). These cultural changes were symbolic, and demonstrated organizational efforts to re-brand the agency and usher new era (Msimang *et al.* 2003). Changes in identity and cultural symbols would help connect better with the black constituency whose experience with the park authority was negative. These changes in the cultural artifacts create new images and opportunities for identifying with the new South Africa. At organizational level, Dr. Robinson managed to change observable characteristics (e.g., organizational structure, policies and procedures etc) and symbols (uniforms, names etc). However, he did not transform the basic ingrained assumptions of park management (national park ideal) and therefore stifling the development of a new vision of park management and “mutually-beneficial partnerships” between parks and black rural communities.

The impediments to change in conservation bureaucracies can be attributed to cultural issues. Conservation agencies are characterized with command and control bureaucratic management style, ‘fortress mentality’, resistance to new ways of organizing and change, hostility toward park neighboring communities, unwillingness to share power, lack of innovation, and inability to restructure for efficiency and effectiveness (Brechin *et al.* 2003; Child 2004; Magome 2004; Nyambe 2005). Efforts to transform conservation agencies without fundamentally changing the dominant park management paradigm are akin to applying “modern techniques to old-fashioned idea – new coat of paint slapped onto the old. If that is the case, eventually the cracks will show through” p, xviii-xix (Adams & McShane 1996).

Financial Uncertainty and Commercialization

The transition era was marked by anxieties about national parks’ future. The organization’s internal publications expressed uncertainty of national parks under black

majority rule. The major issues identified as problematic included forced removals, land dispossession, curtailment of access and right to resources, and poverty; which were perceived to unleash backlash by African communities against national parks. In addition, the majority of black communities regarded national parks as playgrounds for affluent white South Africans and wealthy tourists (Carruthers 1995; Ramphele & McDowell 1991; Ramutsindela 2004). Because of this perception, the park authority expected black South Africans not to positively embrace national parks unless the apartheid legacy had been dealt with.

The NPB felt that the post-1994 ANC-led Government of National Unity would reduce funding for national parks because of pressure to meet expenditure for social service delivery (Robinson 1993). In anticipation of this challenge, Dr. Robinson proposed restructuring the organization “to operate in a more business-orientated fashion, while not losing sight of the original stewardship of preserving national parks for this and future generations in as natural a state as possible” **p, 6** (Dr. Robinson 1993, *Custos*, January 1993). Dr. Robinson felt that political factors and financial challenges were two key challenges threatening the NPB’s future (*Custos* January 1993).

Dr. Robinson suggested creating a financially self-supporting organization, less dependent on whims of government funding priorities, and be capable of meeting its operational expenditure. Commercial orientation and market-driven tourism were viewed as strategic responses to the financial challenges. He envisioned a NPB structure that was “apolitical, financially-independent, business-oriented and decentralized” **p, 9** (Robinson, *Custos* 1993). Dr. Robinson framed NPB’s mission, strategies, objectives, and marketing initiatives in terms of a business-oriented approach with the aim of improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Child 2004).

The NPB’s pursuit of financial self-reliance was response to the uncertainties of transition to democracy and expectation that central government funding would be directed towards addressing apartheid legacy such as poverty, poor social service delivery, and infrastructure underdevelopment for historically disenfranchised black

population (*Custos* January 1994). While park executives felt that government funding priorities would change and the NPB needed to financially meet nature conservation expenses, they expressed the sentiment that nature conservation was a co-responsibility of government and the NPB. Klesie Havenga, the Executive Director of Finance at NPB, stated:

“In fact, it is exactly as a result of these uncertainties that the National Parks Board is expanding and strengthening its financial base without forfeiting growth. Although the National Parks Board strives toward the ideal of financial self-reliance, the government ought to be co-responsible for the costs of environmental conservation. It is an internationally recognized practice for the highest authority in a country to put land aside for nature conservation. Conservation is thus also the responsibility of the government” p, 29 (*Custos* June 1994).

This conviction about government’s financial responsibility towards nature conservation remains prevalent and steeped in SANParks executive thinking to date despite rhetoric of “commercialization as a strategy for conservation.” I show in next chapters how SANParks’ funding from government has dramatically increased through “public works” or “poverty relief” projects.

It is possible that that Dr. Robinson’s effort to increase the organization’s financial independence from central government was a strategy to reduce political muddling. The idea of “commercialization” was quite innovative at the time, and a visionary perspective on creating practical management solutions. Dr. Robinson envisioned potential drop in state funding, and therefore a philosophical shifts in the NPB’s business mind was needed. Creating a commercial business mindset and ethos in park managers and bureaucrats became part of the commercialization initiative (Child 2004). The logic was to change both institutional and organizational structures on which park management rested in order to get the park agency to create different incentives.

The objective of relative financial autonomy and low dependence of government funding had to be matched by cost management, cost-effectiveness, strengthening capacities for commercialization, partnerships, outsourcing, and a focus on core

competencies and activities (Child 2004; Reed 2000). Dr. Robinson conceptualized commercialization strategy “ahead of his time,” and his strategic thinking in terms of funding and organizational management ensured that by the time he resigned the National Parks Board had a huge financial surplus, which turned into a deficit under Msimang’s leadership (Magome 2004).

Msimang implemented the commercialization strategy as one of the change strategies to improve the financial health of SANParks after the financial crisis. It is during Msimang’s leadership epoch that the fruits of commercialization were realized. The benefits of a “business approach” to park management have been recognized by IUCN, in the report entitled *Financing Protected Areas* (IUCN 2000). The premise is that when park managers are given incentives and opportunities to manage parks like businesses they respond entrepreneurially and grow the financial health of parks (Child 2004; Presber-James 1999; Reed 2000).

According to Child (2004), commercialization is an organizational management imperative with performance implications on revenue generation and management practices. However, commercialization generates governance challenges. To what extent will the pressure for revenue generation and commoditizing park resources sacrifice conservation objectives? Does commercialization result in “privatization” of public goods and exclude others on financial basis? What are the social and political implications for commoditizing public goods on questions of public accountability? These questions reflect organizational management challenges in addressing practical consequences of commercialization and public accountability. .

Internal Tensions

Dr. Robinson’s leadership epoch (1991-1996) highlights leadership challenges in managing parks, politics and race issues in a transitional economy. Navigating politics of transition and racial issues in organizational change in a large, complex bureaucracy is mammoth task. Black majority rule brought to the center stage questions of

transformation, relevance and legitimacy of national park agency (Honey 1999), and Dr. Robinson had to steer the organization through the transitional era.

I show in next chapters how Dr. Robinson's leadership epoch (1991-1996) provided a solid foundation for future transformation of SANParks. A closer examination of Msimang and Mabunda's leadership epochs indicate that commercialization and business-oriented approaches they embarked were informed by Dr. Robinson's vision and business strategies. As a result, both Mr. Mavuso Msimang (1997-2003) and Dr. David Mabunda (2003 - 2008) consolidated and expanded Dr. Robinson's organizational strategies, and did not radically overhaul SANParks park management. The key difference between Dr. Robinson and Msimang's transformation effort was the extent of racial transformation and "outreach" parks-people initiatives. Both failed to graft seamlessly social ecology into core activities of SANParks.

Dr. Robinson's leadership provides insights on a possible "leadership theory of transition" and organizational dilemmas in repositioning a historically racialized organization under black majority rule. History, race, and politics intertwined to mediate organizational change efforts. NPB's legitimacy was tainted by apartheid history, and continued white dominance in executive, managerial and professional levels. Black employees viewed this dominance as continuity of "apartheid," and lack of transformation and failure to break with apartheid history. Black managers questioned the pace of transformation and expressed their frustration (Interviewee). This led to accusations that the organization was "not transformed." However, the real challenge was "transforming" the NPB into a "theoretically new post-apartheid organization," which is inclusive and progressive.

Unfortunately, Dr. Robinson's change strategies fell short in reconfiguring the foundational premise of national parks and creating a radically different institution. He opted for "strategic changes" that were not radical and left organization culture and power relations in the NPB (renamed South African National Parks in 1996) unchanged. For example, "social ecology," community forums and consultation initiatives served the

self-interests of the organization in terms of political expediency and social approval. They were not designed to fundamentally change conservation practice and institutionalize new park management philosophy that challenged the bureaucratic establishment or parks-people relations. Some of the changes were driven by the need to adapt to changes in legislation:

“From a legal and administrative point of view, it is essential that the National Parks Board stays continually well-informed and makes adaptations with regard to the legislation needed to manage national parks” **p, 9-10** (*Custos*, April 1993).

Rather than strengthening the “transformative capacity” of the SEU and TTG, Dr. Robinson shirked leadership support for transformation and failed to act as a “champion” for radical change. Ironically, he sidelined the SEU and Dr. Dladla’s aggressive approach towards organization-wide transformation. The conflict between competing political constituencies within the organization widened as they wrestled over what would underpin transformation (Dladla 1995; Magome 2004). Even the Board and senior executives were divided in decision-making and policy directions regarding transformation. It appears “what had to change, and how it had to change, remained difficult to define” **p, 122** (Magome 2004). The rift between the Board and Dr. Robinson deepened, and spilled over to other issues concerning the direction the organization should take:

“...the relationship between the Board and Dr. Robinson became dysfunctional because of alleged irreconcilable differences over splitting tourism activities from the control of park managers in order to improve income...Dr. Robinson opposed the Board, insisting that tourism as an adjunct of conservation and should, as a result, report to the park. Consequently, Dr. Robinson was peremptorily forced to resign” **p, 133** (Magome 2004).

The rift deepened such that end of 1996, Dr. Robinson was compelled to resign. However, the million-dollar question is whether Dr. Robinson actually “transformed” the national park authority or not. A simplistic answer does not do justice to the complexity of change initiatives he undertook in managing the transition and bringing the organization into post-apartheid era. Dr. Robinson claims that he brought the NPB

“screaming into the new South Africa screaming” p, 133 (Magome 2004), and this could imply that he succeeded in “transforming” and transitioning the organization despite its resistance to change.

The “Race Factor”

The NPB enforced the country’s racially divisive policies in park management, which invariably impacted its ability to interact with black communities neighboring national parks. The relationship between parks and neighboring communities was historically hostile, and black communities regarded the national park authority as a bastion of apartheid and instrument of their demise. However, with transition to democracy, Dr. Robinson directed organizational efforts to build the NPB’s legitimacy among the black constituency. De-racialization of management structures, policies, procedures and practices signaled commitment to broader goals of societal transformation.

As stated earlier, ANC-aligned black managers were appointed in the “public face” functions such public relations, social ecology (‘good neighbor relations’) and human resource management. Having black managers in organizational structures dedicated to “improving” park-people relations is a powerful symbolism. This symbolism of race does not account for balance of power. The actual challenge is appointing black managers in core functions of the organization and whether they exercise power to make decisions that transform the organization. I argue that the question of race in park management is much about race as it is about power.

The symbolism of black managers involved in park management structures changes the sentiments among black South Africans but does not magically transform parks-people relations. It increases chances of acceptability and outpouring of positive sentiments that could be platform for connecting national parks better to local communities and political leadership through “racial identification.” It is visible way of projecting “a racially transformed” organization. However, critics argue that this is a little

less than rearranging furniture (Magome 2004) or “changing the frame while the picture remains the same.” The assumption is that the core problem is not necessarily race but the underlying assumptions or philosophy of exclusionary conservation and national park idea that marginalizes local communities in park management. The focus has to target systemic problems, institutionalized racism and professional culture in the NPB that sustain exclusion and marginalization of local black communities.

The fact that the National Parks Board and national parks historically symbolized culture and practice of apartheid (Cock & Fig 2002) meant that it had to deal with that cultural baggage, and seek alternative ethos of racial inclusion rather than racial prejudice. Under apartheid, most black South Africans were did not have access to decent accommodation in national parks (Picard 2000), and whenever allowed into national parks, for example in the Kruger, they were subjected to rustic tented camps (Carruthers 1995; Cock & Fig 2002). Those employed were assigned menial jobs since technical, administrative and managerial professional jobs were reserved for white people.

Racialized employment secured the dominance of white employees in influential positions, a historical legacy that still haunts the conservation sector in the country. This experience reflect the racial tyranny of apartheid, which set in motion an opposite response to “Africanize” park management levels and deal with organizational structures, policies and practice that sustain racism, discrimination and injustice. Dr. Robinson introduced affirmative action and “neighbor relations” (social ecology) to deal with apartheid legacies.

However, the question of race remained a thorny issue. This is essentially a historical reality considering that colonial and apartheid nature conservation and park management were largely organized along racial and cultural hierarchies or “human gradation” (Ramutsindela 2004). Others argue that the limited participation of blacks in South Africa’s park management systems is a matter of little or no interest in conservation, and the historical experience of disenfranchisement.

Managing parks in transitional society is a complex task that requires managing politics and racial issues, and confronting racist patterns and processes that historically sustained national parks (Moore *et al.* 2003).

Dr. Robinson did not have a blueprint, and he faced an insurmountable challenge of impressing a black constituency, building legitimacy of the organization, adapting the organization to environmental changes, and improving agency responsiveness to socio-economic and political demands. These pressures weighed heavily on organization's capacity to deliver on multiple fronts. Political transition and macro-level transformation set in motion pressures and conditions for change within the NPB (Cock & Fig 2002), and these were reflected in the changing organizational structure, management composition, organizational policies, business-oriented approach, commercialization initiatives, and cultural artifacts.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter highlights the intersection of politics, parks and race in park management in South Africa during the transitional phase. It explores the interplay of macro-level political and institutional transformation and organizational-level changes. Because of the ambiguities of “transformation” and lack of clarity of what a “transformed NPM would or should look like,” it is difficult to state conclusively whether Dr. Robinson achieved or not fundamental “transformation” of the park bureaucracy. However, there is justifiable reason to say that he changed the character of the NPB on several dimensions. He introduced “strategic changes,” structural changes (e.g., Social Ecology Unit), and conceptualized community-oriented initiatives that the NPB had historically not undertaken. However, the major shortcoming was failure to radically change the NPB's dominant conservation paradigm and develop a “fresh national park philosophy” p, 29 (Carruthers 2003).

I have discussed in this chapter Dr. Robinson's “reactionary” organizational strategies to adapt the organization during the transition to democracy. The executives

felt that the NPB was “under siege.” Dr. Robinson smelled the “winds of change” that would accompany black majority rule, and began repositioning the NPB to adapt and respond to the anticipated social, political and institutional changes, including possibilities of reduced government funding. Another challenge was restoring the legitimacy of national parks among the new politically powerful black constituency. It was important imperative to make national parks and the NPB relevant to societal needs while advancing biodiversity conservation.

Because of the overarching ideological framework of transformation, the organization was under pressure to transform or “look transformed.” As a consequence, cosmetic changes in management composition, structure, and formal arrangements in park-people relations were undertaken as “survival tactics” to enhance the organization’s enlightened self-interest and legitimacy (Magome 2004). The core park management practices and dominant conservation approach remained intact. This resulted in huge gaps between formal rhetoric and actual practice of “transformation.” I also indicated how “sunset clauses” of the negotiated political transition made it difficult to radically overhaul the NPB and embark widespread affirmative action that would Africanize (indigenize) management and key technical operational positions. Dr. Robinson appointed ANC-aligned black managers for political expediency, and essentially left the top management overwhelmingly white dominated. Its racial make-up symbolized that of apartheid NPB, with cosmetic changes. It is therefore not surprising that he was accused of failing to transform the NPB.

This chapter has shed light on both the contested terrain of transformation and changes in the “battles” of park management in South African national parks. It highlighted the interplay of politics and parks in transition. The transition to democracy created space for this contestation, which effectively played in organizational efforts to change park management and respond to the needs and interests of the previously disenfranchised black constituency.

The next chapter explores the leadership era of the first black Chief Executive of SANParks, and highlights the tensions between political expediency and organizational pragmatism. It discusses the scope and dilemmas of transformation in SANParks, and the practical challenges in balancing political demands and organizational interests.

CHAPTER 4

CONFRONTING TRANSFORMATION: BLACK EMPOWERMENT AND MANAGEMENT DILEMMAS

This chapter explores Mr. Mavuso Msimang's leadership epoch (1997-2003), and discusses issues of race, politics and dilemma of transformation in South African National Parks (SANParks). As the first black Chief Executive, Msimang was under pressure to transform the racial composition of management and address apartheid legacy. I discuss in this chapter the contradictions of transforming racialized power relationships within SANParks. While SANParks made progress in racial transformation, other organizational markers of discrimination in park management practice continued and reflected colonial social relations between parks and local communities. I use the Makuleke land restitution to show the contradictions in post-apartheid park management. The chapter discusses how the financial problems that bewildered SANParks were used to drive a transformation agenda that focused on financial sustainability, and therefore reconfiguring park management approach. I argue that the financial problems provided an opportunity to restructure the organization through "Operation Prevail" and build a business case for transforming the constituency profile of park tourism.

Introduction

"Sometimes just key appointments like that [the employment of Mr. Mavuso Msimang, first SANParks' black Chief Executive] can make a difference in terms of establishing the legitimacy of the organization. Obviously, it has to go beyond that; you can't just have the CE who flies the right flag without doing anything or managing the parks et cetera. So I think it's just one aspect among many others where the transformation of the organization as a whole will give it that legitimacy...I think the government in some instances has made the mistake of thinking that the appointment of the black CE alone is sufficient to ensure transformation and efficiency and so on. It hasn't worked. But in the SANParks instance, that has helped to start a process where government and communities

looked with new eyes at national parks, and said after all these are our national parks” (Interviewee).

In 1997 Mr. Mavuso Msimang, an ANC-aligned political activist, was appointed the Chief Executive of South African National Parks, and replaced Dr. Robinson. As the first black Chief Executive, Msimang’s appointment projected a commitment to “transformation” and inclusion of black people in key leadership positions. While the appointment made political sense in projecting positive public image among the black constituency (internal and external), it was received with much less enthusiasm by conservative sectors of the government and raised questions about ANC’s commitment to protecting South Africa’s national park system (Magome 2004). Msimang had strong political ties with the ANC leadership - being a former secretary to ANC’s president, Mr. Oliver Tambo (Magome 2004) as well as solid nationalist credentials in anti-apartheid struggle; but he had limited practical experience in the conservation sector.

Racial transformation was sweeping across public sector organizations in South Africa. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism had its first black Minister, Mr. Pallo Jordan, Mr. David Mabunda as the first black Director of Kruger National Parks, and Mr. Hector Magome, SANParks’ first black Director of Conservation Services after resignation of Dr. Anthony Hall-Martin. These appointments had ideological underpinnings and demonstrated the ANC’s commitment to the Africanization of the conservation sector, particularly in institutions that previously were bastions of apartheid. The appointment of black executives had the intended consequence of SANParks gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the black majority government. Commenting on the implications of SANParks’ first black Chief Executive on legitimacy of the organization, a senior executive stated:

“I think you need the social support or approval from community and also need legitimacy in the eyes of government. And I think something that helped National Parks was simply appointing a Chief Executive, Mavuso Msimang, the first black CE for SANParks, from ANC...known and respected by the President, Cabinet Ministers et cetera...not only did he have political legitimacy, his tenure gave him credibility as Mr.-Fix-It. I think sometimes just key appointments like that can

make a difference in terms of establishing the legitimacy of the organization (Interviewee).

At least in the beginning, key black appointments at senior levels signaled efforts to end the era of Afrikaner-domination in executive and senior management in the national park authority. Mr. David Mabunda became the first black Director of South Africa's flagship national park, the Kruger National Park.

In the next sections, I explore the contradictions and faulty lines of transformation under black leadership, and argue that while racial transformation was a motivational dynamic in post-apartheid South Africa, it fell short in eradicating the structural and institutional bases of injustice, inequality and discrimination in park management. The assumption that "Africanization" is a panacea to exclusionary conservation and hostile parks-people relationships is misleading, and ignores the failure of black leadership to fundamentally re-conceptualize park management to deal with underlying assumptions of national parks ideals and preservationist approach in nature protection. Simply because national parks are managed by black Africans does not necessarily mean that national parks will automatically deliver meaningful benefits as well as respond favorably to the needs and interests of neighboring black communities. Progressive black leadership and incentives for socially just conservation are important ingredients for changing historical parks-people relations.

Conceptual Ambiguities and Contested Transformation

Cock and Fig (2002), Hall-Martin and Carruthers (2003), Magome (2004), and Msimang, Magome and Carruthers (2003) provide fascinating description of SANParks transformation efforts from 1994 to 2003. I build on their key arguments, and extend the analysis to incorporate the current leadership and transformation efforts through in-depth exploration of both internal and external forces - national politics, macro-institutional forces and intra-organizational dynamics – shaping SANParks transformation. I show how SANParks leadership has differentially interpreted the social and political ideology

of transformation. I also discuss the tensions and contradictions between formal organizational policy (rhetoric) and actual practice of transformation in SANParks.

Mr. Msimang regarded transformation as “a defining characteristic and motivational force in contemporary post-1994 South Africa” **p, 13** (South African National Parks 1998). Certainly, transformation was a defining characteristic. However, the concept itself was ambiguous and lacked clarity. There was no clear model of what a “transformed SANParks” should look like or would look like, and this made it difficult to gauging the progress of transformation in SANParks:

“There was never agreement of stated objectives of transformation [or] any agreement right from the beginning within SANParks, right from 1994, that these were the stated objectives, this is what we mean when we say we shall be transformed, and this is what we are driving towards” (Interviewee).

Within SANParks, transformation became a site of contestation and struggle over racial hegemony and the trajectory of organizational change. Organizational polarization emerged along racial lines and power alliances; the net result was different perspectives embedded in particular racial and socio-political discourses. This is not surprising given that the racialized history of park management in South Africa. The major changes in post-1994 political landscape opened a window of opportunity for black employees to question “racial division of labor”, attitudes, policies, practices, processes and systems. De-racialization or “Africanization” of park management was premised on the need to dismantle the hegemonic Afrikaner establishment, and create space for other racial groups to participate in park management.

I show in next sections how transformation became a racially and politically loaded term to express racial challenges in the organization, primarily the need to change racial composition in park leadership, senior management and operational technical levels. In essence, this entailed having black South Africans in management positions. Why was this important? The National Parks Board was dominated by Afrikaner males, and historically “cast in the racial mould” (Webster 1985) that reflected the racial tyranny

of the apartheid regime. Because of apartheid legacy, there was moral and political imperative to transform SANParks, in this context, what transformation possibilities were available for Mr. Msimang?

Faces of Transformation

Changing corporate identity and cultural artifacts is one way of projecting a new image. Mr. Msimang introduced casual wear at the corporate office, and did away with the military-like uniform that had traditionally symbolized the National Parks Board. As part of demonstrating commitment to transformation, SANParks embarked organizational initiatives to shed off “organizational principles, policies and practices that had for decades been nurtured by the ancient regime” p, 22 (Annual Report 2002). Some of the simple measures included changing the name of the official magazine from *Custos* (custodian/keeper) to *Timbila* (name after a musical instrument) (Magome 2004). The SANP acronym was “tweaked to SANParks because Mr. Msimang felt that the acronym ‘SANP’ could also be applied to the South African National Policy” p, 141 (Magome 2004), and this was part of the strategy to refashion (re-brand) the national park authority and shake off association with the past.

In January 1997, the Board accepted the key strategic areas for transformation (Table 4-1: Key Strategic Areas for Transformation).

Table 4-1: Key Strategic Areas for Transformation

Key Strategic Areas (KSAs) for Transformation	KSA Number
Human relations: transform current negative employee relations within SANP; encourage employees’ support of SANP’s mission and strategic objectives	1
People development: identify potential and grow employee development	2
Business development: open business opportunities and contracts to blacks	3
Affirmative action: correct past imbalances by recruiting and creating opportunities for blacks, women and the disabled	4
Elimination of systems and processes hindering the implementation of SANP’s mission and values	5
Alignment of SANP’s structure to affirm and confirm the mission and values of SANP	6

Corporate image: address the visual corporate identity of SANP	7
Optimization of the quality of services and hospitality: develop strategies that enhance high quality services in order to maximize income generated	8
Gender: develop comprehensive gender policy to address issues affecting men and women at the workplace; policies and procedures on maternity and paternity leave, and sexual harassment	9
Language policy: address questions of official language	10
Land claims policy and strategies: to facilitate reconciliation and increase SANP's legitimacy and credibility among rural communities historically forcibly removed from their land to create parks	11
Cultural resources and heritage management: formulate policies and strategies that ensure the development and promotion of historical sites and cultural resources through cultural sensitivity, accurate recording and interpretation of their cultural significance	12

Adapted from *Custos* (1998, p. 52-53); Magome (2004)

The KSAs focused on addressing internal and external relations, and confronting the apartheid legacy. It was apparent that new policy formulations, structural changes, vision, and strategic direction were required to embark on a journey of transformation. These KSAs reflected organizational efforts to respond to evolving socio-political and institutional conditions in post-apartheid South Africa. The organization had to confront issues from multiple fronts, and address questions of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability that are central to organizational performance (*Custos* 1998).

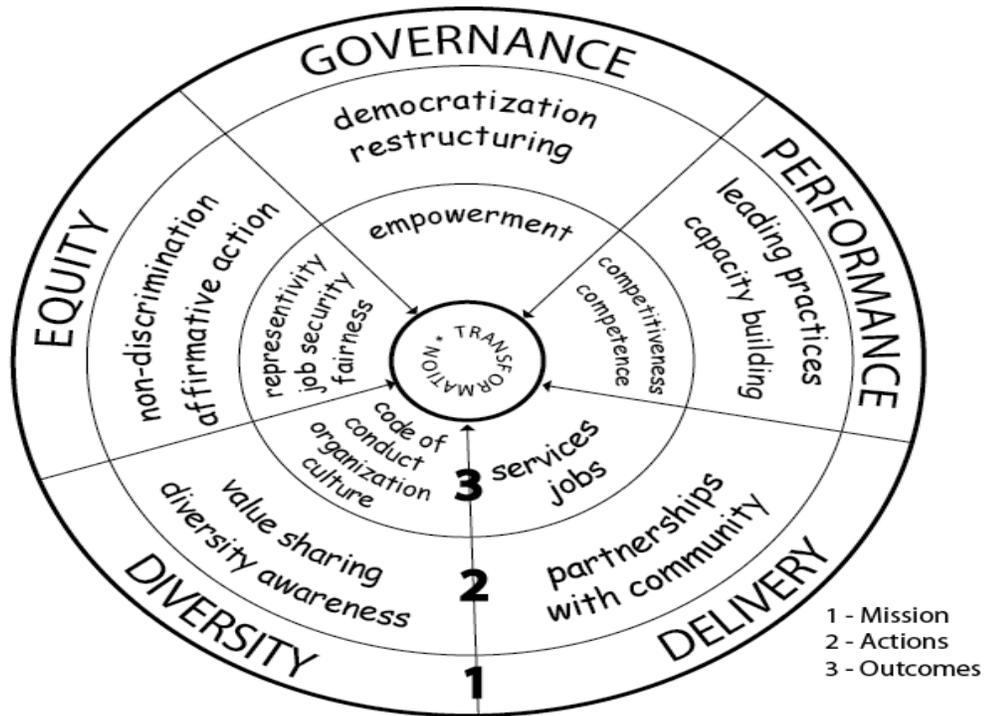
The Board's Transformation Statement highlighted the vision for change:

“South African National Parks is striving to transfer power and control of resources from the white minority that had been appointed and privileged by an undemocratic system, to the majority that participates in the new democratic process. It is also directing the benefits of its activities to providing for all South Africans rather than the more wealthy and privileged sections of society” **p, 53** (*Custos* 1998).

The Transformation Statement was truly inspirational, but left an open-ended question regarding whether SANParks had the capacity to effect meaningful transformation and practically transfer power and control to black South Africans. The Corporate Plan for Action and Transformation (1998) set an ambitious project to shift the balance of power and eradicate organizational principles, practices and policies

associated with apartheid (Figure 4-1: 1998 Corporate Plan for Action and Transformation).

Figure 4-1: 1998 Corporate Plan for Action and Transformation



Source: SANParks (1998)

Magome (2004) argues that the Corporate Plan (1998) or “transformation framework” contained conflicting mission statements. In reality, it was difficult to undertake organization-wide transformation, radically change park management practices, and transform racial composition of SANParks management and technical levels because of constraints imposed by negotiated transition’s “sunset clauses,” which secured the rights of white bureaucrats. Thus, “the political compromises delayed the transformation efforts” p, 136 (Magome 2004) and ushered a new elite-pact between two racial elites (Magome 2004). What emerged was elite-pacting (Singh 1992) between new black managers/professionals and the white old guard. This had an unintended consequence of sustaining operations and practices according to many of the old

apartheid determinants (Marks 2005). This confluence of elite interests of the old and new guards ensured opposition to radical changes in park management.

Another practical challenge to transferring power and control from the white minority (Afrikaner-males that dominated critical organizational layers) to previously marginalized social groups (black managers) was the dearth of experienced black Africans to fill managerial and technical positions. Inasmuch as there was great political expectation to drastically increase representation of blacks in management and technical level, SANParks did not have the financial resources to attract a huge pool of black scientists and managers. It attempted to change the “racial face” of the organization through Employment Equity targets (See Table 4-2: SANParks Workforce Profile as at 31 March 2004). Affirmative action and human resource development policy were part of a broader organizational transformative effort to correct racial imbalances¹⁴, eliminate racism and sexism in SANParks (Cock & Fig 2002; Cock 2007; Magome 2004).

At the Kruger National Park, “black managers were appointed to senior positions, an important milestone in the transformation of the Park” **p, 26** (Annual Report 2002), and Mr. David Mabunda intensified efforts to attract more black visitors to the national parks. Aggressive marketing strategies helped increase the percentage of black visitors to Kruger National Parks, which accounted for 7.5 percent of the total number of guests, a big improvement from the estimated 4 percent in the previous year (Annual Report 2002). These efforts served the interests of the organization inasmuch as they helped stimulate interest of the black constituency in national parks as well as overcome the historical alienation of black people in park management.

¹⁴ Black leadership included the first black chairperson of the Board, CEO – Mr. Msimang, the appointment of two black women directors, and appointment of Mr. Mabunda as the Director of the Kruger National Park (Cock 2007).

Table 4-2: SANParks Workforce Profile as at 31 March 2004

Level	Male				Female				Total	Total	Total
	A	I	C	W	A	I	C	W	Male	Female	Staff
F-Band	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	6	1	7
E-Band	4	0	0	15	6	0	0	1	19	7	26
D-Band	33	2	10	98	21	2	3	13	143	39	182
C-Band	87	4	22	58	29	3	16	78	171	126	297
B-Band	636	0	167	13	128	1	40	47	816	216	1032
A-Band	781	0	30	0	347	1	56	0	811	404	1215
Total	1544	7	229	186	531	7	116	139	1966	793	2759

A-F (Paterson Band)

Race: A=African; I=Indian; C=Colored/Mixed Race; W=White

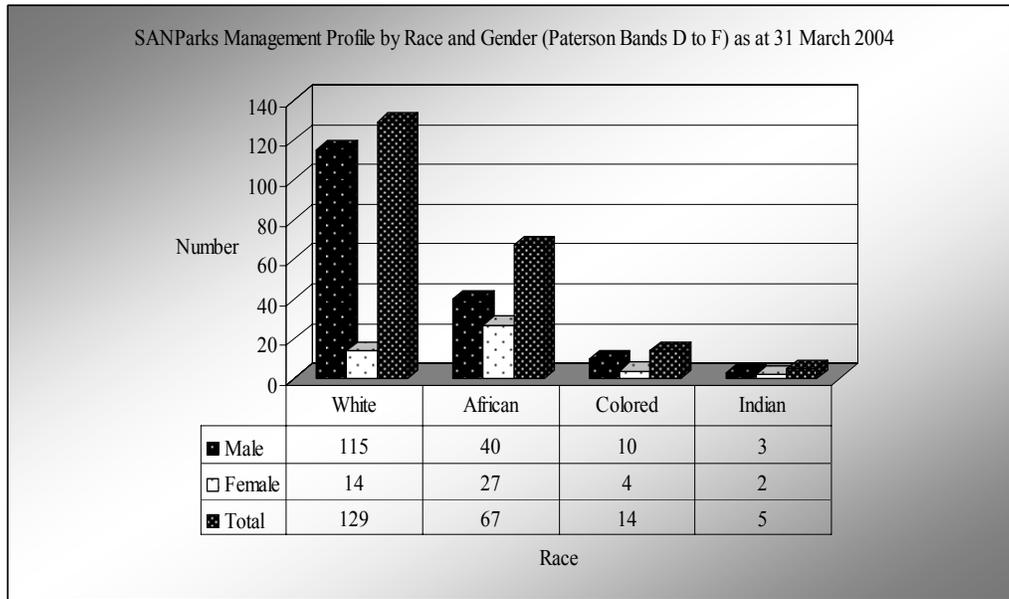
SANParks Annual Report 2004, p. 15

Efforts to diversity profile of park executives, managers and visitors produced contradictory outcomes. The increase in numbers of black executives was not matched with changes in the number of blacks employed in influential operational and technical/specialist layers. The results suggest that SANParks, similarly to US Forest Service (Thomas & Mohai 1995), has not changed the racial make up of its workforce radically although it has made gains towards racial and gender diversification at top echelons (Cock 2007; Magome 2004). While blacks occupy executive layers, the powerful operational and specialist technical levels (Paterson Bands D and E) remain overwhelmingly white:

“So currently you have got black leadership at the executive level, whites in senior management and then you have got a couple of black middle managers, and that is how it happens. So you still have a block there which is completely white-dominated” (Interviewee).

This “white technical core” in SANParks feeds into perceptions and experiences of racism and lack of transformation among black employees in SANParks. Interviewees often expressed concern with the “failure of transformation” at managerial and specialized organizational levels, which they attributed to “apartheid” in SANParks (Table 4-3: SANParks Management Profile by Race and Gender as at 31 March 2004).

Table 4-3: SANParks Management Profile by Race and Gender (Paterson Bands D to F) as at 31 March 2004



Source: SANParks Annual Report 2004, p.15

There were allegations that the white park managers resist “transformation” and fight against social ecology initiatives because they do not feel parks should have anything to do with social issues since their core mandate is conservation. To understand the allegations against white employees, we have to unpack the historical linkages between racial identities and park management that reflect processes and practices of power relations (Moore *et al.* 2003). The discourse of transformation in park management highlights both race and park management as terrains of power embedded in social struggles.

Does limited transformation of racial composition of technical and specialized operational levels necessarily equate with failure of transformation and continuity of “apartheid” in national parks? We have to interrogate the assumption that changing racial composition of occupational levels in SANParks would actually trigger new park philosophy, new relationships between parks and people, and promote socially just conservation. While racial representation of blacks in top management is a positive development in terms of diversity, unfortunately black employees are poorly represented

in powerful technical and professional categories. They are overwhelmingly represented in administrative and menial positions. Consequently, race and park management intersect as domains of power and sites of social and political struggle (Carruthers 1995). Certain racial groups occupy influential positions, and this reproduce human gradation (Ramutsindela 2004) or social hierarchies in park management.

Race and park management invoke passion and differences about identity, and point to inequalities and exclusions. However, a careful analysis reveals that race provides a marker of identity, and contested as racial groups wrestle to direct park management activities and policies. The findings indicate that black managers did not transform colonial park management practices, and their relationship with adjacent communities worsened (Interviewee). The contradiction is that merely increasing black managers will not automatically translate into different park-people relationships and emergence of new park philosophy. Hence, the argument has been that transformation has to go beyond skin color or de-racialization:

“...by itself [Africanization or appointment of black managers] doesn't constitute transformation per se but provides the basis for connecting parks better to surrounding communities. It provides the basis for greater acceptance of existence of protected areas by communities and by the black majority at large within the country because prior to 1994, protected areas were fully supported by the white minority. I don't think one can assume that the majority of black South Africans had any sense of having a connection to protected areas. So I think that is something as an institution we have been working on, not just by transforming the racial profile or the way SANParks looks but also by transforming the way it operates, and the way it connects with communities” (Interviewee).

Unless deep-seated organizational/professional culture that impedes reformulation of conservation practices or new conception of relationships between parks and adjacent communities is challenged, it does not really matter what the race of the park managers is – the relationship will be driven by the dominant culture and park philosophy that marginalizes community involvement in key decision-making structures in conservation and park management. The biggest challenge in transforming the

inherited system of national parks is dealing with park culture and residues of institutionalized inequalities.

Black managers felt that they were appointed for cosmetic reasons just after 1994 to make SANParks look politically correct, and often lacked power and influence that white colleagues have (Interviewee). Aggressive appointment of black executives and managers was also influenced by the need to meet legislative targets of the Employment Equity Act (EEA), government policy, and internal goals. However, the rate of black people exiting the conservation sector in search of “greener pastures” tends to be higher than the rate of similarly qualified black professionals coming in (Interviewee). Without a viable strategy to retain professional black employees, SANParks will likely to continue having “a thick layer of white scientists and most of those old scientists that inherited positions because of their apartheid affiliations” (Interviewee). This is likely to reinforce the perception and allegations of lack of “racial transformation” when white domination continues in critical layers of the bureaucracy and specialized professional positions.

However, SANParks transformation statement remains clear on shifting power from white to black employees in ways that ensure all levels of the internal organization of the organization reflect the demographic structure of South African society. Contrary to the argument that racial transformation affect “the organization’s value system and dominant resource management paradigm” p, 297 (Thomas & Mohai 1995), findings of this dissertation highlight that “race” has been used as emblem of gesture rather than used to bring about more pervasive structural transformation in South Africa’s national parks. I speculate that that only when there has been a “critical mass” of new employees with values that differ from the organization’s traditional value orientation and willing to catalyze new thinking in park management could there be meaningful change park philosophy and practices.

“Conceptually we didn’t quite get it right”: Contradictions in Land Restitution

Mr. Msimang has been credited for transforming SANParks and spearheading innovative parks-neighboring community relations through social ecology initiatives, community support programs, and land restitution settlements in national parks (Magome 2004). However, when one takes a closer look at SANParks’ social ecology initiatives and strategies for creating mutually beneficial partnerships between parks and people during Mr. Msimang’s era, there are lots of cracks in his transformation approach. Mr. Msimang’s rhetoric of transformation attracted accolades, and he said the right things while on the ground practicing different things. While he publicly professed support for land restitution, he initially opposed the Makuleke land claim in the Kruger National Park. The rhetoric:

“SANParks thus takes the view that biodiversity conservation in National Parks and restitution of land rights to the previously land dispossessed local people are national competencies. This suggests that they both enjoy equal support and importance. The two functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be wisely combined to mutual benefit. Accordingly, current land claims on National Parks...are not regarded as a threat to biodiversity conservation. If anything, they have the potential to enhance biodiversity conservation” **p, 15** (Annual Report 2002).

The statement suggests that land claims and restitution are not threats to biodiversity conservation or the integrity of national parks; the resolution of valid land claims in national parks offers an opportunity to contribute to broader objectives of societal transformation and redressing injustices of the past (Ramutsindela 2001, 2002, 2003). As I demonstrate later, SANParks employed various tactics to oppose land claims, and when claims were finally validated, it set stringent conditions that restricted local communities from exercising decision-making authority over land use, and largely maintained its bureaucratic power in over conservation decisions in areas where local communities were granted land title.

The 1996 Constitution and Land Restitution Act 22 of 1994 spell the need for change, and restoring of rights to historically marginalized communities, and restitution.

The Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) outlined sub-programs on “meeting basic needs; developing human resources; building the economy; and democratizing the state” p, 114 (Marks 2005). The 1994 RDP espouses democratic ideals of participatory approaches to development and policy making. The Constitution accords South Africans environmental rights, and sets the tone for redressing injustices of the past. The Land Restitution Act provides the legislative basis for effecting restitution to “people who were dispossessed of their land rights through racially discriminatory legislation since June 19, 1913” p, 18 (Ramutsindela 2002). These institutional frameworks made rights a reality, and the right to redress as a constitutional and moral imperative. Both the Constitution and Land Restitution Act served as instruments for transformation.

SANParks’ policy on land claims during Mr. Msimang’s term was contradictory. A brief discussion of the Makuleke land claim and restitution highlights SANParks’ initial opposition to land claims despite the rhetorical commitment to land claim/restitution within national parks. The Makuleke land claim was a response to the need to gain restitution for the land that the community lost due to horrific forced removals, in which 3000 community members were forced by the apartheid regime to burn their homes at gunpoint in 1969. The community demanded restoration of their ancestral land rights to the Pafuri, northern part of the Kruger National Park between the Luvuvhu and Limpopo rivers (Cock 2007; Reid 2001; Reid *et al.* 2004; Steenkamp 1998; Steenkamp & Uhr 2000). The Makuleke lodged their land claim in 1996, and SANParks originally protested it. Having gone through 18 months of intensive negotiations and protracted conflict over land rights and use options, a settlement between the Makuleke and SANParks was formally finalized on the 30th of May 1998. Political expediency dictated a settlement, and the fact that the ANC was facing an election in April 1998 suggested that SANParks’ ANC-aligned chief executive was compelled to deliver positive outcomes on land restitution.

In terms of the agreement, the Deed of Donation, SANParks returned full ownership and title to the Makuleke community, and the land was approximately 25,000

hectares. However, SANParks set stringent legal conditions for the Makuleke community, and ensured specific constraints on land use options. In terms of land use restrictions, 1) no mining or prospecting were to be undertaken and no part of the land was to be used for agricultural purposes; 2) no part of the land was to be used for residential settlement other than for tourism; and environmental impact analysis requirements were set; 3) the land was to be used solely for conservation and related commercial activities; 4) a servitude was to be granted to SANParks to ensure that it performs its duties in accordance with the agreement and National Parks Act; 5) no act to be performed that was detrimental to the state's obligation in case the areas was declared a RAMSAR site; and 6) that SANParks had the right of first refusal should the land latter be put up for sale (Magome 2004). In essence, SANParks "locked" the land for conservation, and retained responsibility for conservation activities. The assumption was that the community lacked capacity to carry out conservation, and that capacity building had to occur before the community could take over responsibility for conservation management of the land (Cock 2007).

These strict legal conditions stipulated "the Makuleke are only entitled to limited tourism developments on their land with highly controlled harvesting of high value wildlife species such as elephant and buffalo" **p, 134** (Magome 2004). These conditions reflected the ideological premise of bureaucratic power and technical rationality, which ensured that power, remained in the hands of the bureaucrats as well as secured SANParks economic interests. The conditions also reflected SANParks' mistrust of local communities' capacity to manage natural resources (Manspeizer 2004). The denial of Makuleke community's residence and choice of land use on their ancestral land indicates continuity of ideals of exclusion and objection to resource use in national parks. According to Magome,

"The Makuleke case study showed that the SANP was still dominated by the 'old era' approach that was largely concerned with protecting national parks while neglecting other needs of local communities" **p, 134-135** (Magome 2004).

The Makuleke model reflected “a top-down preservationist ideal on their [Makuleke] historic rights” p, 135 (Magome 2004) and set rigid parameters of what the Makuleke community could do with the land restored to them by SANParks.

The land claims presented dilemmas, and revealed the contradictions in Mr. Msimang’s stance on transformation. There was a compelling ideological and political justification for addressing land claims but at the same time securing organizational interests. SANParks used the argument about its mandate to ensure “good resource management” to negotiate limited transfer of resource rights to the Makuleke community, and set stringent conditions for the Makuleke community. For example, environmental impact analysis was one of the requirements for the local community to undertake before setting up eco-tourism facilities. Such regulation ensured that SANParks would continue to exercise its bureaucratic power. As one interviewee familiar with the Makuleke land restitution settlement commented about Mr. Msimang’s practical response to land claims:

“Despite the claims that Mr. Msimang spearheaded and supported the Makuleke land restitution, on the contrary, Msimang initially opposed and resisted the land claim. Interestingly enough, he is credited with championing land restitution. This certainly is falsification of history. SANParks’ lawyer and Mr. Msimang, the chief executive initially strongly opposed the land claims and didn’t want to give in to land claims in parks” (Interviewee).

Inasmuch as Mr. Msimang professed the rhetoric of transformation and land restitution, and stated that conservation could be leveraged to assist communities to overcome past injustice in nature conservation (Ramutsindela 2003), “SANParks took a defensive and legalistic strategy to dealing with the land claims” (Interviewee). The defense was a practical way of securing SANParks interests. It appears the prevalent mentality and attitude within SANParks was “we are doing our job, and it’s circumscribed in the law” (Interviewee).

The land restitution model did not fundamentally alter the structure of power relations between SANParks and the Makuleke community but rather ensured that SANParks continued to muscle its bureaucratic powers. I have alluded earlier that the

restitution settlement did not grant the Makuleke full resource ownership rights and limited their ability to decide for themselves land use options. This raises a question whether the tenure rights of the Makuleke would empower them to wrestle authority from the park agency. Without the power to make critical decisions, can the Makuleke community really claim to have been meaningfully empowered by the restitution settlement? Is SANParks committed to socially just conservation and meaningful empowerment of local communities? To what extent does the symbolism of land rights translate into real power? The Makuleke land restitution example tells us about contradictions in transformation as well as how the park bureaucracy devises means to resist devolving power to local communities. As one expert commented:

“We tied them up with regulations. There is no trust. There are all sorts of restrictions that are going to make it impossible for people to utilize resources. We have not re-conceptualized the model that was imposed colonially. We have changed a few rules here and there. We have not shifted too much from it. Instead of using guns now, we are using ‘tying up policies’” (Interviewee).

While regulations and monitoring systems are important for resource management purposes, the production and fashioning of conservation in “scientific” and technical resource management terms serve to exclude local communities and put constraints on them in subtle ways. Sometimes claims of “technically-sound,” “good resource management” camouflages bureaucratic resistance to change. It appears SANParks was uncomfortable and distrustful of local communities’ capacity to manage land and wildlife resources. According to senior managers in SANParks:

“For me, why don’t we trial how people are going to use the resources? We are so finicky and so scared that we see the other as out to destroy rather than the other as out to support our efforts. So we must tie them up with all sorts of regulations so that they can’t move. So it’s an abstract way of ‘policing’” (Interviewee).

Makuleke land restitution poses questions about whether SANParks “respect individuals of all cultural background and social standing” and “committed to the transformation process with regard to organizational development and our relations with external stakeholders” **p, 136** (Magome 2004). However, there are limits to “respect” and

“commitment” to stakeholders. SANParks has been accustomed to managing land earmarked for biodiversity conservation, and defended resources from local control and access. Because of historical pattern of state-centrist resource management, dominant park philosophy of exclusion and “command and control,” SANParks struggles to fully devolve resource management responsibilities to local communities. As a consequence, it has remained with the authority over conservation in co-management or contractual park arrangements with local communities with settled land claims. In a sense, SANParks has not “surrendered” national parks but rather negotiated power-sharing arrangements with local communities (Msimang *et al.* 2003). The reluctance to devolve resource management (conservation) responsibilities to local communities may be informed by real concern with the capacity of local communities to employ sustainable practices especially where stakes for conservation are too high. In reality, this might be a pragmatic option to deal with “risk” where local communities live in poverty and granting them management responsibility over resource management decisions could increase the stakes for short-term gains.

Land restitution can be a window of opportunity to transform protected area management, and link conservation with social justice objectives (Ramutsindela 2003). Cock (2007) argues that addressing the land question is an environmental justice issue. Contrary to Cock’s optimism that land restitution allows the re-instatement of an indigenous conception of conservation or “mobilization of indigenous culture in support for conservation” **p, 154** (Cock 2007), SANParks has used the Deeds of Donation, restitution settlement contracts, to preserve its bureaucratic power and decision-making authority over resource management issues. I concur that land restitution has powerful symbolism in terms of reasserting local communities’ sense of identity with land, but the real challenge remains that of giving substance to the symbolism by allowing communities to exercise decision-making authority in land and resource uses¹⁵.

¹⁵ The land claim settlement of the #Khomani San (the indigenous hunter-gatherers) was reached on 21st March 1999, the Human Rights Day. They had been removed from their land, which was designated the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. The removal threatened cultural survival of this indigenous people, with approximately 500 individuals known to survive. While the community received title to land after SANParks relinquished about 55,000 hectares, but set a condition that the community will not alter the land use of that area. SANParks maintains its jurisdictional and bureaucratic power through legalistic means or

Symbolism without power undercuts the Makuleke community from mobilizing their indigenous culture and knowledge system to drive a conservation agenda that meets their needs. Considering the contradictions of the Makuleke land restitution and SANParks “bureaucratic impulse,” the fundamental question is whether the “Makuleke model” should be the “blueprint” for settling outstanding land claims (restitution) in South Africa. Land restitution should be settled on a case-by-case basis recognizing contextual realities and challenges. A “one-size-fits-all” approach is recipe for disaster.

Leadership Challenges in Transformation

Similarly to Dr. Robinson, Mr. Msimang shirked the responsibility for transformation to the Social Ecology Department (SED), a unit that did have organizational clout to drive the transformation agenda. Magome (2004) argues that such managerial neglect diminished the permeability of transformation deep into the organizational fabric. Without visibility of the Chief Executive as a champion of transformation, park managers increasingly resisted the transformative role of social ecology. Inasmuch as the 1998 Corporate Plan stated the strategic importance of social ecology in introducing and driving a new park philosophy, promoting partnerships with neighboring communities and establishing mutually beneficial dialogues and arrangements, the SED lacked organizational capacity and the internal credibility to affect this kind of transformation. When criticized for his arms-length approach to social ecology and transformation, Mr. Msimang half-heartedly took charge of the transformation process (Magome 2004). The tensions emerged in executive management regarding the role of social ecology in park management.

The then Director of Conservation Development, Dr. Anthony Hall-Martin “exposed the tensions in the leadership of the SANP by stating that his priorities had always been purely biological, and that he was ‘not particularly concerned about

imposition of legal conditions on land restitution agreements (Cock 2007; Magome 2004). We can understand SANParks responses only when we unpack the institutional principles that underlie national parks’ organizational forms. A national park is “a national park is so far as it adheres to the ideals of national parks.”

communities and people and all that stuff”” **p, 138** (Magome 2004). Dr. Hall-Martin’s sentiments and opposition to social ecology resonated with the majority of white senior managers and park wardens who felt that the focus on social issues diverted the organization from its core mandate of conservation. There was also contestation of views along racial lines regarding the processes and trajectory of transformation. The head of SED, Dr. Dladla resigned in mid 1999 in frustration with the slow pace of transformation and internal resistance to social ecology (Interviewee). Ironically, when Dr. Dladla resigned, the SED was downgraded from being a directorate to unit, without representation at the director-level.

Mr. Hector Magome was appointed to head the Social Ecology Unit (SEU). He realized the magnitude of polarization that had occurred in SANParks over the role of social ecology, and he arranged a “best practice conference” **p, 139** (Magome 2004) to ascertain the usefulness of social ecology in park management. A detailed exploration of social ecology and SANParks is beyond the objective of this chapter (see Magome 2004) suffice to say that both the best practice conference and the DANCED mid-term review report highlighted conceptual flaws of social ecology. Several problems were identified, and these included conceptual flaws of social ecology, vulnerability of the SEU because of low morale, lack of capacity to drive participatory approaches or build cross functional work, and the failure to connect social ecology with other strategic management issues (Magome 2004).

Social ecology faced opposition from park managers (Magome 2004) because it was poorly understood in terms of its ability to achieve conservation objectives. In addition, its focus on community involvement did not resonate well with traditional park philosophy, which emphasized technical rationality and bureaucrats’ power in decision-making in protected area management. It appears social ecology clashed with the professional culture of conservationists who subscribed to protectionist, “command and control” paradigm (Interviewee). Some old guard “feared and resisted transformation and viewed SE as being synonymous with transformation” **p, 141** (Magome 2004) – transformation regarded as replacement of whites by blacks, and conservation dominated

by social issues (Interviewee). Top management also struggled to come to grips with social ecology, particularly how to align and integrate social ecology with corporate, departmental, and park plans. It proved difficult to seamlessly weave social ecology into the day-to-day operations of parks (Magome 2004). It is not surprising therefore that “conceptually we [park executives] didn’t quite get it right” (Interviewee).

Financial Crisis and “Operational Prevail”

The 1998 Corporate Plan spelt the need to transform SANParks into a financially viable and autonomous parastatal entity less reliant upon public funding. Expectations of reduced government funding due to dictates of neo-liberal economic framework, the 1996 Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR), compelled SANParks to pursue market-driven strategies of revenue generation to enable it to fund conservation. Private sector strategies and market-oriented approaches were envisaged to help leverage funding opportunities and devise new income-generation streams (Child 2004; Osborne & Gaebler 1992; Prato & Fagre 2005; Presber-James 1999; Reed 2000; Saporiti 2006; Swingland 1998).

Mr. Msimang inherited a financially sound agency from Dr. Robinson. Dr. Robinson had anticipated funding challenges during the transition to democracy since he felt that the government would face tremendous pressure to provide basic social services and infrastructure to historically marginalized communities (Refer to Chapter 3). At the time of Dr. Robinson’s resignation, SANParks had a positive cash flow of approximately SAR23 million or US\$3.8 million and investments worth SAR95.5 million or US\$15.8 million (Magome 2004).

However, under Mr. Msimang’s leadership, SANParks’ liquidity deteriorated due to cash flow problems and financial mismanagement in the organization. The financial crisis reached to a point where SANParks’ banking overdrawing facility had reached its limit of SAR30 million or US\$10 million in 2001, and political opposition parties in Parliament were calling for government intervention (Magome 2004). This proved to be a

public relations nightmare for Mr. Msimang. Demanding increased funding for conservation would invoke the perception that a black chief executive undervalues government priorities on social service delivery to black communities and elevates wildlife above lives of black South Africans. Ignoring the liquidity problem also risked SANParks' failure to deliver its conservation mandate. Mr. Msimang was initially reluctant to lobby the government for increasing funding for SANParks despite him having close political ties with the ANC government (Magome 2004). However, the financial crisis put him between a rock and hard place. When the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) instructed Deloitte and Touché auditors to assess the causes of the liquidity problems, the auditors' report highlighted management problems, lack of staff with financial skills, and incompetence in financial management (Magome 2004). This was an indictment of Mr. Msimang's leadership and organizational management.

In February 2000 Kruger National Park suffered huge financial losses due to flooding, and its cash flow problems affected the entire SANParks' finances. The Kruger has such an impact on SANParks overall financial health; when the Kruger "sneezes, the whole SANParks catches the cold." The Kruger weight is felt since it "generates something like 67 percent of the income of SANParks, the other 20 parks 13 percent" (Interviewee). Ironically, the flooding tended to be a blessing in disguise since it opened a window for SANParks "to secure a government bridging grant of SAR30 million including the reinstatement of the "road subsidy"¹⁶ of SAR12 million a year" **p, 144** (Magome 2004).

In order to stabilize and secure organizational survival, Mr. Msimang embarked an organizational initiative, "Operation Prevail", which put severe restrictions on all travel, capital expenditure and infrastructure maintenance, and froze all operations for eight months with the exception of key tourism activities. As part of the cost-cutting

¹⁶ The "road subsidy" is grant provided to the national park authority to develop road infrastructure in national parks. It represents public sector investment in national parks through infrastructure (road) development and road maintenance in existing parks. The expansion of the national park system also demands an increase in the road subsidy.

strategy, SANParks reduced its workforce “from over 4,000 to fewer than 3,000” **p, 144** (Magome 2004). “Operation Prevail” was a painful restructuring process. However, it improved SANParks’ cash flow without completely removing inherent systemic problems that posed organizational vulnerability. Cultural change initiatives were not undertaken.

SANParks began implementing a business model to diversity its revenue generation and meet expenditure for conservation. It had to operate as a commercially oriented parastatal entity. This required delivering tourism products efficiently, which it was failing to do despite managing the country’s spectacular natural assets. Its tourism products were poorly differentiated, prices were not market-determined, and service standards were often mediocre (Saporiti 2006). It benchmarked itself against private sector operations, and the exercise indicated that SANParks lacked the capacity to deliver tourism services efficiently and leverage tourism opportunities. Therefore, a decision was made to focus on core function of biodiversity management rather than running all commercial ventures (Child 2004; Reed 2000). The private sector was contracted to run commercial ventures.

SANParks was generating income from entrance fees, accommodation in parks and sale of wildlife. It recognized the need to “transform that revenue into bigger revenue scale” through commercialization (Interviewee). Commercialization became a business model for creating a financially self-sustaining, parastatal organization (Child 2004).

The commercialization strategy involved concession of exclusive rights to commercial use of lodge sites. The 20-year concession contracts for lodges contained “environmental and social obligations and penalties for noncompliance” **p, 3** (Saporiti 2006). In an effort to implement the commercialization strategy, SANParks “concessed 12 lodges, 19 shops, 17 restaurants, and 4 picnic sites to private partners” **p, 3** (Saporiti 2006), who were expected to pay SANParks an annual fee calculated as a percentage of their turnover bid. SANParks realized that costs of internally operating certain functions were higher than the cost of contracting out, and thus it made business

sense to contract out for cost-effectiveness. In addition, SANParks' benchmarking exercise had indicated gaps in organizational capacity to leverage lodges and restaurants for greater revenue generation. Therefore, the commercialization strategy offered opportunities to optimize earnings, improve operational revenue, and stimulate investment in park and tourism facilities.

Concessions were evaluated with assistance of the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Private Sector Advisory Services¹⁷ unit. SANParks' adoption of "commercialization as a conservation strategy" was also shaped by the country's neo-liberal economic framework, GEAR. GEAR stipulated diminished role of government (rolling back the state and reducing public spending) and the need to open space for private sector involvement. Basic neo-liberal economic theory suggests that the state should intervene in the marketplace only where there is market failure, and should be responsible for regulatory functions. Applying this logic to the national park context meant that SANParks would transfer management of commercial operations to private sector operators perceived to be better qualified and equipped to run these facilities. In such circumstances, SANParks would regulate and monitor concessions to privately-run commercial operators within national parks as well as ensure compliance with environmental regulations and social obligations stipulated in the concession contracts.

Notwithstanding the compelling rationale for market-driven commercial strategies in park management, critics¹⁸ were concerned that commercialization and profit motives of concessionaires would undermine social objectives and deviate national parks from addressing needs of local communities (Cock & Fig 2002). They felt that social inequalities, poverty and exclusion of local communities would deepen while affluent groups with concessions benefit from national parks, with the unintended consequence of national parks becoming "luxury outfits" for elites (Interviewee). However, financial

¹⁷ The IFC helped mobilize donor funding to cover various costs of the consultancy. It assisted in concession contracts, and developing model for concession and outsourcing of all retail and restaurant facilities (Fearnhead and Mabunda 2003), and services associated with delivery of tourism products such as security, housekeeping, garden services and laundry.

¹⁸ Critics also included the 'old-guard' conservationists who felt that commercialization would plunder national parks in pursuit of profit, and were focused on blocking or "stone-walling the process" p, 199 (Fearnhead & Mabunda 2003).

challenges facing SANParks dictated that the organization pay attention to revenue generation and sustainable financing mechanisms by stimulating entrepreneurial and commercial approaches in park management. Organizational structural reforms included the creation of a new post – Director of Commercial Development and Tourism to spearhead commercialization.

SANParks financial interests and black economic empowerment¹⁹ objectives guided implementation of “commercialization as a conservation strategy.” Therefore, it was not a purely driven by SANParks’ self-interests but encompassed linking conservation initiatives to broader political objectives of transformation and black economic empowerment (Cock 2007). Commercialization was both a tactical and strategic response to organizational survival and political legitimacy. It offered economic opportunities for previously disadvantaged social groups (Saporiti 2006) while creating a pathway for financial survival and growth (Child 2004). The overall objective of commercialization was to focus SANParks on its core business of biodiversity conservation, which is a critical foundation for the country’s tourism and recreation. The organization realized it lacked the capacity to effectively manage commercial operations and optimize benefits from tourism and natural assets.

Institutional theory informs us that organizational behavior is influenced by incentives and disincentives determined in the institutional environment (Prato and Fagre 2005; Presber-James 2001). The South African climate was increasingly becoming receptive to public-private partnerships (PPPs), and hence SANParks could leverage those opportunities to advance its commercialization drive and promote broader objectives of black empowerment and local entrepreneurship (Fearnhead & Mabunda 2003).

¹⁹ The black economic empowerment principles in concessions included developing small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs), black shareholding (precise details and timing for implementing equity schemes), affirmative action, tangible quantifiable benefits and targets in terms of training and employment of previously disadvantaged groups through the life of the concession. The commercialization strategy emphasized empowerment at community level, and forging business relationship between private sector and previous disadvantaged entrepreneurs and communities living adjacent to national parks. The concessionaires were expected to comply with empowerment principles, and had to have “empowerment audits” (Fearnhead & Mabunda 2003).

Child (2004) argues that commercialization or de-nationalization of national parks is a prerequisite for better conservation, and he based this proposition on his comparison of organizational performance of financially driven conservation organizations versus state-dependent conservation organizations. It is important to note however that not all national parks will ever be financially viable (t Sas-Rolfes 1995). In SANParks' national park system, only three parks, the Kruger, Tsitsikamma and Golden Gate are profitable (Cock 2007), and therefore cross-subsidize the non-profit making ones. From this standpoint, there is limited possibility of financial self-sufficiency for the other national parks, which means that central government funding is still required to support SANParks and cover shortfalls.

Transforming Park Constituency

The relevance and legitimacy of national parks among historically disenfranchised black constituency has been questionable because of apartheid legacy and history of colonial apartheid conservation. Protected areas lacked broader support of black South Africans (Carruthers 1995). There is historically a crisis of legitimacy of national parks among their black constituency. Murphree (2004) argues that protected areas (national parks) have to be responsive to constituency interests to ensure long-term sustainability. This sustainability argument is succinctly summarized below:

“The sustainability of parks and biodiversity will be enhanced by developing a value proposition for protected areas that is attractive to local communities and the country as a whole, and aligning its transformation project with broader societal and constitutional values of non-discrimination, black empowerment, and employment equity. Rural people neighboring parks should have a stake in it, and this would ensure personal commitment to parks and biodiversity conservation” (Interviewee).

The profile of park constituencies has been changing since the end of apartheid in South Africa. There has been an effort to reach out to constituencies that were historically marginalized. SANParks' transformation statement makes reference to the need to shift

power and control from the minority to the majority segment of the population that had been marginalized as well as make national parks “joy and pride of all South Africans” (SANParks Business Plan 2007). This has entailed attracting black visitors to national parks, which is a business imperative with the potential to mobilize political support and legitimacy among the black constituency.

There are various ways in which SANParks can respond to the interests and needs of the black constituency. Restitution and restoration of rights to land, meeting socio-economic needs of local communities through livelihood support, local employment, and development opportunities are some of those responses. Another way has been targeted marketing to increase the number of black visitors to national parks. Mr. Msimang understood the mutability of park constituencies over time, and that parks needed to accommodate this reality (Murphree 2004).

Environmental education efforts that focus on black school children also provide an opportunity for national parks to connect with communities, instill environmental ethos, and build a constituency for national parks. This is part of transformation considering how historically black communities were excluded from accessing parks. The Social Ecology Department implemented outreach and environmental education initiatives targeting schools through partnerships with non-government organizations.

Having followed media reports on SANParks’ financial crisis, McKinsey & Company approached Mr. Magome, Director of Conservation Services Department and former head of Social Ecology Unit, and offered advisory services to SANParks on a *pro bono* basis (Magome 2004). The McKinsey Report highlighted that “except for human resources policies, SANParks lacked common corporate biodiversity strategy, revenue generation, and broader constituency support” **p, 144** (Magome 2004). The organization had failed to tap into the huge black constituency as a viable market as well as support base for national parks.

The statistics of black visitors to national parks were pathetically low; approximately 4% of the tourists to Kruger National Park in 2001 were black South Africans. This indicated that national parks were not a preferred destination of choice for leisure and recreational activities among black South Africans (Magome 2004). From a business and revenue-generation standpoint, this was an untapped market. Therefore there was need to develop marketing strategies to capture this market. Second, extremely low number of black tourists/visitors to national parks posed a significant challenge in terms of instilling a strong conservation ethic among the black constituency; the question remained how do you make a case for increased public funding to a black majority constituency that is detached from national parks and lack any intimate experience of national parks? Third, the harsh reality was that black majority population commanded political influence, and their support would be critical for organizational survival and legitimacy.

McKinsey and Company pointed that SANParks should build a constituency for conservation by diversifying demographic profile of park visitors, create positive relationships with local communities through environmental education and socio-economic benefits, and solidify support from current white constituency. The consultants proposed “constituency building” (Magome 2004) as a strategy to connect national parks better with the black South Africans and other relevant stakeholders. However, in order to avoid misconception among politicians, SANParks changed “constituency building” to People and Conservation (P&C). A new Director, Dr. Wazeena Wagiet, an expert in environmental education, was appointed to head the People and Conservation Department in mid 2003. However, the P&C function was not integrated effectively with other core park management activities, and this marginalized its transformative capacity:

“In fact SANParks set up a division called People and Conservation... a budget was allocated and so on. I don’t think we have quite managed to get it right in order to integrate the function of that division into the mainstream management of parks. I think somehow within SANParks, we made a mistake of separating that People and Conservation function from the day-to-day activities and programs of park management... I think conceptually we didn’t quite get it right when we set up the People and Conservation Division, where we said the priority now is

community outreach through Environmental Education programs...I think it is a discussion we probably need in SANParks; it is how we integrate that function [P&C] into operations so that we don't have operations there and People and Conservation there. It needs to be integrated" (Interviewee).

Because of the conceptual shortcomings and lack of seamless integration with core park management activities, People and Conservation functions were predestined to fail just as social ecology. Instead of being viewed as transformative instrument, P&C has often been relegated to an "outreach" program that delivers SANParks' "corporate social responsibility" (Interviewee).

In 2003, the 5th World Parks Congress (WPC) was held in Durban, South Africa. The theme of the WPC was "Benefits beyond Boundaries", and the focus was on creating benefits from biodiversity conservation and protected areas and channeling them to local communities. The WPC patron, Mr. Nelson Mandela regarded "benefits beyond boundaries" as an "opportunity to break with this history [colonial past and history of alienation and exclusion of local people] and to ensure that Africans became key participants and decision-makers on principles and policies regarding national parks" **p, vi** (Hall-Martin & Carruthers 2003). Mr. Mandela reiterated that national parks should be:

"...transformed into vital source of economic development and that they bring a wide variety of benefits to local as well as a global constituency. We need to break with traditional thinking, to catalyze a new vision and to join hands in new partnerships" **p, vi** (Hall-Martin & Carruthers 2003).

The challenge was how to translate those goals into activities that could be implemented. At the WPC, SANParks showcased its transformation achievements by releasing a book (Hall-Martin & Carruthers 2003; Magome 2004). Interestingly, after celebrating the "success" of SANParks, Mr. Msimang resigned from SANParks in September 2003 to join the State Information Technical Agency as Director General, with a mandate to "fix" it (Magome 2004) given his perceived achievements at SANParks.

Concluding Remarks

The Msimang leadership epoch (1997-2003) shows the contradictions in transformation, and the gaps between the rhetoric and practice of transformation. When Mr. Msimang inherited SANParks and its flagship Kruger National Parks from Dr. Robinson, he aggressively appointed black managers and succeeded in transforming racial composition of leadership (executive management) and park managers in some parks, notably the Kruger. This “face of transformation” was appealing to political leadership and black constituency in the country.

While both Mr. Msimang and Dr. Mabunda were credited for transforming racial representation in SANParks and Kruger National Park respectively (Magome 2004), they struggled to effect transfer of power from the white minority that hosted technical expertise and operational experience to the historically disadvantaged black employees. The harsh reality of the matter was the dearth of expertise and experience among black South Africans. While political expediency favored radical changes in racial composition of executive leadership and senior management levels, capacity constraints, financial crisis, and dearth of skilled black conservationists compelled pragmatism, and such was the dilemma that Msimang faced. In addition, because of apartheid legacy, white South Africans dominated professional groups with the skills, expertise and experience in biodiversity conservation and natural resource management.

This chapter also linked transformation to commercialization initiatives undertaken by SANParks to leverage natural assets and parks’ resources in pursuit of financial sustainability and broader transformation objectives of black economic empowerment and local socio-economic development.

The scope of transformation during Mr. Msimang’s era is widely contested. Others have characterized it as “shallow restructuring” (Cock & Fig 2002). Magome argues that “Msimang’s ‘shallow restructuring’ reflected his inability to fully understand processes of meaningful change in a highly bureaucratic state agency” **p, 149** (Magome

2004) that ignored how deeply-entrenched professional culture and apartheid legacy weighed heavily on the organization's capacity to transform. He postulates that SANParks' strong culture was an impediment to transformation, and assimilated black managers or new elites. As a result, they failed to conceptualize fresh park philosophy informed by post-apartheid socio-political and economic realities of black communities.

The next chapter explores Dr. David Mabunda's leadership era (2003-2008), and discusses his business-oriented and "healing" approach to SANParks transformation.

CHAPTER 5

A “HEALING” AND BUSINESS APPROACH TO PARK MANAGEMENT

Leadership style and perspectives shape the scope of transformation. In this chapter I examine Dr. Mabunda’s leadership epoch (2003-2008) to determine the implications of his leadership on SANParks performance and transformation. Because of his past experience at the Kruger National Park and living through the “pain” of transformation, Dr. Mabunda has framed transformation in terms of business efficiency, operational excellence, and “healing.” Race now features marginally in current transformation discourse in SANParks, and the focus has been strategic repositioning and transforming SANParks’ “business model” in order to address performance gaps and systemic problems. Organizational performance has become the target for performance management and efforts to revisit the model of park management.

Background

Cock and Fig (2002), Child (2004), Magome (2004) and Nyambe (2005) have explored various dimensions of transformation in South Africa’s conservation bureaucracies, and identified impediments to organizational transformation. Cock and Fig (2002) characterize SANParks transformation as “shallow restructuring” rather than fundamental change. Nyambe (2005) identifies conservation agencies’ strong professional culture, rigidly bounded mission, “command and control” bureaucratic management thinking, lack of responsiveness, and resistance to change as barriers to organizational transformation. These problems are not necessarily unique to SANParks, and have also been identified in the United States National Park Service (USNPS), which has a history of not easily accommodating change. The USNPS Vail Agenda of 1992 highlighted the difficulties in transforming the national park system. It stated that national park agency “will not be transformed quickly or easily because confronting challenges

that were long standing” p, 149 (Magome 2004) required addressing structural barriers and organizational resistance to change.

Previous chapters (Chapter 3 and 4) explored macro-level and organizational-level and leadership challenges associated with transformation. I explained that Dr. Robinson’s era was marked by transitional challenges, and he made several organizational changes to bring the National Parks Board “screaming” into the new South Africa. Mr. Msimang inherited a financially sound organization, and went through financial crisis that caused SANParks to undertake a major restructuring initiative, “Operation Prevail” to ensure organizational survival. Mr. Msimang succeeded in transforming the racial profile of SANParks management levels, and appointed black managers in visible positions. I then highlighted contradictions in his transformation approach. Interestingly, he consolidated and implemented some of Dr. Robinson’s strategies, and therefore not surprising that Magome (2004) concludes that SANParks under Msimang ended where Dr. Robinson left SANParks when he resigned.

The challenges in racially transforming SANParks during Dr. Robinson’s leadership period could be explained by South Africa’s model of transition. Limited transformation was possibly a function of institutional limits – the “sunset clauses” that emphasized stability and continuity, guaranteed job security of old guards for at least five years, and denounced revolutionary changes (Herwitz 2003; Miller 2005). Therefore, expecting Dr. Robinson “creating what isn’t” p, 150 (Magome 2004) would be ignoring the practical barriers imposed by the dynamics of negotiated transition to democracy. Msimang was in a better position to implement radical changes in park management because the initial five-year period of “sunset clauses” had lapsed, and he relatively succeeded in transforming the racial composition of executives and park managers.

The findings indicate that all three administrations (leaders) took some bold decisions in their own ways, and began a process of rethinking park philosophy to accommodate socio-political and economic realities. However, the core philosophy of national parks has been sustained. According to a park executive,

“Conservation is not for sissies. You have to be bold and brave when you are involved in conservation. Sometimes you are going to make decisions that people like and enjoy, sometimes you have to put your foot down because of the responsibility bestowed unto you” (Interviewee).

How bold then is Dr. Mabunda in driving a transformation agenda that sets a new direction for the park agency and assist it to adapt and respond to environmental conditions? It is possible that Dr. Mabunda’s boldness could be a function of his leadership style and realization that some “radical demands” on national parks cannot be easily accommodated merely for political expediency.

In this chapter, I explore Dr. Mabunda’s leadership’s (2003-2008) change strategy and transformation initiatives and processes, a period of SANParks life that has not been scholarly analyzed before. The challenge for Dr. Mabunda has been to look back to find out why past SANParks collective leadership acted in the manner they did, what were their success stories and problems; such examination of the past (including his own past) helps shape the trajectory of his leadership (Magome 2004). Change requires looking in and out, and assessing internal and external drivers of change. My analysis of Dr. Mabunda’s leadership sheds light on leadership style and transformation perspectives focused on entrepreneurial, performance oriented park management.

Leadership Style and Transformation

“Transformation is leadership-based. You have to look at the person who is seen to be driving the transformation” (Interviewee).

Dr. David Mabunda, the second black Chief Executive of SANParks, has a Ph. D in tourism management, and openly champions a business approach to park management. He is widely regarded within SANParks as a strategist, politically astute, and “healing” leader. He has targeted transformation of SANParks’ performance, and leans his strategic posture towards operational excellence and business efficiency. Dr. Mabunda has

embraced private business management principles and systems in SANParks in order to improve organizational performance.

Dr. Robinson (1991-1996) lacked the political legitimacy largely because he was white, and had been appointed to run the National Parks Board by the apartheid government. However, he pursued an independent administrative agenda of improving the park authority's organizational performance in technical resource and financial management. Mr. Msimang (1997-2003) had strong political clout because he had been involved in the anti-apartheid movement, and closely connected to the ANC party politics and government. For this reason, he was able as the first black Chief Executive of SANParks to advance a transformation agenda that advanced black empowerment and racial transformation, and also could easily mobilize resources (funding) and political support for national parks (Cock 2007; Magome 2004).

Dr. Mabunda's (2003-2008) previous experience as the first black Director of the Kruger National Park strengthened his political capital and experience in managing national parks; the financial crisis that Kruger National Park went through during his tenure certainly had an impact on his experience and outlook (Interviewee). When he became SANParks Chief Executive, he devised strategies for sustainable performance and financing for the park agency.

The executives, senior managers and employees I interviewed regard Mabunda as a business-oriented change agent who "has put SANParks on the road to business performance-managed operation with a quest for operational excellence" (Interviewee). During the interviews, I was amazed at the number of times that interviewees referred to Mr. Msimang's question about how to "transform a Cinderella" but the executives chose not to debunk the "Cinderella" myth. The "Cinderella" is a cultural myth within SANParks, and reflects the belief that the organization is already transformed and a world-leader in conservation. One senior executive was critical of the "Cinderella myth", and argued that it inhibited SANParks from transforming aggressively its business model and practices because of the fallacy of being a world leader. He stated that SANParks

needs to benchmark itself more with the private sector to realize that it is not a “world leader” on best practices, efficiency and performance – hence it should focus on continuous transformation of the “Cinderella.” SANParks has so much to learn from the private sector, and therefore “it should never stop transforming and progressing” (Interviewee).

One could actually get a better sense of the pro-business thinking in SANParks’ organizational management by unpacking the views of the Board and executives. The current Chairperson of the Board, Ms. Cheryl Carolus is a black businesswoman, with investments in black economic empowerment ventures. Also the current chief executive is well versed in business management and so is the managing executive responsible for tourism and marketing functions and chief operating officer who were recruited from the private sector. It is not surprising that their professional orientation incline them to business-oriented approaches in park management.

Dr. Mabunda replaced Mr. Msimang as SANParks’ Chief Executive in November 2003, who had been credited with racially transforming SANParks. He had also witnessed transformation of the Kruger National Park, where he was the first black Director (Magome 2004). The differences in leadership styles and vision are captured below:

“Under Dr. Robinson, it (National Parks Board) was very much closed...almost police style and rigid. With Mr. Mavuso Msimang, he had to deal with transformation, with much of the politics as it were and introducing business thinking basically for the first time...[and]...commercialization as we called it at the time...But under Dr. Mabunda, we have advanced but again it is much linked to personality also. I think because he has a warm approach and he likes to call himself a healing leader, and he uses those words. And truly he has been. With Dr. Robinson, it was the old regime, with Mr. Msimang it was the transformation, and now I think Dr. Mabunda has tried to and still trying not to always refer to the old. We are now working as an organization but also not only in terms of color, in terms of transformed business, and transformed approach” (Interviewee).

The above statement differentiates the leadership styles and scope of transformation of former and current Chief Executives. It does matter who occupies the

position of Chief Executive in SANParks or organizational hierarchy because a leader makes a difference. The leader marshals resources and ensures that agency influence grows.

“Healing” Leadership

Before I explore Dr. Mabunda’s business approach to transformation, I analyze the basis for his “healing” leadership and its implication for SANParks transformation. Dr. Mabunda inherited SANParks after it had gone through a difficult financial crisis and major restructuring initiative, “Operation Prevail.” The organization was also struggling to change the bad history of hostile relationship with black neighboring communities. Given the legacy of apartheid, the pain of “Operation Prevail” through retrenchments, and cost-cutting measures, resentment and mistrust within SANParks deepened such that “healing” was needed:

“We wanted to create what we call a healing organization, which is about support and healing the problems of the past. The organization previously went through terrible times in the 2000 era when the Kruger was hit by floods; we had financial troubles, and it was tough. There was also through transformation and trying to get to employment equity targets, people were moved for the benefit of new people coming in. So I understand that there was fear and uncertainty, and that is why the healing culture was brought in to say, we are one family so let’s treat each other in manner in which we heal the wounds of the past but also ensure that the manner in which we support people is of a healing approach” (Interviewee).

Dr. Mabunda’s “healing approach” was predicated on his recognition of past hurts associated with both apartheid and “Operation Prevail”, and the need for inclusion and participation of historically disadvantaged communities in park activities. Transformational “healing” approach sought to deal with land claims in a manner that broader goals of restitution are supported while securing conservation objectives, and as well minimize backlash and pain (Interviewee). Because of Dr. Mabunda’s “healing approach” towards historical grievances, he has managed to diffuse the anticipated negativity and hostility that often characterize protests by land claimants (local communities), and opened dialogue to craft collaborative solutions.

Interviewees commented that Dr. Mabunda's "open-mindedness and non-confrontational nature" and personality reinforces his "healing" (Interviewee). Rather than taking an aggressive and defensive position that characterized Dr. Robinson and Msimang's eras, and where such sentiments like "this is the park to fight and die for" (Interviewee), Dr. Mabunda's era is marked by sensitivity to local socio-economic issues and needs. Within SANParks, Dr. Mabunda views a "healing organization where employees are first treated as human beings with personal aspirations and challenges than mere extensions of the machines churning up products and dollars" **p, 3** (Go Wild, November/December 2007). Dr. Mabunda's "healing" perspectives have shaped SANParks transformation.

Land Claims and SANParks Policy

Dealing with land claims in national parks requires political astuteness, and sensitivity to the imperatives of democracy in South Africa. Dr. Mabunda has taken a policy position that SANParks will not contest any land claim, unlike Msimang's initial defensive position, when it is properly validated through the government's Land Commission process. He regards land claims and restitution as a broader transformation goal that supports democracy in the country, and therefore SANParks should further these objectives. According to Dr. Mabunda, "SANParks is an organ of state; therefore, its policy approach is to support the Restitution of Land Rights Act (Act 22 of 1994 as amended)" **p, 9** (Annual Report 2004). Contrary to the view that Mabunda's stance is akin to passive surrender of conservation lands to local communities, he regards land restitution as a higher goal that SANParks ought to support while working with local communities to fashion new partnership arrangements that secure conservation objectives.

The history of racist land policies and dispossession makes land restitution a political and moral issue (Ramutsindela 2003), and therefore park managers cannot ignore the politics of land reform in South Africa. The Constitution and Land Restitution

Act spell out the importance of land restitution as part of the transformation process in South Africa. Dr. Mabunda has chosen to support land claims and allow the official validation processes to determine the legality of land claims. Land claims and restitution create space for fashioning new resource governance arrangements that allow previously disenfranchised communities to harvest benefits from protected area management and gain a stake in national parks. The national parks negotiate restitution package with land claimants, and the process involves the Land Claims Court and Land Claims Commission (Farmbry & Harper 2005). However, “the give-back restitution approach” has been suggested for the Kruger National Park given its economic value to society and financial functioning of SANParks.

A park executive portrayed Dr. Mabunda’s sentiments towards retaining the right to manage national parks without the pressures of co-management arrangements requiring constant negotiation with local communities in decision-making:

“We can set up a joint management agreement as to how we should be managing the park but you can’t sit here on a daily basis with me next door and then I have to consult every time with you what decisions I must take on a daily basis’... So he [Dr. Mabunda] is receptive to land claims and he supports the correcting of the imbalance of the past but he is also putting his foot down by saying, ‘I can’t manage this park; I can’t make decisions if I constantly have to report to a local person’” (Interviewee).

There is recognition of tension in balancing constitutional demands of land restitution and nature conservation objectives without undermining the legitimacy of the organization. Politically, SANParks cannot afford to be viewed as opposing broader goals of societal transformation, and undermining opportunities of land restitution for black communities. At the same time, it has a legal mandate to protect nature and biodiversity conservation, and simultaneously expected to be sensitive to social and political demands of restitution. Dr. Mabunda argues that:

“...recent land claims against national parks might have unintended consequences of undermining this objective [biodiversity conservation] in that some icon national parks like the Kruger National Park may be reduced to so many different

owners that in reality its status becomes reduced to a conservancy. There are hard and uncomfortable decisions which may have to be made in regard to this possibility and it is the hope of SANParks that the best solution will be attained” **p, 9** (Annual Report 2004).

Despite rhetorical support of land restitution and commitment to land claims within SANParks, there is anxiety and discomfort about possible consequences of land claims on national parks. The tension within SANParks regarding land claims is reflected in competing sentiments in terms of settling “outstanding land claims without compromising the nature conservation mandate” **p, 10** (Annual Report 2004) as well as “supporting the national process to ensure that justice prevails in this regard” **p, 7** (Annual Report 2006). The rhetoric has prevailed in all three administrations (leadership). It is about projecting support for government policy while recognizing the real challenges that land claims pose for the management and integrity of national parks. This is particularly evident when the land claim involves a national park with huge financial, economic, and ecological value.

The impacts of land claims on the geography of national parks in South Africa have received huge national media attention. The concern has been that land claims and restitution settlement could potentially fragment the integrity of national parks (Figure 5-1: Land Claims in the Kruger National Park).

Figure 5-1: Land Claims in the Kruger National Park



Source: Mail & Guardian (2005)

For example, land claims within the Kruger National Park could theoretically fragment the Kruger into patches owned by different ethnic local communities. The question becomes whether local communities would gain title and form local “contractual” parks or symbolically given title with compensation while leaving the Kruger intact and under total management of SANParks. One park expert commented that “the patchwork ownership of Kruger is now coming to roost; there seems to be a ‘popcorn effect’ of land claims” (Interviewee). The land claims remain a challenging ongoing issue that could threaten the integrity of national parks (Annual Report 2004). SANParks’ Board chairperson, Cheryl Carolus, points that the issue of land claims poses a real challenge for the organization:

“For example, verified land claims against the Kruger National Park cover approximately 1 200 000 of the 2 000 000 ha of the park, including major tourist camps [Skukuza, Letaba, Lower Sabie, Punda Maria and Pretoriuskop]. If due consideration is not exercised, the impact on the park may compromise both biodiversity and tourism delivery” p, 4 (Annual Report 2007/2008).

Historically, the Kruger National Park was gradually pieced together from lands which local communities lost due to forced removals. It is a symbol of dispossession of black African communities over a long period. The outstanding land claims in Kruger National Park, South Africa's and SANParks flagship park, present real challenge for a new vision, innovation and critical thinking in terms of fashioning mutually beneficial partnerships and management regimes that advance interests of SANParks and local communities. Balancing the objectives of transformation, land restitution and nature conservation remains a challenge in post-apartheid South Africa (Ramutsindela 2001; 2003). Indeed, land claims in the Kruger will certainly test SANParks' commitment to broader goals of transformation, socially just conservation, and restitution. In addition, the land claims in the Kruger National Park allow us to revisit the transferability and suitability of the much-celebrated "Makuleke model" in addressing land restitution in the Kruger National Park. The "Makuleke model" cannot be a "one size-fits-all" approach to dealing with unique challenges in individual parks. The interviewees reiterated that land restitution in the Kruger National Parks has to take a "hard-nosed" acceptance that some parks cannot be fragmented to satisfy political objectives of land restitution:

"So purely from a hard-nosed perspective, the government can't afford to say, 'well we will redress history.' Obviously, we must redress history but in such a way that you don't undermine what is a very real economic asset for the country... But I think from a government perspective, it would be more about a hard-nosed acceptance of the fact that in international tourism industry, you can't tamper with Kruger. It would be suicidal to do that in an economic sense. So there are lots of proposals being floated in terms of giving people redress but not actually interfering much with the Kruger" (Interviewee).

Because of the unique contextual conditions in each park, park executives and senior managers have expressed the need to consider land restitution in each national park on the basis of individual merit against broader biodiversity conservation goals taking into account its economic and financial contribution to the nation and the integral health of the national park system respectively.

It appears the preferred model for restitution in the Kruger National Park is financial rather than giving the land claimants their land as what happened with the

Makuleke community. There is recognition of the legitimacy of historical dispossessions and the need to settle land claims, but the real challenge is the Kruger National Park is the financial backbone of SANParks and a critical economic asset for the country's tourism industry. Once the financial and economic factors are put into the equation, this changes the way that restitution is settled. Interviewees overwhelmingly indicated that "you can't tamper much with the Kruger" and thus redress has to ensure the integrity of Kruger National Park.

Another restitution case involves land claim on the whole Mapungubwe National Park; this poses major challenges on SANParks land claims policy and restitution approach. What the government has to determine is the criticality of Mapungubwe as part of not just South Africa's national cultural heritage but southern Africa cultural heritage. The park transcends national cultural boundaries, and therefore might require creative restitution models that do not necessarily entail granting the land claimants rights to land but rather other compensatory benefits. It is really a matter of balancing national and individual communities' interests. However, interviewees appeared confident that the restitution model for Kruger and Mapungubwe national parks would not involve allocating land to communities, and de-proclaiming the land from national park status (Interviewee). There is a principle decision of Cabinet that says, in addressing land claims in protected areas, people should not be settled in national parks but rather alternative settlement arrangement be made (Magome 2004).

These land claim examples show the dilemmas of transformation and dealing with social issues while ensuring that agency interests are not undermined. In addition, how SANParks deals with land claims is both a political and organizational process, which cannot be easily separated from both national and local politics of redress. Maneuvering the political landscape becomes an important aspect of leadership.

Dealing with outstanding land claims²⁰ requires navigating social and political landscapes with sensitivity and pragmatism, and thinking about possible solutions for each scenario. Dr. Mabunda has attempted to devise different possibilities for each scenario, and his real challenge is dealing with land claims in the Kruger National Parks. Given that over 50% of Kruger National Park is under land claim, which theoretically can break up the park, the envisaged solution would not be the Makuleke restitution-type model but some form of financial compensation.

There is a pragmatic understanding that giving the claimants rights to land in the Kruger National Park or have a co-management arrangement would pose major managerial and financial challenges for SANParks. While co-management options could be feasible in other parks such as Richtersveld and Mapungubwe, Kruger's financial and economic contribution to SANParks and South Africa's tourism respectively require innovative ways to address restitution. Several options are being considered:

“The options are co-management, financial payout, and leaseback. The leaseback involves ‘lease back from the community for 99 years’ or long-term lease as it were but our Board isn't really in favor of that for the Kruger. They would prefer financial payout with title staying in the hands of government” (Interviewee).

What is interesting is the change in SANParks' “tone” regarding land claims on national parks, especially in light of the profound implications of the verified land claims against Kruger National Park. It now appeals to securing the “public good” in settling land claims:

“SANParks supports the restitution process, but continues to caution that settling of land claims against national parks should not undermine or compromise the public good that these assets provide to the broader society” **p, 10** (Annual Report 2007/2008).

²⁰ In identifying corporate challenges, SANParks acknowledges that the absence of final consensus on the proposed settlement models as well as lack of financial resources to sustain post-settlement remain a risk to the success of land restitution (2006/07 Annual Report and Update on medium-term Expenditure for SANParks 16 & 17 October 2007, Portfolio Committee).

Therefore, SANParks leans towards options that buttress state-centrist, “command and control” management structure, and centralize power in the hands of the bureaucratic establishment. Instead of using the land claims to envision new forms of park management or re-conceptualize the existing national park model, SANParks would rather sustain the old system and “pacify” local communities through restitution incentives that do not accord full devolution to local communities. It appears SANParks is missing a window of opportunity to use land claims and restitution to optimize local indigenous knowledge in resource management by granting local communities decision-making authority on resource management (Ramutsindela 2003) and formulating new typologies of national park governance, which are radically different from the traditional national park model (Murphree 2004).

SANParks’ current park policies “seek to shore up a static system with concessionary and cosmetic forays into local participation” **p, 227** (Murphree 2004), and do not meaningfully empower local communities to share power with the bureaucratic-cum-scientific conservation establishment paradigm. Brechin *et al.* (2002) propose new ways of thinking about how to balance long-term interests of biodiversity and social objectives through socially just conservation, which is supposed to reflect congruence of parks-people interests.

According to Murphree, we can understand the future of national parks along the following two confrontational fault lines that characterize the debate on park policies and politics: “conflicts over long-term conservation goals and short-term livelihood and exploitative strategies, and conflicts over center and periphery interests” **p, 224** (Murphree 2004).

While it is imperative that national parks take into account local attitudes and needs in park management and policy decisions, there has to be a delicate balance between short-medium term interests of local communities and long-term interest of national parks. Magome (2004) states that it is the short-term and medium term attitudes of local people that determine whether a park survives or not; and the issues are around

development and poverty alleviation. In previous chapters, I have shown how the park authority has responded to social expectations and political demands by creating benefits for adjacent communities and structures to interface with local people as part of the transformation initiative. However, park managers' enlightened transformational pragmatism has sought to balance between local people's short-to-medium term interests and long-term interests of national parks. Conflict in these interests has to be management, and Dr. Mabunda has been creative in balancing those interests through government-funded (social responsibility and poverty relief) initiatives targeting neighboring communities. Dr. Mabunda has attempted to find commonality of interests between government, national parks and local communities in order to promote empowerment and restitution mechanisms that allow mutual benefits.

There are times he has taken some politically bold decisions concerning resource management, and which have not necessarily been popular with the black constituency. Some of the decisions have infuriated adjacent communities who were hoping to extract resources in national parks, but Dr. Mabunda chose to defend conservation objectives. For example, he refused to allow fishing in the Tsitsikamma National Park in the interests of conservation objectives despite the political signals that he was sending regarding issues of livelihoods and protecting resources within national parks. According to senior manager, this show that Dr. Mabunda was willing to defend conservation and proved that "conservation is not for sissies":

"Since he [Dr. Mabunda] started in the Kruger, he is not scared of becoming bold... For example, the Tsitsikamma fishing issue where the local people wanted to fish in the Tsitsikamma National Park, and so obviously with the Minister's support we have now decided that whatever the circumstance, we are not going to open the Tsitsikamma National Park for fishing by the local people. This is really making a very bold statement in the current democracy" (Interviewee).

Dr. Mabunda's resistance to fishing by local communities in the Tsitsikamma National Park reflects the dominant posture of the conservation bureaucracy, and fits well with the national park ideal that opposes sustainable resource use within national parks.

This imposes an inherent limitation on SANParks' ability to fashion creatively non-traditional links between parks and consumptive local livelihoods.

Park executives continuously face the challenge of balancing conservation objectives and demands for local socio-economic beneficiation. In addition, they are under constant pressure to deliver benefits to communities (Annual Report 2004). While political expediency may dictate that local communities harvest resources in national parks, it has to be measured against the impact of such choices on biodiversity conservation. In some instance, park executives and managers have to be willing to defy “politically-correctness” that compromise conservation objectives and advance the interests of the organization. Such defiance could engender opposition from local politicians and alienate SANParks from communities denied resource use. However, Mabunda succeeded in galvanizing political support for his decisions, and rallied political patrons - Ministers for the Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism (DEAT), Department of Water Affairs & Forestry (DWAF), and Department of Trade & Industry (DTI) - to support SANParks programs linked to broader government policies and initiatives on black empowerment and local economic development. Because of his political savvy, Dr. Mabunda managed to galvanize government funding for poverty relief and public works in national parks, and link the initiatives to local employment creation and enterprise development.

The real challenge for SANParks is creating fresh park philosophy and social innovations in protected area management (Reid *et al.* 2004). The objective of transformation in post-apartheid park management should be to accommodate the interests of previously disadvantaged communities:

“What about what people want? People want to get economic return from land use and wildlife, and this requires new ways or innovations. Why should the Kruger National Park be run on a standard national park model? Could it be run in a different way; as a regional park with local people as proprietors; as an area that is a kaleidoscope with different land uses? A national park does not have to be one contiguous park area but rather a large area with integrated conservation and

development planning taking into account potential socio-economic benefits linked to conservation” (Interviewee).

The above statement highlights the need to consciously re-conceptualize the standard national park model, and focus on socially progressive conservation. It questions the national park model that has historically shaped park-people relations. Therefore, there has to be a critique of the inherited park model, and expose its constraints on socio-economic development of black African communities living adjacent to national parks.

Contradictory Outcomes

SANParks transformation has had some contradictory outcomes. I examine some of the contradictions in SANParks “people and conservation” initiatives (“benefits beyond boundaries”) and park expansion under Dr. Mabunda’s leadership. In July 2003, Dr. Razeena Wagiet, a former advisor to the Minister of Education and expert in environmental education, was appointed the Executive Director of the newly formed People and Conservation directorate with the mandate to spearhead environmental education and build constituency for conservation (Annual Report 2004). Other new executive appointments²¹ included the Executive Director of Parks, Mr. Paul Daphne, and Executive Director of Kruger National Parks, Dr. Bandile Mkhize replacing Dr. David Mabunda.

In previous chapters I explained the shortcomings of SANParks transformation initiatives in fundamentally changing parks-people relations, and developing new practices. While there was success in transforming racial profile of management and creating new structures to deal with neighboring communities, professional posture and organizational culture in SANParks inhibited opportunities for radical change in park

²¹ Mr. Paul Daphne has extensive experience on conservation and development, and worked as a senior bureaucrat in provincial government of the North West province in South Africa. Dr. Bandile Mkhize has a PhD on nature tourism focusing on “the meaning and expression of tourism among urban blacks” (Mail and Guardian, May 7-13, 2004). These appointments indicated an emerging commitment to ensuring that national parks develop the capacity to provide benefits beyond boundaries through mutual beneficial relations and building a stakeholder constituency of previously disadvantaged communities.

management approach. This remains a huge challenge for professionally dominated organizations (Nutt 2004). I examine below some of the contradictions in SANParks' people and conservation initiatives, and link them to capacity constraints and professional posture that have block radical changes in core park management practices. As a professionally dominated organization, SANParks tends to drive an agenda that rests on maintaining bureaucratic power and interests. This does not imply lack of compromise to accommodate external interests.

Park Expansion

The expansion of the national park estate has been encouraged in order to meet both national and international expectations on percentage of protected area land. In South Africa, the target is to increase state protected area from 6% to 8% by 2010 (Annual Report 2004; Annual Report 2007). As a result, SANParks has undertaken land acquisition projects to expand and consolidate the conservation estate under SANParks' management as well as ensure that the national park estate covers under-conserved biodiversity (Annual Report 2006). Dr. Mabunda regards land acquisition for park expansion as “the catalyst to enhance both economic and social opportunities” **p, 11** (Annual Report 2006). Interestingly, park expansion serves the interests of large (mega) protectionist parks, and poses challenges for local communities despite the rhetoric of socio-economic opportunities and sustainable development. Park expansion has unintended consequences of locking potential land for local agriculture and alternative uses in the hands of conservation, and possibly result in land dispossession of some people. Despite the rhetoric of local empowerment,

“The issue of transferring power to people is a contradiction itself. We are rendering people powerless as we buy up more land to expand national parks. While we have to buy land, they [local people] can't live in those lands... It's an issue that we have to deal with as we talk about restitution... Look at the Eastern Cape, and look at how much land has been bought, and the displacement of alternative land use practices as a result of conservation efforts. And what are we leaving behind? In the Eastern Cape, conservation had taken over land, and changing land that was used for agriculture and growing crops. And fences are

going up. People are being kicked out of their places, and it appears there is a contradiction. Instead of giving people their land, the land is being locked up in conservation. So it's a bit contradictory but at the same time it goes back to the issue that certain percentage of land needs to be in conservation. It is not an innocent statement. If we say we want to see more land in the hands of conservation, it's not a neutral statement. It's loaded with problems itself" (Interviewee).

SANParks' initiatives on land acquisition and park expansion are characterized by abovementioned contradictions; and park expansion with possibilities of land dispossession and disempowerment of previously disadvantaged communities.

“Benefits beyond Boundaries”

“I think in all earnest the resources that we dedicate to conservation, particularly to social issues, is almost pacifying. It is a pacification effort so that you soften the way people view conservation, the way park neighbors view conservation. It has something to do with our brand of conservation” (Interviewee).

SANParks' People and Conservation Department has spearheaded the implementation of people-oriented conservation, empowerment projects, environmental education, and constituency building among historically disadvantaged communities. Several environmental education initiatives such as “Kids in Parks,” “The Morula Kids Art Competition,” “Take Kruger to *Kasie* [township]” have exposed national parks to local communities, and amplified benefits of national parks to previously marginalized communities (Annual Report 2006).

Other initiatives include the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) that have a budget of over R100 million a year earmarked for a variety of labor-intensive projects. Alien species clearing, infrastructure development, Coast Care, and Working for Water projects are geared towards temporary job-creation and empowerment of rural communities. In these projects, national parks are used as springboards for economic beneficiation for surrounding communities. The government-funded EPWP is the vehicle for local employment and enterprise development in national parks. Inasmuch as the

primary legislative mandate of SANParks is conservation, SANParks executives acknowledge that local economy and community members have to benefit from national parks, and this has strategic implications for SANParks’ long-term survival and legitimacy. SANParks has delivered targeted benefits to communities (Table 5-1: “People and Conservation” Performance Targets and Results 2006/2007).

Table 5-1: "People and Conservation" Performance Targets and Results 2006/2007

“People and Conservation” Performance Targets & Results	
Key Performance Target	Performance Results
Environmental Education Programs 85,000 learners in educational programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100,000 learners (118%) went through Environmental Education Programs. Kids in Parks & Imbewu Projects are dedicated programs for disadvantaged youths. They rely on external funding, and often threatened by limited staff resources. • 18,000 South Africans gained free access to National Parks over 5 days of the National Parks Week. Park based education programs are largely dependent on external funding, and limited park resources may hinder delivery.
Removal of alien invasive species 121,315ha of follow-up clearing	126,834ha (104%) achieved
Expanded Public Works Program 100% on projects related to infrastructure upgrading program	100% achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 3 year cycle (ended in year under review): 363 SMEs created of which 330 are Black enterprises; 8,119 people employed
Broad Based Transformation Achieve “good BEE Contributor” status in Tourism BEE Charter & Scorecard 50% procurement value from BEE compliant suppliers Employment Equity ratio of 94% as % of all employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Good BEE Contributor • 52.96% procurement value from BEE compliant suppliers achieved • 96.7% achieved

Source: SANParks Annual Report 2006/07

The abovementioned programs are part of an overall focus on building relationships with surrounding communities and getting buy-in for conservation. National parks are treated as integral part of local economy rather than alien systems that take land out of the local economy. The Poverty Relief (or Social Responsibility) initiatives generate tangible benefits for park neighboring communities. Local communities are also exposed to conservation through these initiatives as they work.

However, these poverty relief and public works initiatives have had unintended social consequences for local communities despite the positive effects on local livelihoods. The negative social effects include alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, and financial problems. A detailed study of the impact of parks and the Expanded Public Works Program was initiated by DEAT and SANParks to ascertain both positive and negative effects on communities and economy.

Several scholars and practitioners have argued that protected areas should promote local socio-economic development (Anderson & Grove 1987; Brechin *et al.* 2003; Child 2004; Ellis 1994; Fabricius & Koch 2004; Honey 1999a; Hulme & Murphree 2001; Magome 2003; West & Brechin 1991). However, calls for integrating conservation and development have been met with opposition (Brandon *et al.* 1998; Hutton *et al.* 2005; Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Wilshusen *et al.* 2002). The critics argue that expanding the functions of national parks beyond conservation to incorporate development compromises the ability of conservation agency to meet conservation objectives. They argue that this imposes constraints on national parks' capacity to deliver their core mandate of biodiversity conservation. Such polarization in thinking has dominated the debate on whether national parks should have a dual responsibility of biodiversity conservation and local socio-economic development.

Neumann (1998) argues that national parks are responsible for the poverty and underdevelopment that encircle them, and therefore have a moral obligation to address poverty and local underdevelopment. Parks are therefore expected to create "benefits beyond boundaries." Once framed in mutually exclusive terms, it becomes difficult to

advance and implement park-people innovations that are mutually beneficial to conservation and development. The literature on integrated conservation and development programs (ICDPs) provide insights on the opportunities and constraints in balancing conservation and development objectives (Mutenga 2002; Saberwal *et al.* 2001; Western *et al.* 1994; Zube & Busch 1990).

The question is no longer about whether SANParks should promote local socio-economic beneficiation but rather what strategy serves its interests. In the interviews, park executives clearly emphasized that SANParks does not have a developmental role because the legislation is clear on what its role is. Therefore, SANParks cannot assume that role since it is assigned to other government institutions. Contrary to Neumann's (1998) assertion that national parks should assume responsibility for addressing rural poverty and underdevelopment, some interviewees suggested that that responsibility lies with the government:

“It's not SANParks responsibility. It's President Thabo Mbeki's responsibility... The responsibility is clearly spelt out in the Act. So the Act doesn't say SANParks will be an engine of rural development; it says SANParks will be responsible for looking after the elephant, wildlife and nature” (Interviewee).

There were strong sentiments that SANParks can only facilitate local socio-economic development and assist other government institutions mandated with the responsibility for poverty alleviation:

“We are not responsible for socio-economic development in South Africa. Other government departments have that responsibility. But what we are saying is that we, through our national parks, will facilitate socio-economic development. SANParks will play only a facilitating role; we are not responsible for socio-economic development, we are responsible for conservation and that is our mandate” (Interviewee).

In order to facilitate government efforts in addressing rural poverty and underdevelopment, SANParks expects the government to provide funds and resources to support its initiatives. In essence, SANParks becomes an implementing agency for

government's poverty relief and public works programs. SANParks has used people-oriented conservation initiatives such as the Expanded Public Works Program, Working for Water/Invasive Alien Clearing initiative, Coast Care, Poverty Relief Project, and/or Social Responsibility Program of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism to leverage government efforts and funds to facilitate rural development without assuming the core mandate of development. Dr. Mabunda introduced a project management portfolio in SANParks to ensure that the agency strengthens its capacity to manage efficiently those government-funded programs. These initiatives are transformational, and highlight a major departure from SANParks' historical park management approach.

Another dilemma faced by SANParks is managing community expectations on the role of national parks in local development. Previous studies (Magome 2004; Picard 2000, 2003) indicate that short-term and medium term attitudes of local people determine whether a park survives or not. With the transition to democracy, black South Africans' expectations on parks and development require managing (Magome 2004). One interviewee commented passionately that SANParks' "responsibility actually stops at the fence" (Interviewee). The senior park manager argued that legislation is very clear on SANParks mandate despite calls for a "developmental role" outside the park boundaries - there is a clear dilemma posed by societal expectations on "developmental role" of national parks since legislation sets a clear mandate on biodiversity conservation and management of heritage assets. Despite this dilemma, the park executives recognize that legitimacy, survival, and long-term interests of national parks are predicated on how SANParks responds social interests and balances self-interests (strategic objectives) against situational contingencies:

"We recognize that in terms of legislation, our primary mandate is conservation but that attached to it is the beneficiation of local economy. I think an argument that would say that there is a contradiction between a developmental role and a conservation role would have to be seen within the context that one finds PAs... To present that argument within a context where there is tremendous legacy of unaddressed needs, tremendously high levels of unemployment, and extreme poverty, all the indicators indicating that there is an enormous developmental

challenge in that context and that parks shouldn't be instruments for development, really can be a self-defeating argument. If one doesn't promote the notion of parks as nodes of development in rural areas, the very existence of those PAs in the long-term may be threatened. Consequently, there is a moral obligation to address developmental needs. It is in the interest of conservation that impoverished communities surrounding PAs should benefit from these areas, otherwise the day will come when they will simply walk in and take over PAs" (Interview).

The above statement clearly demonstrates "enlightened self-interest," and compelling organizational motivation to address rural poverty and facilitate development efforts inasmuch as the legislative mandate restricts SANParks from assuming a developmental role. Contrary to the expectation that national parks should not assume developmental responsibility (Magome 2004) because of functional (jurisdictional) authority that restricts responsibility to conservation of biodiversity, landscapes and associated heritage assets, it appears SANParks has been creative in facilitating local socio-economic development. Its enlightened sense of responsibility seems to be the central motivation for finding ways to improve relations with its neighbors. The above quotation reflects that sense of moral and social responsibility to meeting needs of adjacent communities and larger society; in the process SANParks becomes an morally responsible organization driven by enlightened self-interests – "self-interests, shared-interests, and altruistic-interests" (Ikerd 1999).

In the final analysis, SANParks has not waited for perfect institutional conditions to change or legislative efforts to expand its mandate to integrate local socio-economic development objectives with its core mandate of conservation. It has proactively pursued socially responsive conservation initiatives and broader objectives of black empowerment, and mobilized resources for addressing rural poverty. SANParks has expanded voluntarily the scope of its responsibility beyond its legislative mandate. This shows that natural resource bureaucracies are capable of responding to challenges of rural poverty and societal expectations contrary to literature that assumes they resist change and entrench poverty (Neumann 1998; West 1994).

The findings question the general assumption that legislation has to be changed to create a dual mandate in order to enable conservation bureaucracies to focus their performance on conservation and socio-economic development objectives. While legislatively broadening the functional authority of SANParks beyond conservation to implement socio-economic development would be ideal, it is important that we also appreciate how SANParks has creatively tapped into existing institutional arrangements and incentives to advance noble socio-economic objectives. Rather than regarding it universally “difficult when a leader wants to be more proactive than a legislative authority sees appropriate or necessary, or when it calls for acting on needs that exceed the organization’s capacity” p, 25 (Nutt 2004), progressive leadership does not wait for legislative changes but create conditions that enable conservation agencies to satisfy both conservation and social objectives.

Elephant Culling Controversy and Cultural Rigidity

The concern over the impact of elephants on the Kruger National Park has been a subject of intense debate and controversy of management action. SANParks suspended elephant culling as a management option²² in 1995. When SANParks proposed to reintroduce elephant culling as a management option, there was a huge outcry from animal welfare activists (Pickover 2005), and matter became a public relations nightmare. SANParks had traditionally relied on internal scientists for core decisions on wildlife management, and overlooked the growing power and influence of animal welfare advocates.

In a country where participatory resource management and public accountability is emphasized, it is surprising that SANParks would underestimate the influence of opposing stakeholders in managing such a controversial resource management decision. SANParks had largely managed the elephant issue in-house and never bounced ideas with

²² For a policy brief on elephant management, the following references are useful: (a) Scholes, R. J. and Mennell, K. G. (n.d.) *Elephant Management: A Scientific Assessment for South Africa – Summary for Policymakers*; (b) SANParks (2008) *An Introduction to a new Elephant Management Policy for South African National Parks*, Pretoria: SANParks.

stakeholders or the public (Interviewee). SANParks conservationists “always believed that managing an ecosystem requires managing the population, and we culled animals. And we believed it” (Interviewee).

SANParks overlooked consulting well-known scientists outside the organization and building public awareness and coalition around the “elephant problem” (Interviewee). In the meantime, the elephant population in the Kruger National Park was exploding to numbers that threatened biodiversity conservation. When SANParks decided to re-introduce culling, it was met with strong opposition.

A simple learning lesson was missed; when you are managing parks for the public, you engage them in debate on controversial issues and find out how they expect the problem to be dealt with. With the public outcry, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism leaned his sympathetic ear to the public because of politics, and gave a grant of R5 million to the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) to investigate elephant management options. This Ministerial move raised questions about SANParks’ expertise and knowledge at the time, and SANParks lost face:

“We have lost face with the Minister on this issue. We lost our integrity... The Minister should be saying, ‘SANParks, I want to hear what you say, please tell me how I should deal with this.’ So if the Minister now appoints another panel to look into the issue, you have lost face....The second point is the Minister gave R5 million to SANBI to investigate the options around elephant management...So this is why I am saying we have lost our integrity; our integrity lost because we are clued up” (Interviewee).

The above statement illustrates that SANParks did not fully assess the changes in the social and political landscape of nature conservation, and how public accountability in resource management decisions was increasingly gaining currency. It was no longer acceptable to operate and make decisions “business as usual.” SANParks should have lobbied public support and rallied external expertise to show that the expanding elephant population was a threat to biodiversity, and hence culling as a management option was critical.

SANParks kept the debate internal and believed that the way it had traditionally managed elephant population through culling and non-involvement of public in this decision was the “right way of doing things and dealing the issue of elephant overpopulation”²³ (Interviewee). This rigidity in elephant management practice became a barrier to innovative stakeholder management, and organization was surprised when the Minister sought advice from SANBI - “we were caught napping until the Minister took over” (Interviewee). The controversy surrounding elephant culling highlights how SANParks’ inward-looking had unintended consequences, and triggered public outcry as a result of the agency’s lack of public accountability. Inasmuch as there was a compelling reason to advance elephant culling, the political process of getting public buy-in should have been a strategic step to transforming SANParks’ interface with stakeholders and leverage accountability and legitimacy for its action. Managing stakeholder relationships and constituency accountability is now a managerial challenge for 21st century national parks, and park executives (conservationists) can no longer hide behind the mantra of ecological management. Parks have to deal simultaneously with social, political and ecological processes and responsibilities.

In February 2008, Mr. Marthinus van Schalkwky, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism announced the approval of the Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa that lifted of the 13 year old ban on elephant culling, which SANParks had self-imposed (Annual Report 2007/2008).

²³ The rigidity in conservation thinking with regards to elephant management has to be understood in the context of challenges of changing professionally dominated organizations. Wildlife experts and conservation ecologists have a strong professional culture, and believe their strategy for wildlife management rests on their perceived capacity. Therefore, when their capacity was questioned in face of media reports and public outcry on elephant culling controversy, they were forced to reexamine their role and rebuild their image of competence. Dr. Magome, the Director of Conservation Services engaged public debates to reassure South Africans about SANParks’ competence on managing the elephant population as well as defend past practices that brought success in conservation and elephant management.

Rethinking Conservation Model and Park Management Processes

“I think what constitutes a national park is in the process of being thoroughly debated and reviewed” (Interviewee).

Some of South Africa’s national parks have historically been established because of single species. For example, the Bontebok National Park for the antelope bontebok (*Damaliscus pygargus*), Addo National Park for elephants, and Mountain Zebra National Park for mountain zebras (*Equus zebra*). In recent years, this has changed since national parks are being established to represent South Africa’s biodiversity, landscapes and associated heritage assets, which are more than just a single species. While cultural heritage has been added as an integral aspect of conservation, biodiversity conservation remains a core mandate and fundamental aspect that defines how SANParks carries out its business. The park executives identified this change as “an example of transformation, which doesn’t relate to race and color, or people issues; it is about the conservation thinking, and that is the change in the conservation thinking” (Interviewee). There have been efforts to increase the “right mix of biomes represented within the protected area (national park) matrix or system” (Interviewee).

Another “transformation” identified by interviewees is the shift away from the “fences approach” to contiguous parks connected with landscapes with different land uses. Some of the new parks “have been established around key biodiversity aspects in the succulent Karoo and in the Agulhas, where you will not find fences, and you will witness aspects of resource use” (Interviewee). Interviewees felt that this shift away from fences and allowing sustainable resource use in national parks offers new opportunities for rethinking SANParks conservation model:

“We are busy establishing in the Garden Route, a Garden Route National Park that would comprise discrete components of protected areas, indigenous forests, mountain catchments areas, marine protected areas, lake systems... In between you will find communities, you will find agriculture, and the real project there is to develop a national park within a bioregional planning context. So even outside the defined protected area, we will engage in stewardship programs, we would try and contract in private landowners in order to ensure that the conservation project

doesn't stop at the proclaimed park boundary. We would be looking in certain areas at sustainable resource use... There will be sustainable use of indigenous timber within the proclaimed forest national park, and we will introduce a new model of protected area management" (Interviewee).

This is certainly a huge departure from SANParks traditional park model. It recognizes the need to harmonize people-park issues, adaptively manage conservation, and "not exclude people but rather make them benefit while we manage parks for the sustainability of biodiversity and cultural heritage" (Interviewee). Sustainable harvesting of resources with national parks is increasingly being promoted in SANParks but in a measured manner. It is not yet official policy that all national parks allow sustainable use; the refusal by Dr. Mabunda to allow local fishing in Tsitsikamma National Park highlights that sustainable use is done on a case-by-case basis, and some national parks will not have sustainable resource use.

Another innovation linked to SANParks transformation is the Conservation Development Framework (CDF), a zoning process that ensures park management plans incorporate conservation and development objectives. It is a tool for defining and representing spatial aspects of the desired state of the park according to conservation and tourism objectives. Specific zones of a park are designed for specific conservation and tourism activities. The zones range on a continuum from high-density areas (with lot of development activities) to low-density areas (where no development occurs, and the environment is maintained in its pristine state to protect sensitive species/ecosystems). The CDF determines how the park is managed from a conservation point of view, and indicates where tourism facilities can be put up, roads built or not. The CDF is an innovation that emerged in SANParks under Dr. Mabunda's leadership. This innovation informs park management plans, and meets the zoning requirements of the Protected Areas Act of 2003.

SANParks now recognizes the challenges of managing complex ecosystems and biodiversity with incomplete knowledge of their behavior. Hence, "strategic adaptive

management²⁴” has been adopted as the guiding management tool to deal with complexity and uncertainty, and conserve biodiversity in national parks. This represents a shift in management thinking in terms of biodiversity conservation and ecological management, and stakeholders are invited to participate in designing a shared vision for a desired state of a national park that meets their values and needs within SANParks mandate. This organizational planning process in park management demonstrates SANParks effort to track and adapt to societal values, and building them into its organizational adaptive management practices and procedures (Nyambe 2005). It is conceivable that SANParks could have mitigated or avoided the public outcry against elephant culling proposals had it strategically engaged its stakeholders on this question and shaped their understanding of the costs of elephant overpopulation on biodiversity and ecological integrity of national parks. This required engaging stakeholders in the complex social, political, technical, and ecological dimensions of elephant management, and articulating costs for the “desired state” of national parks.

Land Acquisition and Park Expansion

During interviews, park executives and managers justified SANParks’ land acquisition and park expansion strategy and felt that the national park system (conservation estate) needed to be expanded to meet government commitments of having more land “in the hands of conservation” (Interviewee). Only one senior manager identified the dilemma of expanding the conservation estate. The appropriative and expansionist strategies reflect continuity in park bureaucracy’s behavior in both colonial and post-colonial eras:

“We need to understand the appropriative dynamics and motivations for designating parks during colonialism. You also have to understand the reasons for maintaining and expanding parks by post-independence African governments. You notice that they have changed the people in leadership in the national park system but leaving the appropriative and oppressive system intact. A critical look

²⁴ Strategic adaptive management refers to acting with foresight (strategic), learning while doing (adaptive), and engaging as well as empowering stakeholders (participatory) in management of natural resources and conservation (Annual Report 2007/2008).

behind the politics shows you that this is an outcome of political economic interests” (Interviewee).

Murphree (2004) explains the continuity of appropriative behavior of the conservation bureaucratic establishment on the basis of political economic interests. The expansion serves these interests, including state proprietorship of wildlife resources. One might argue that interests of the politico-economic center prevail rather than those of local communities when it comes to expanding boundaries of national parks. It is not necessarily the geography of parks that is a problem but the epistemology of park policy. Fundamental changes in park policy are required to make national parks more responsive to socio-economic realities of park neighboring communities. Murphree (2004) proposes a conceptual framework to bring about changes in park policy by moving from old to new approaches (Table 5-2: Conceptual Approach in Changing Park Policy):

Table 5-2: Conceptual Approach in Changing Park Policy

Old approach	New approach
Determinative	Contingent
Focused on structure	Focused on process
Prescriptive	Adaptive
Impositional	Facilitative
Reductionist	Systemic “...parks as one component in a complex socio-biological system with adaptive cycles of growth, accumulation, restructuring and renewal.”
Immutability	Resilience

Source: Adapted from Murphree (2004, p. 224)

There have been efforts within SANParks to develop adaptive park models that suit different contextual realities and challenges by focusing on processes, adaptive management, and facilitating collaboration with adjacent communities. The proposed Garden Route National Park would certainly deviate from the “Kruger model.” In addition, there is also an ongoing debate in SANParks about findings ways to integrate the “people and conservation” function seamlessly with core park management activities. As one executive comments, “we are forcing ourselves to understand the picture” (Interviewee) in light of emergent demands and changing context of park management in post-apartheid South Africa.

However, it remains to be seen whether fundamental changes in the dominant park model will occur considering that SANParks is a professionally dominated organization with a considerably strong culture that leans towards the “protectionist, national park model.” Critics argue that SANParks’ historical bias towards the protectionist model of biodiversity conservation (or national park ideal) undermines its capacity to respond to community-based conservation (Cock & Fig 2002) or “socially-just conservation” (Brechtin *et al.* 2003). Contrary to this criticism, SANParks has adapted its park management model to suit contingent factors, and therefore characterizing the park model as monolithic is erroneous.

It is imperative that we pay attention to SANParks’ multiple and adaptive responses to new demands, new constituent expectations, shifting socio-political agendas, and changes in institutional prescriptions (Nutt 2004). The findings show that SANParks has been able to transform old systems, structures, and park policies to allow new ones compatible with new challenges to emerge. It has also mobilized resources and carried out transformation agendas related to black empowerment, local socio-economic development, land restitution, social justice and equity, and poverty alleviation; these issues were not paid attention to in the pre-reform era. In the process, SANParks has profited socially, politically and financially from advancing broader goals of transformation and black empowerment.

In the next section, I explore Dr. Mabunda’s efforts to transform SANParks’ organizational performance by introducing business management principles of efficiency and operational excellence.

SANParks Key Strategic Goals and Operational Excellence

“We are not trying to be a profit making organization, however we need to have so much efficiencies such that whatever income that is leveraged can be used to promote the iceberg [conservation] which is the public good activity of the organization” (Interviewee).

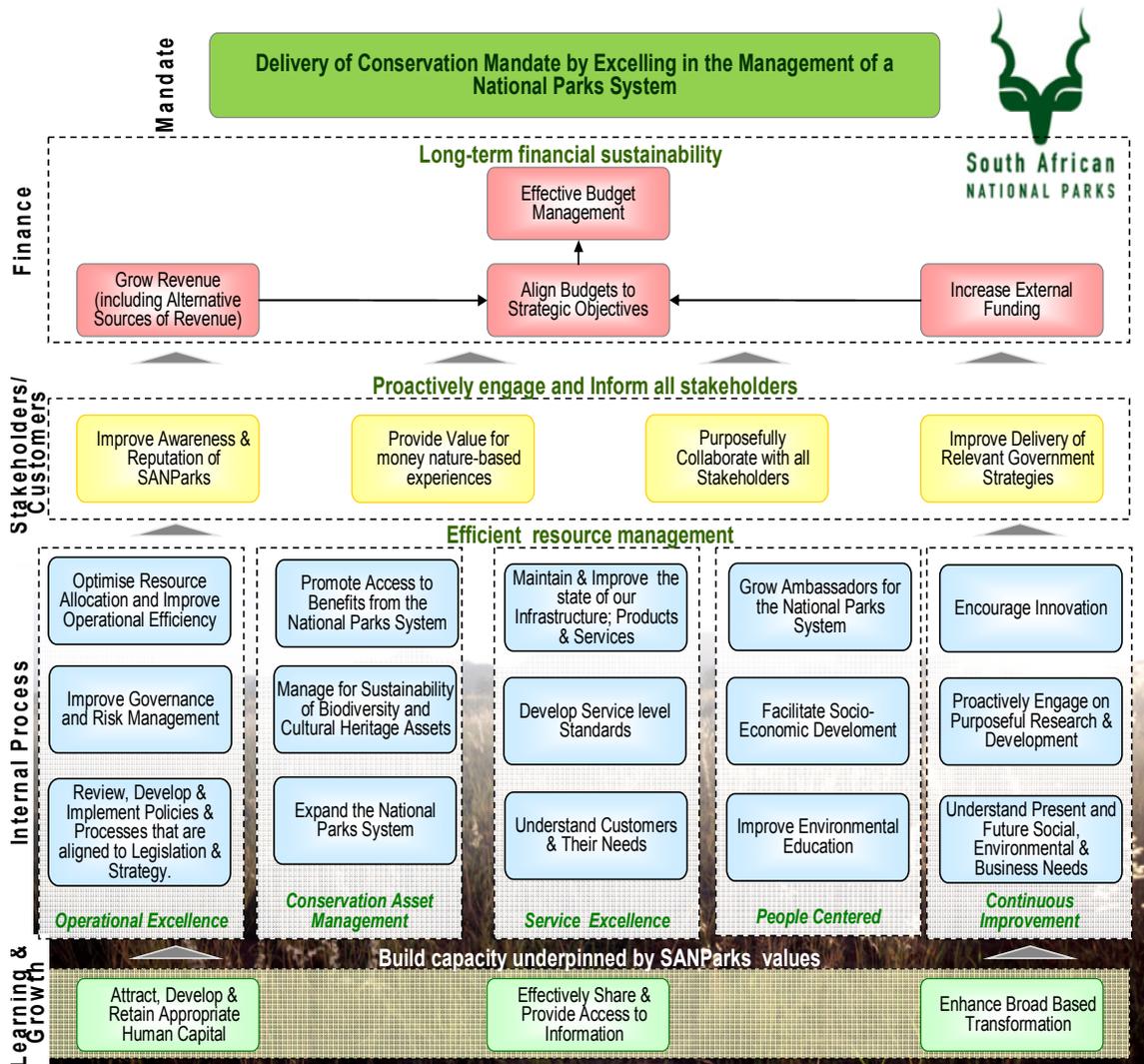
Dr. Mabunda dedicated his tenure to create a “businesslike” national park agency premised on “effective and efficient management of the business through the introduction of processes and systems aimed at getting the organization to adopt business management best practices, and ensure that a performance driven culture is promoted and embraced” p, 4 (SANParks Business Plan 2007/2008). He argues that SANParks’ ability to deliver the biodiversity conservation mandate rests on efficient management and sustainable financing of the national park system.

Looking back at his past experience with “Operation Prevail” and the financial difficulties in the Kruger National Park, Dr. Mabunda has chosen to take long-term strategic repositioning of SANParks, and focus on improving its performance. The Deloitte and Touché Report had indicted Mr. Msimang’s leadership for SANParks financial crisis and mismanagement, and this experience was a lesson for Dr. Mabunda and he wanted to ensure that “there were checks and balances which were never there before” (Interviewee). He created a position of Chief Operating Officer, and appointed Mr. Sydney Soundy, manage the day-to-day functions and operation of SANParks. He wanted to focus on strategic issues, build political support and coalition for SANParks’ activities, and lobby government and donors.

To achieve the targets in his business plans, Dr. Mabunda felt that a performance management system was needed to gauge SANParks performance with regards to strategy and a wide range of activities. He introduced the Balanced Scorecard²⁵ (BSC) in the 2005/6 financial year to assist SANParks implement its strategy and manage organizational performance. The BSC is a tool to measure business performance, strategy execution and management (Figure 5-2: SANParks Strategic Map and Balanced Scorecard).

²⁵ The BSC is a framework or “strategic management system” that incorporates all quantitative and abstract measures relevant to the organization or enterprise. Kaplan R S and Norton D P (1996) “Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy into Action” Harvard Business School Press; Kaplan R S and Norton D P (1993) "Putting the Balanced Scorecard to Work", *Harvard Business Review* September–October p, 2-16.

Figure 5-2: SANParks Strategic Map and Balanced Scorecard



Sources: SANParks (2007)

The figure shows the various dimensions of performance management, key strategic objectives, and essentially represents SANParks business architecture. According to SANParks' Chief Operating Officer Mr. Sydney Soundy, the BSC enables SANParks to translate strategy into operational terms, align the entire organization to the strategy, ensure that employees support organizational strategy, and trigger a continuous process of innovation (Go Wild, January 2008). It is an instrument to transform performance management and change culture in SANParks.

The BSC incorporates financial, customer, internal processes, learning and growth as four general categories (perspectives) that constitute performance measures. The financial perspective focuses on improving income to cost ratio, growing revenue,²⁶ and developing alternative funding sources to meet the cost of conservation. The customer perspective relates to building sound relationship with stakeholders and customers, enhancing SANParks reputation, and contributing to local environmental education and socio-economic development. It seeks to make SANParks a nature-based tourism destination of choice, transform the domestic guest profile, and ensure that the national parks reflect South Africa's demographic representation. Several stakeholder initiatives such as park forums and environmental education programs like "Kids in Parks" and "South Africa National Parks Week" demonstrate efforts to build constituency in support of national parks.

The internal processes focus on core activities and processes that deliver the value proposition in a productively and efficient manner. These internal processes include 1) conservation – SANParks delivering the biodiversity and heritage management mandate; 2) people and conservation – building a constituency for people-centered conservation and tourism; and 3) tourism – developing and growing a sustainable nature-based tourism business for SANParks. Tourism pillar of the business architecture focuses on generating revenue from commercial operations in order to fund and supplement government funding for conservation. The commercialization strategy is an element of the tourism pillar. Its objective is to reduce cost of delivery, leverage private sector investment and expertise, and expand tourism products as well as improve SANParks' service levels. The learning and growth perspective is the base of any strategy and focuses on the intangible assets of an organization such as internal skills and capabilities required to sustain the value-creating internal processes. It is concerned with human capital, information capital (systems), and organizational capital (climate²⁷) of the enterprise. To realize achieve

²⁶ Development Economists, a consulting firm, analyzed financial performance of SANParks, and concluded that "the total profit of SANParks for the 2005/2006 financial year was approximately R14,2 million, 3171 jobs have been sustained and an amount of R204,9 million has been paid towards human resource services" (SANParks March 2008, Executive Summary of the Study, "SANParks: Economic Impact Assessment").

²⁷ In 2007, SANParks embarked on an organizational climate survey to assess the prevailing climate within

superior organizational performance, SANParks has also embarked on measures to improve culture of learning and employee development (Annual Report 2006; Go Wild October 2006; Go Wild January 2008).

Why is the BSC so important? It demonstrates SANParks efforts in transforming organizational performance on a wide range of key strategic issues. For example, SANParks' internal process focused on marketing national parks to black customers and attracting them to visit national parks is bearing fruit (Annual Report 2004). The increase in numbers of black visitors to national parks reflects the success of SANParks "corporate strategy of transforming the domestic guest profile" p, 7 (Annual Report 2006). The domestic tourist market among black South Africans has grown from 11.7% to 18.8% (Annual Report 2006). SANParks continues to raise public awareness on national parks, and has been promoting new products to attract the emerging market. The current business architecture shows that Dr. Mabunda understands the business case for building constituencies that support conservation and national parks. The black constituency is an untapped market for tourism with potential for increasing revenue for national parks. Apart from the business case, getting black South Africans to participate in biodiversity activities and involved in park forums increases social and political support for national parks as well as a sense of "ownership" of national parks by adjacent communities. Having neighboring black communities benefit socio-economically from national parks changes the nature and sense of relationship between parks and poor communities.

SANParks commercialization strategy has helped generate revenue, promote broad-based black economic empowerment (Department of Trade and Industry 2003), and create local employment opportunities and socio-economic benefits through public-private partnerships²⁸ (PPP), and government-funded projects. Cultural heritage has been

the organization, and it was a follow up on organizational development interventions that had occurred in the last 3 years. Organizational Diagnostics was the service provider (consultancy), and the survey sample was about 31.4% of SANParks employee complement of 3000 (Go Wild February 2008).

²⁸ Public-private partnerships (PPP) are mutually-beneficial commercial transactions between public sector entities and their private sector partners regarding use of public goods. Commercialization initiatives are premised on PPP on a wide array of projects, including retail, restaurants, accommodation, lodges, and

elevated as a corporate strategic objective; and several cultural heritage resource management initiatives in Mapungubwe, Kruger, Tsitsikamma, Agulhas, and Bontebok National Parks now exist. The summary of SANParks performance on selected key performance areas is listed below (Table 5-3: SANParks Selected Performance Target and Results Based on Balanced Scorecard).

Table 5-3: SANParks' Selected Performance Target and Results Based on Balanced Scorecard

Key Performance Target	Performance Results
Financial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve break-even budget • Improve income to cost ratio to 78% • Grow revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1% surplus achieved • 82% achieved • Sales strategy and model reviewed; unit & bed occupancies up by 4.8% & 5.8%; visitors to parks grew by 9.5%; 7% growth in wild cards
Customer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85,000 learners in environmental educational programs • Enhance SANParks reputation • Black visitors to parks – 22% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100,000 learners (118%) went through environmental education programs • Challenge being to improve from “Parks Board” to transformed “SANParks” image • 18% achieved
Internal Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituency building through park forums. 80% of parks to have legitimate and operational Park Forums • Grading of facilities - 100% of tourism products graded as per Tourism Grading Council requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% achieved (budget constraints) • 90% achieved
Innovation and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership & Management Development; 98% of coaching & mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% achieved – 13 mentors & 40 protégés participated in development program

Source: Annual Report 2006/2007

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have shown how Dr. Mabunda has transformed SANParks “business model” by focus on organizational performance management and injecting

others activities. SANParks has through its commercialization strategy been able to receive an income of more than R54 million from existing and new concession agreements, reflecting growth income of over 15% (Annual Report 2007/2008).

entrepreneurial principles into SANParks. He has set in motion fundamental changes in park management thinking and practices in an effort to weaken bureaucratic rigidities (Nutt 2004; Child 2004). However, it is still premature to make conclusive statements about the deep of transformation caused by the BSC suffice to say that SANParks has become a strategic organization. A closer examination of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and implementation of government-funded programs (e.g., expanded public works, poverty relief projects) show organizational ingenuity in advancing organizational interests while promoting government objectives of transformation and black empowerment. The implementation of SANParks' socio-economic programs reflects strategic and pragmatic inclinations, and the capacity to mobilize commercialization strategy and government funding to increase investment funding and benefits to national parks, and contribute to broad-based black economic empowerment and local development opportunities. In the process, SANParks has generated political and social support for national parks and conservation efforts, and reconfigured relationships between parks and neighboring communities by attracting black South Africans as a constituency for national parks.

Dr. Mabunda's healing approach reflects a commitment to "healing" past pains and overcoming hostility and mistrust that have historically characterized the relationship between parks and neighboring black communities. Dr. Mabunda has focused on "humanizing" national parks and redressing socio-economic injustices by creating socio-economic opportunities for park neighboring communities to benefit from park resources. Through strategic self-interest and enlightened pragmatism, Dr. Mabunda has repositioned SANParks to accept the interdependence and synergetic existence between parks and neighboring communities, and continues to leverage the convergence of interests around transformation and black empowerment to galvanize financial and socio-political support for SANParks' community-oriented initiatives. The funding from other government departments, such as Working for Water, Coast Care, and Expanded Public Works Programs, have provided socio-economic opportunities to park neighboring communities (rural black South Africans), and thus achieving mutual gains and common

objectives of poverty alleviation, local employment opportunities, and linking conservation to local socio-economic development.

In this chapter, I have highlighted several “transformations” that have occurred in SANParks, and linked them to changes in functions, structure, culture, and practices of the national park agency. The findings point to strategic, “enlightened self-interest,” and pragmatism in the initiatives undertaken in promoting the local socio-economic empowerment through government-funded community-oriented projects. These initiatives have helped build a political constituency for national parks, with wider implications for legitimacy and organizational survival. Dr. Mabunda’s “transformation” strategies indicate pragmatism in organizational transformation, park management reforms, and socio-economic initiatives, and hence confirming that SANParks transformation is driven by “enlightened pragmatism.”

Instead of responding to populist demands for national parks assuming a developmental role, Dr. Mabunda has focused on mobilizing and leveraging government grants to implement socially responsive and community-oriented projects without compromising interests of national parks. SANParks plays a facilitating role in socio-economic development, and serves as an implementing agency of government programs. This has been an innovative way to balance rural development interests and conservation objects. He secures funding for improving infrastructure in national parks from central government agencies, and links infrastructure and resource management initiatives with government’s programs aimed at promoting local employment, black economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, training, and enterprise development. As a consequence, national parks are tangibly connected to rural economies, and meaningfully facilitate development within their locality.

SANParks has been able to facilitate rural development without legally expanding its mandate, but rather using contextual opportunities and institutional incentives to leverage its influence to promote noble social objectives and be relevant to poor rural communities. It has managed to create livelihood and employment opportunities for rural

black communities with potential positive returns for parks' social and political sustainability (Child 2004; Cock & Fig 2002; Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism 2003; Koch 2003; Magome *et al.* 2000). The chapter also explored the contradictory outcomes of SANParks transformation initiatives.

The adaptation of SANParks to social and political changes in South Africa confirms Murphree's (2004) suggestion that park policy must mutate to accommodate shifts in constituencies and changes in socio-political, institutional, and economic conditions. Dr. Mabunda has ensured that SANParks seizes the moment to be relevant to society and heal the wounds of the past without waiting for perfect institutional conditions to emerge. As a consequence, SANParks has been facilitating local socio-economic development and promoting broader objectives of transformation and black empowerment driven by "enlightened self-interest" and strategic pragmatism. SANParks executives have been strategic and pragmatic in terms of balancing organizational interests and institutional and socio-political demands, and leveraging the transformative capacity within SANParks in order to pursue socially progressive conservation initiatives that promote local socio-economic development and black empowerment.

The next chapter discusses the implications of the findings of Dr. Robinson (1991-1996), Mr. Msimang (1997-2003), and Dr. Mabunda (2003-2008) leadership epochs to the contributions of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation offers important lessons from SANParks transformation. Each leadership period set a stage for the next one, and helped move the organization to another level. While the changes were not revolutionary, they gradually culminated into a transformation because the current organization is different from the old. This answers the question whether a large, complex conservation bureaucracy like SANParks can be transformed. Yes it can! The transformation requires strategic changes and pragmatism – ensuring that organizations effectively respond to contextual challenges and are able to further broader societal interests while they secure organizational interests.

The case study also reveals that transforming large, complex organizations (Perrow 1972) is a mammoth effort, and even after 17 years, much remains to be done to realize organization-wide transformation of SANParks. SANParks serves as a case example to illustrate the challenges and contradictory outcomes of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. It also provides opportunities for understanding transformation initiatives and processes aimed at eliminating inappropriate organizational structures, systems, practices, and policies in park management as well as promote socially responsive conservation. The examination of SANParks transformation is contextually based, and explored looking at critical incidents beginning with political democratization in 1991 to 2008.

Case Study and Organizational Theory

The use of a case study methodology permitted me to explore the multi-dimensionality of organizational transformation through rich description and analysis of SANParks transformation. It also afforded me the opportunity to evaluate the proposed

“enlightened pragmatism” approach to transformation. The findings indicated that conservation bureaucracies undertake transformation initiatives and further social interests due to enlightened, strategic self-interest. When faced with socio-political and institutional pressures, agencies can undertake several pragmatic changes and compromises in ways that further broader social objectives of transformation and black empowerment while securing organizational interests. SANParks transformation offers alternative ways of thinking about change in large conservation bureaucracies, particularly the importance of pragmatic, targeted and measured transformation.

Because of the sheer size of large national park bureaucracy, it might not be possible to undertake an organization-wide transformation without difficulties. Therefore, “units of transformation” can be identified, and experimentation with transformation initiative proceeds without threatening entire national park system. I showed how each leadership undertook certain steps to transform SANParks (formerly National Parks Board) targeting specific organizational dimensions that improve opportunities for responsiveness and adaptation to environmental challenges. In addition, I highlighted the organization’s ability to interpret policy, socio-political demands, institutional prescriptions, and reconfigure in order to be relevant and legitimate in society. For example, the commercialization strategy has enabled SANParks to contribute to broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE), local socio-economic development, help finance biodiversity conservation through sustainable financing mechanisms, and increase and harvest the net economic benefits attributable to national parks (Child *et al.* 2004a; James 1999; Langholz *et al.* 2000; O’Toole 1999; Phillips 1998; SANParks 2008; Saporiti 2006). Market-led mechanisms for conservation have strategically leveraged SANParks assets to improve funding and socio-economic benefits through public-private partnerships, which have assisted in building constituencies in support of national parks.

The dissertation focused on SANParks to understand how a natural resource bureaucracy can pursue self-interests by appealing to broader social interests, and by taking advantage of institutional incentives and contextual opportunities. The case study demonstrates enlightened self-interest and pragmatism in transformation efforts, and links

change initiatives within an organization to macro sociological processes in wider society. With the transition to democracy and broader challenges of transformation and black empowerment, SANParks had to leverage its resources to facilitate local socio-economic development opportunities and help fight rural poverty among communities neighboring national parks. Contrary to critics of natural resource bureaucracies who regard them as allergic to change and unsympathetic to the plight of poor rural communities (Neumann 1998), my findings show that organizations could leverage political and institutional opportunities to instigate organizational actions that promote realization of broader social goals. Conservation bureaucracies can be powerful instruments for alleviating historical natural resource based rural poverty (West 1994) especially when progressive bureaucrats are given the flexibility to innovate and tap into institutional incentives. The findings of this dissertation reveal that bureaucratic interests do not necessarily have to be negative, and can be linked to strategic self-interest and altruistic interests – promoting social objectives that benefit society. More detailed studies of how natural resource bureaucracies in post-colonial Africa leverage resources for broader socio-economic transformation and help address rural poverty and underdevelopment are needed. Transformation is not necessarily a burden but can be harnessed for strategic advantage and survival capabilities. The case study highlights how an organization transforms for socio-political and moral reasons, and links its transformation initiatives with a viable business case.

The real question at stake is whether enlightened pragmatic transformation of the natural resource bureaucracy can lead to black empowerment, local socio-economic development, and help address rural poverty and underdevelopment that encircle national parks without undermining the agency's capacity to secure conservation of biodiversity and heritage assets. What motivates natural resource bureaucracies to actively pursue broader ideals of transformation and black empowerment or interests that alter their structure of domination?

Enlightened Pragmatism and Confluence of “Transformation” Interests

In the dissertation, I have shown that powerful political, institutional, ideational, and economic forces influenced SANParks transformation. The case study revealed the changing patterns of national park management, and adaptation of SANParks structure, policies, and management practices to political and institutional changes in the country. I examined the role of ideas and interests in transformation and black empowerment in shaping the trajectory of SANParks transformation. I highlighted that SANParks recognized that its interests, legitimacy and survival of national parks were linked to its ability to respond to both broader and local socio-economic interests. Because of the changes in societal expectations regarding the roles and functions of national parks in the context of democratization and liberalization, SANParks has had to transcend its narrow conservation mandate and implement community-oriented and socially-responsive conservation initiatives by aligning its initiatives with government programs linked to transformation and black empowerment. Therefore, it seized government-funded programs and ideas about transformation and black empowerment to recast its interests and organizational activities. A closer examination reveals the ability to exploit contextual opportunities in a pragmatic manner, and hence realizing organizational interests while advancing wider social objectives.

By exploiting interest convergence, SANParks has been able to gain social and political support from stakeholders for its initiatives, and create opportunities for resource mobilization, legitimacy and organizational survival. This ability to galvanize support through coalescing interests is most exemplified by Dr. Mabunda's leadership era – where SANParks interests in terms of transformation and black empowerment are framed similarly with government's interests to enable SANParks to become the preferred agent to implement government-funded programs related to black empowerment and poverty alleviation. SANParks formulated policies and programs that linked conservation to socio-economic problems of poor communities living adjacent to national parks. As a result, socio-economic problems of poor communities are then treated in concert with conservation issues. The emergent philosophy links conservation interests with socio-political ideas of “transformation and black economic empowerment.”

The interaction of macro sociological factors and organizational-level changes, and/or organizations and society interplay provides opportunities for understanding what happens to organizations when there is a fundamental shift in the environment in which they are rooted. The case study provides insights on organizational responses to shifts in the ground – considering the democratization and liberalization generated new political, institutional, economic, and ideational forces that historically SANParks was not familiar with. The transition from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa set in motion new dynamics and tensions, which SANParks had to navigate and negotiate. They brought new and multiple demands upon the national park agency. Therefore, these forces and competing interests became powerful drivers of change. The dissertation title reflects this reality, and captures the sentiments of a senior park executive that recognized, within SANParks, “our battles also changed” with political democratization and emergency of transformation and black empowerment as political currency in the new South Africa. SANParks adopted ideas of transformation and black empowerment as part of its organizational objectives, and linked them to conservation interests. SANParks’ commercialization and other social innovations (“neighbor relations,” “social ecology,” “people and conservation” initiatives) in park management linked its conservation interests to social issues and broader transformation and black economic empowerment goals.

In the past SANParks had experienced antagonistic relationships with the black majority population because of its vision of conservation that significantly conflicted with the socio-economic interests of poor black communities living adjacent to national parks. However, since democratization in South Africa, SANParks has made efforts to create a vision of national parks that bring together different interests as well as reconcile conservation objectives with social interests – making national parks at least partially responsive to socio-economic needs of historically disadvantaged black population. It has implemented programs that help connect national parks with adjacent communities through temporary employment opportunities, environmental education activities, and socio-economic development projects. Linking conservation interests to local socio-economic development and black empowerment issues was historically inconceivable but

current leadership recognizes that pragmatism requires transcending the impasse between narrow conservation mandate and social issues. This is an important step in changing park management and conservation model. SANParks leadership has been instrumental in conceiving strategic policies and approaches that promote social progressive conservation and pay attention to broader objectives of transformation and black empowerment.

It was apparent that “enlightened pragmatism” has influenced the trajectory of SANParks transformation described in this dissertation. The evidence indicates the relativity of SANParks’ transformational choices, and pragmatic leaders that have attempted to pursue strategic policies and approaches to transformation that are well-informed by conditions on the ground. The approaches have followed “workable solutions to problems” and seem to focus on reforming or tweaking park management paradigms and organizational structures, policies, and practices rather than replacing them wholesale. Instead of being driven purely by ideological values and populist demands, SANParks’ chief executives opted to balance strategic objectives against situational contingencies, and implementing transformation, black empowerment, and park management reforms incrementally through successive layering. In the process, they managed to transcend narrow conservation mandate and accommodate diverse interests in pursuit of common purpose and mutual gain. These findings of this dissertation present an alternative way of thinking about leveraging common interests in instigating transformation in organizations and society at large. The three leadership periods demonstrate this possibility of uniting conservation interests and social interests - and increase our awareness of the interdependencies of “people and conservation.”

Summary of Lessons

SANParks transformation holds an important lesson for park management in South Africa. It offers a narrative about challenges of transforming large conservation bureaucracies in the context of profound political and institutional change, and where societal expectations on national parks exceed their core mandate. In such circumstances,

the organization faces tremendous pressure to balance external demands, manage expectations and stakeholders, and ensure legitimacy and survival. In the case of SANParks, “enlightened pragmatism” guided transformation and organizational efforts to balance societal expectations, demands and agency’s interests. SANParks managed to evolve from a conservation agency that pursues exclusionary conservation to a socially responsive one capable of advancing social issues and implementing government-funded projects on black empowerment, poverty relief, and outreach activities. It built organizational capacity to implement socio-economic projects and people-oriented conservation; an aspect it was never historically designed for. Prior to transition to democracy and “transformation,” SANParks had no tradition of supporting “social ecology” or “people and conservation” initiatives linked to adjacent communities. This shows that when faced with socio-political pressure, SANParks is able to integrate objectives of technical, scientific conservation with social responsibilities, and find ways to balance the two.

Yet, SANParks seems to struggle to conceptually integrate “people and conservation” structures seamlessly with core park activities. This has wider implications on its ability to deliver socially just conservation in sustainable fashion. It has not “conceptually got it right.” Interestingly, out of the three black managers appointed to head the function of social ecology (renamed “People and Conservation”), two of those managers were women who apparently resigned out of frustration with the diminished power of the Social Ecology Unit or “People and Conservation” Division. The findings highlighted that “people and conservation” function can be interpreted, to a certain extent, as “cosmetic” or appeasement to critics of protectionist conservation. A senior park manager viewed as “pacification” effort to mitigate criticism that SANParks has not meaningfully engaged local communities in core decision-making structures. Because “people and conservation” function is a “detached structure” (Brechtin et al 2003), it does not command power or organizational muscle. For this reason, it has managed to secure the interests of traditional park management, and offering SANParks a way to implement conciliatory socio-economic projects or black empowerment initiatives without radically

altering conservation practices or challenging the underlying assumptions of SANParks' dominant park management paradigm.

The case study also sheds light on the limitations of SANParks' empowerment model associated with its land restitution approach. The Makuleke land claim highlights the park bureaucracy's distrust of local communities' capacity to manage resources. The strict conditions imposed on local communities' right to land indicate that SANParks attempt to continue exercising decision-making authority over resource management and conservation. While local communities are given title to land, they are not empowered to make decisions regarding land use without seeking permission from SANParks, which has imposed stringent policies and procedures that have to be followed before local communities can do anything.

The findings also reveal the contested nature of transformation in SANParks. Is "transformation" synonymous with changing racial composition of park executives and managers or should it focus on changing park philosophy to allow local communities to participate meaningfully in decision-making structures in national parks? Rather than thinking in dichotomous terms, transformation can encompass changing the social composition of park managers, make it racial and gender diverse, and change the core park philosophy in order to promote the involvement of local communities in conservation decision-making processes.

The findings of this dissertation highlight the challenges in defining SANParks transformation especially in the absence of a clearly articulated conceptual destination of what "transformed" SANParks would or should look like (Magome 2004). Magome (2004) argues that when there is no clearly defined destination of organizational transformation, any change can easily be labeled "transformation" and performance measurement of transformation becomes elusive.

While a "clear model of what the organization should look like after the transformation is complete" **p, 548** (Denison 2001b) is critical in mobilizing resources,

expertise and commitment, I have argued that leadership and principled beliefs play an important role in directing where the organization should go and what it should do. Looking at SANParks' strategies for change and transformation devised by the three chief executives, there were ambiguities in terms of the conceptual destination of SANParks transformation – yet this ambiguity offered flexibility and adaptive responses needed to pursue context-specific changes and focus on moving targets. It appears also that targets for transforming racial composition of workforce became catalysts for organizational change, and race used as “emblem” of gesture rather than more pervasive structural transformation. Affirmative action appointments and empowerment initiatives were undertaken to meet political expectations and institutional prescriptions on participation of black South Africans in management levels and economic activities. However, the dearth of qualified black technical specialists and professionals made it difficult to radically change the racial composition of critical technical and professional levels within SANParks – and hence the allegations that those white-dominated layers were resisting transformation and perpetuating “apartheid” in SANParks.

The dissertation also illustrates the shortcomings of purely focusing on race or “Africanization” of park management structures as a panacea to park-people conflict. The appointment of black managers does not automatically guarantee improvement in parks-people relationships inasmuch as they signify progress and symbolism. The Board and executive management levels are now dominated by black South Africans, which mark the end of white dominance in park leadership but not necessarily in organizational and professional power. White employees with technical expertise continue to wield power in the organization (Magome 2004). The assumption was black managers would play a significant role in changing the historical hostile relation between parks and black neighboring communities. Ironically, there have been incidences where parks-people relationships have worsened with black managers in charge. This phenomenon raises a question about the symbol of black appointments versus substantive capacity of black managers to change park management practice and underlying assumptions that predispose parks to marginalize local communities.

The findings indicate that appointing black executives and park managers neither succeeded in radically shifting power dependencies from white technical specialists/managers to black employees, park bureaucrats to neighboring black communities nor created a fundamentally different structure of park management. On the contrary, colonial social relations in conservation have been durable, largely because of the persistence of “apartheid” in nature conservation (Magome 2004). As long as local communities are separated from nature or not given decision-making authority over nature conservation, “apartheid” will continue to characterize nature conservation whether black managers or white conservationists dominate SANParks. This is ironic given the expectation that black managers would transform park management and significantly increase “interest dissatisfaction” with the colonial model of park management. However, I am not suggesting that there have not been some serious changes in park management. Rather, it should be noted that changes in racial composition in the management structure is not a magic wand that transform park management practices. Park management ideas, organizational culture, and professional culture and practices have to change in order to allow new conceptions of nature conservation that balance conservation and social objectives. The findings of this dissertation offer hope considering the efforts by SANParks leadership to forge new conceptual destinations for SANParks. Leadership becomes an important factor because it mediates the direction the organization should go and what and how ideas about transformation are implemented. The three leadership epochs showed how the park executives framed transformation to advance conservation interests and political support for national parks.

Institutional context and national policies set the framework that defines organizational environment and action. They also create incentives and disincentives for transformation. When there is an enabling institutional environment, an organization is able to pursue a meaningful role in socio-economic development. The legal framework in South Africa prevents SANParks from undertaking a developmental role (Magome 2004), since its mandate is clearly delineated by legislation. However, SANParks has not retreated from playing a developmental role simply because of institutional constraints

imposed by the Protected Areas Act of 2003 and the previous National Parks Act of 1976, or Constitution barring public agencies from assuming the mandate of other public organizations. Rather it has leveraged government resources, external funding, and other legislation to facilitate local socio-economic development and black economic empowerment. It is about seizing the moment or exploiting contextual opportunism to advance organization gains and broader social objectives.

Magome (2004) takes a deterministic view regarding institutional constraints – simply because legislation does not provide SANParks a development mandate, it should not mean that its hands are tied in terms of what it can do. Results from this research point in another direction, that is, legislative jurisdiction (authority/mandate of conservation) does not rigidly restrict SANParks from implementing “socially expected” local development projects. SANParks’ implementation of government-funded Expanded Public Works Projects and Social Responsibility (Poverty Relief) Projects shows innovation and realization of mutual survival dependence between parks and adjacent communities. Contrary to Magome’s (2004) assertion that expecting SANParks to play a developmental role is wishful thinking, the findings of this dissertation indicate that advancing broader social goals and local socio-economic interests proved beneficial to national parks, and were a strategic and pragmatic response to the real and present challenges confronting both national parks and adjacent communities. The shared interests (common vision) in terms of objectives of transformation and black empowerment has enabled SANParks, government departments, and park neighboring communities to work together in pursuit of mutual gain, provide opportunities to poor communities, and improving infrastructure and maintenance in national parks. In this case, there has been convergence of interests to promote transformation and black empowerment. In the process of pursuing shared interests, SANParks has been able to advance socially responsive initiatives that transcend narrow conservation mandate.

A closer examination of transformation strategies adopted by SANParks executives reveals “enlightened pragmatism” in pursuing objectives of transformation and black empowerment in national parks. SANParks was able to advance broader

transformation objectives through government-funded programs, community-oriented projects, and pragmatic organizational changes that secure its organizational/business interests. SANParks transformation was not passively driven by populist societal expectations or blindly instigated by political and institutional demands but rather predicated on practical and critical assessment of environmental conditions as well as consequences of failing to adapt to environmental changes. Informed by “enlightened self-interest” and pragmatism, SANParks was able to accommodate socio-political and institutional demands without compromising its organizational interests. It managed to leverage government-funded programs to promote local socio-economic development and black empowerment opportunities. It achieved this by tapping into existing institutional incentives and coalescing diverse stakeholders to support its transformation and black empowerment initiatives – this helped SANParks obtain political support, material resources, and legitimacy – all the ingredients for survival.

The findings also highlight three “faces” SANParks transformation.” The initial transformation focused on shedding organizational principles, policies and practices that has nurtured by apartheid for decades. Dr. Robinson began the process of “transformation” by making organizational changes that would allow the National Parks Board (renamed SANParks) to find its “place” in the new South Africa. His successor, Mr. Msimang focused on changing the racial face of SANParks management composition, and restructuring the organization (“Operation Prevail”) in order to survive the financial crisis. Dr. Mabunda has guided SANParks through a transformation process targeting improving organizational performance through private sector business systems. Overall, SANParks transformation has been around “color lines” (race), moving the organization toward parastatal (quasi-government, commercially oriented entity), and currently focused on operational excellence by implementing business management principles and systems essential to deliver on the organization’s mandate. Each “transformation” phase has focused on addressing the apartheid legacy and respond to political and institutional challenges.

The discussion shows that the shortcomings in political and institutional reforms have allowed residues of apartheid park management to persist since deeply entrenched national park ideas and underlying assumptions of colonial conservation have largely been accommodated. Because of the dominance of the bureaucratic-cum-scientific conservation establishment, the relationship between national parks and adjacent communities has often reflected colonial social relations and continued marginalization of local communities in key decision-making structures despite the fact that black executives and managers are now in charge. These contradictions deserve further exploration.

This study was guided by the following objectives: (1) to understand transformation perspectives in the national park system in South Africa from 1991 to 2008; (2) to explore the role of political democratization, institutional and major policy changes in organizational transformation; (3) to identify organizational processes associated with transformation and dismantling of white-dominated structures in park management; and (4) to explore the intersection of race and park management. As the dissertation progressed, I was able to revisit the objectives and questions with the goal of understanding how external pressures (socio-political, economic and institutional) were negotiated. I was motivated to understand the resultant organizational responses to dramatic external forces, and perspectives behind the adaptation and transformation.

Research Implications

The findings of this study offer important opportunities for research. The study demonstrates that “de-racialization” or “Africanization” of park management does not necessarily ensure the “transformation” of park management practices. While the appointment of black managers provides a powerful symbolism, it is at the level of park management practice that transformation ought to focus on. Underlying assumptions of colonial conservation and exclusion of local communities in key decision-making structures have persisted under black leadership. This poses a major problem to the thesis that “Africanization” of park management structures will positively address the historical

hostile parks-people relationship (Carruthers 2006). It is a necessary step but not sufficient condition for transforming park management practices.

Transformation of park management has to go beyond race to dealing with the culture of park agencies and underlying basic assumptions of protected area management (embedded in the dominant national park idea). Irrespective of race, park managers committed to the vision of exclusionary, protectionist conservation will resist people-oriented conservation initiatives. I propose that research explores how conservation bureaucracies historically steeped in protectionist conservation can institutionalize socially just conservation (Brechtin *et al.* 2003) and adapt to changes in societal assumptions and values regarding the role and function of national parks (Honey 1999b; Murphree 2004).

The findings also point to the significance of organizational culture and learning. The rigidity in organizational practice (exemplified by the elephant culling controversy), reluctance to engage local communities in key decision-making on nature conservation (the Makuleke land restitution's agreement conditions), and failure to seamlessly integrate "people and conservation" (social ecology) with core functions within SANParks speak to challenges in organizational culture and learning. It is therefore important that future research pays attention to aspects of organizational culture that impedes learning and adaptation.

Organizations often have a tendency to settle at a comfortable level of "equilibrium" dictated by organizational history and capacity. It is important that future research explores learning processes and adaptive management practices in conservation agencies related to efforts to institutionalize changes in park management values held by post-apartheid South Africa (Nyambe 2005). We need to understand how changes in societal expectations and values are incorporated into park management practices within conservation agencies. The research should address the intersection between society and conservation agencies, and show whether fresh park philosophy predicated on African realities is possible. For example, we need to question why Kruger National Park should

be managed on a standard national park model rather than a regional park with local people as proprietors.

In addition, we need further investigation of how conservation agencies learn to change and share management responsibilities with local communities. The findings indicated that SANParks has attempted to respond to the needs of neighboring communities by experimenting with “people and conservation” (social ecology) initiatives, but the question remains whether these initiatives have produced meaningful participation and empowerment of local communities in a non-exploitative manner. We know scholarly little about performance metrics of “socially-just conservation” (Brechin *et al.* 2003) since conservation agencies (or national parks) have rarely defined them. This calls for further clarification and exploration of what constitutes “conservation success” or achievement of “socially-just conservation.” The study of SANParks transformation has provided selective organizational dimensions of socially responsive initiatives linked with conservation and park management. I recommend that further research is needed to evaluate the benefits and shortcomings of “enlightened self-interest” and pragmatic transformation that is non-revolutionary. Is it possible that revolutionary change rather than measured, pragmatic initiatives has the potential to generate fresh park philosophy that is antithetical to the colonial model of park management?

I recommend further case studies to explore SANParks transformation at the operational level, focusing on comparative experiences of individual national parks to determine how their transformation initiatives have impacted resource governance and people-parks issues on the ground. Such case studies will be fruitful in providing perspectives of “foot soldiers” on transformation and implications of political and major policy changes on protected area management. Such research can cover sociological challenges of transformation at individual national park level, and the micro-politics and organizational responses to local-level socio-economic demands.

APPENDIX: CASE STUDY

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology employed to answer questions posed in Chapter 1. I discuss the chosen research design, data analysis, and explain how I mitigated weaknesses of the case study methodology, and address ethical issues in this study.

Selection of Case Study

The case study focuses on South African National Parks (former National Parks Board) transformation from 1991 to 2008. SANParks offers opportunities for exploring how the national park agency has pursued transformation since democratization in South Africa.

While South Africa offers a wide range of provincial case studies to test the research questions, it is the national park agency case study that crystallizes the intersection of macro socio-political dynamics and transformation challenges of a national park bureaucracy. It provides opportunities to explore the lag between macro sociological changes and organizational transformation, and a context to understand change and continuity of apartheid relics in park management since political democratization in South Africa. There have been only two major doctoral dissertations focusing on organizational change dimensions in South Africa's conservation sector (Magome 2004; Nyambe 2005) and a few scholarly works addressing the question of change in park management and conservation sector in the country (Child 2004; Cock & Fig 2002; Hall-Martin & Carruthers 2003; Reed 2000).

SANParks satisfied criteria for a critical case to answer the research questions posed. It offered opportunities for exploring social and political processes in organizational transformation given "SANP reflects some of the hallmarks of the South African transition to democracy: negotiation, appeasement, inclusion, and reconciliation"

p, 152 (Cock & Fig 2002). SANParks seemed an attractive microcosm of South Africa's unfinished revolution and anti-apartheid struggle. Cock and Fig succinctly capture the challenges of transformation in SANParks:

“South African National Parks is at a crossroads. Ahead lies a choice between two visions: one that sees it as important to complete the transformation; and another which rests on alliances with remnants of the old order to block thorough-going change. The new executive leadership charged with the day-to-day management of the organization may find itself caught between the two” p, 152 (Cock & Fig 2002).

In view of the abovementioned challenges, I was motivated to explore the tensions in transformation and multiple possibilities that existed. SANParks transformation had been described as incomplete transformation, “shallow restructuring” or “unfinished revolution” (Cock & Fig 2002; Magome 2004; Carruthers & Hall-Martin 2003). I was curious to understand the basis of those conclusions, and explore the role of leadership practices and ideas in influencing the trajectory of SANParks transformation and organizational responses to political and institutional changes in the country.

In addition, Dr. Mabunda's leadership had not been subjected to scholarly research, and I felt that his leadership epoch and influence on SANParks transformation would be a revelatory case - a situation in which the investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyze phenomenon previously inaccessible to investigation (Yin 1994). The case study design seemed appropriate and suited to explore SANParks transformation in-depth from the perspectives of SANParks' collective leadership and key informants with intimate knowledge about the transformation process and initiatives.

Single case study methodology was found appropriate for in-depth exploration of the complex process of transformation, and application of organizational theory and analysis (Cassell & Symon 1994; Else 2004; Nyambe 2005), and proved useful in “helping target problems worth solving, as well as to determine the validity of a possible solution” p, 41 (Else 2004). The study of SANParks transformation follows a disciplined analysis of a topic (transformation), within a framework of political transition,

institutional change, and organizational transformation. I strongly believe that this study has the potential value of unlocking critical issues for further studies.

This study explores SANParks transformation using both retrospective historical events and analysis of contemporary events and processes. Combining historical and contemporary events helps show the temporal interconnectedness of organizational change processes (Pettigrew 1995; Pettigrew 2001). SANParks transformation was studied over time. I focused the case analysis from 1991 to 2008. The year 1991 represents two major critical events – 1) the appointment of Dr. “Robbie” Robinson as the National Park Board’s Chief Executive responsible for seeing the National Parks Board through the transition to democracy, and 2) CODESA – the watershed for political democratization in South Africa. Several critical incidents are also described in the dissertation, and these include the post-1994 general elections, appointment of black chief executives and managers in SANParks, and major policy and institutional changes. This case study invokes a longitudinal element given its focus from 1991 to 2008.

SANParks’ Official Transformation Perspective

Before I discuss in detail the methodology and data analysis, I present background information on SANParks’ vision, mission, and transformation perspective (Table 6-1: SANParks Vision, Mission, and Values). The official perspective on transformation allows the reader to evaluate the SANParks transformation initiatives and organizational responses to political and institutional demands in context.

Table 6-1: SANParks Vision, Mission, and Values

<p>Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National parks will be the pride and joy of all South Africans and of the world.
<p>Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop and manage a system of national parks that represents the biodiversity, landscapes, and associated heritage assets of South Africa for the sustainable use and benefit of all.

<p>Transformation Mission & Statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To transform an established system for managing the natural environment to one which encompasses cultural resources, and which engages all sections of the community. • ...striving to transfer power and control of resources from the minority that privileged by apartheid to the majority in a new democracy.
<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the transformation process in both organisational development and our relations with external stakeholders • Recognize different value systems and promote social equity • Co-operate for mutual benefit • Culture of transparency and involve stakeholders • Uphold environmental ethics in conservation of natural and cultural resources • Dynamic response to changing environment and community needs

Source: SANParks official website (adapted)

SANParks views transformation as both a strategy and a process that seeks to shift its organisational culture so that it is not inhibited by the legacies of the past (Table 6-2: Summarized SANParks' Official Perspective on Transformation).

Table 6-2: Summarized SANParks' Official Perspective on Transformation

<p>Transformation Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify strengths and significance, weakness and vulnerability of the organisation • Confront legacies that inhibit the organisation from drawing on all people's relevant talents and potential skills • Establish key result areas (KSAs) for change to guide conservation and national parks for enjoyment by all stakeholders
<p>Transformation Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental corporate culture change across the organisation to result in constructive and appropriate structures that support SANParks' advisory, policy and operational functions • Develop and implement access and equity, and equal employment opportunity policies - corrective action to address gross imbalances in staff profiles and the employment conditions • Access and stakeholder involvement in the change process to ensure participatory democracy and ownership of the transformed agency • Reconciliation with communities adjacent to SANParks through their economic and cultural empowerment • Make major changes whilst maintaining the best of the past • Develop SANParks as a public agency in the service of the South African society and the world at large by ensuring the full ownership of it by a democratic nation.

Adapted from SANParks website (<http://www.sanparks.org/about/transformation.php>)

Why Case Study?

I employed a single case study design (Yin 1994) to describe the SANParks transformation. A research design entails a framework and a plan for action that links research questions and the execution of a research project, and therefore has implications for data collection and analysis (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Bryman 2001; Durrheim 1999). It refers to how the research is executed, and whether it answers research questions cost-effectively, efficiently and appropriately recognizing the many different aspects of a problem. The researcher has to pay attention to the problem to be studied, sources of desired data, type and nature of data, the objectives of the study, and availability of resources to undertake the study. Taking all these factors into account, I felt that a case study design was suited for this dissertation's qualitative study and consistent with its research objectives and questions (Coyle 2007; Creswell 2003; Durrheim 1999; Marshall & Rossman 1995; Merriam 1998; Yin 1994).

A case study research design provided opportunities for employing multiple lenses of social science research in broadening our understanding of SANParks transformation. Because of the multi-dimensionality of transformation or change processes, it was important to employ a holistic and multifaceted approach. It has the ability to address a variety of evidence – interviews, documents, artifacts and observations (Yin 1994), which allow studying complex processes in their entirety. Moreover, it assists the investigator to understand how respondents (research subjects) socially construct specific phenomenon or accounts of reality. Therefore, I adopted a qualitative and interpretive approach to capture respondents' perspectives on transformation as well as illuminate multiple and competing viewpoints, and varying meanings and usages of “transformation.”

Yin (1994) states that case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. In this study, the case is SANParks transformation. Contextual understanding of SANParks was important, and allowed the researcher to investigate the interaction of macro-factors (sociopolitical and institutional) and organizational processes in depth and help illuminate

complexities, contradictions, and nuances of organizational change in context (Nyambe 2005).

I also employed “contextualism as a theory of method” to study the long-term process of transformation in its context (Huber & Van de Ven 1995; Pettigrew 1995). Contextualism is premised on the notion that theoretically sound and practically useful research on change should explore the context, content, and process of change together with their interconnections through time (Pettigrew 1995). It recognizes the temporal interconnectedness of change, and links context and action (i.e. how context is a product of action and vice versa). Change is viewed as multifaceted, and characterized by social, political, environmental and structural elements. Pettigrew (1995) laments that organizational change has been often studied as though it is ahistorical, aprocessual, and acontextual in character. He suggests that we need to understand the multifaceted dimensions of organizational change, and this requires both avoiding a singular theory of organizational change and examining multiple “causal” assumptions and shifting interconnectedness of fused strands rather than focus on a singular or linear casual assumption (Pettigrew 1995).

Contextualism provides opportunities for exploring and explaining continuity and change, patterns and peculiarities of organizational action, and the role of structures and contexts in shaping organizational transformation. Pettigrew’s (1995) contextualism pays attention to context, not just as a stimulus environment, but nested arrangements of structures and processes where actors subjectively interpret, perceive, learn, comprehend, and help shape process. The process is both constrained by context and shapes context, in terms of preserving or altering it.

Theoretical Value of Methodology

Critics of qualitative methodologies express concern with the research validity²⁹ (both internal and external) and reliability³⁰ of case study approach. I recognize that there are threats to validity in qualitative research, which includes observer bias (resulting from researcher's perspectives brought into the study and imposed upon it), observer effects (observer's impact on participants and setting being studied), and reliability factors (the very limited number of cases studied reduce reliability and generality of findings). Although "external validity and reliability in case studies are more difficult to achieve in a single case study, they can be more effectively designed into the case study by clearly delineating any implicit theoretical relationships in the development of a formal case study protocol" **p, 38** (Else 2004). The sections below detail my effort to strengthen the value and "plausibility" of the selected methodology and research protocol.

I strengthened the theoretical value of the selected methodology through a number of ways. I focused on increasing the degree of objectivity through use of multiple sources of evidence, and thereby address concerns with validity and reliability. I triangulated the research material using different data sources. I ensured that clarity about precisely what was being studied (Else 2004), and this in turn improved the internal validity of the case study. Data was triangulated and crosschecked by park executives in order to enhance its trustworthiness.

South African National Parks was not selected as a representative sample of South Africa's conservation sector agencies but rather to provide an opportunity to study and understand organizational transformation in a particular context. It was never intended to be representative nor its findings applied more generally to other cases. Therefore, any generalization must be made applied cautiously with its plausibility depending on the adequacy of the theory being proposed and the extent to which the available body of knowledge support it (Nyambe 2005).

²⁹ Validity basically refers, in simple terms, to something that can be accepted as true subject to being studied and researched with some degree of rigor.

³⁰ Reliability is premised on expectation that one researcher could reproduce the work of another and arrive at comparable conclusions.

Rather than focusing on statistical generalization advocated by quantitative proponents, I propose a different form of “generalizability” couched in terms of theoretical propositions. Its extrapolation depends on theoretical coherence or interpretation, and the findings of the study generalized to the specific phenomenon of interest being studied or similar cases. As a consequence, case study results show particularities of a single case and context, which may be useful in informing or reforming existing theories.

Despite the focus on a single organizational entity, a case study analysis of SANParks transformation opens the door for far-reaching insights about SANParks transformation in particular and the phenomenon of transformation of complex, public organizations in South Africa. It has broader implications for organizational analysis and theory, and policy and practice of transformation in the country and beyond. Therefore, lessons from findings cannot be restricted only to the national park system or conservation sector. I believe the study has different levels and scales of applicability; some that will only be about South Africa, while others could inform “transformation” in post-colonial African governments in general as well provide understanding of patterns of transition and “accommodatory strains” p, 52 (Singh 1992) brought about pragmatic challenges of “transformation” and negotiated political settlements.

Negotiating Access

Gaining access to the organization, people and data is often a huge challenge in organizational and social science research. The problem is heightened when one needs to conduct a case study research in a specific organization that it constantly navigating social and political landscapes, and having to deal with issues that are contested, controversial and with wider socio-political implications for management and day-to-day activities within the organization. The issue of transformation in SANParks and South Africa in general tends to be emotionally charged and politically-sensitive, and as such gaining access to study it in an organization requires trust.

I was introduced to Dr. Hector Magome, the Executive Director for Conservation Services at SANParks by my former informal mentor, Dr. James Murombedzi (former Project Officer of the Ford Foundation and Regional Director of IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa). This introduction opened doors of opportunity to gain access to SANParks, and Dr. Magome served as the “champion” for my research and introduced me to SANParks executives and managers. He assigned his official personal assistant to assist with scheduling meetings and introducing me to SANParks managers and library staff who provided access to archival material.

I had previously interacted with Dr. Magome at various professional meetings, notably the Southern Africa Sustainable Use Specialist Group conference and Rhodes University’s Community-Based Resource Management seminar. It was at these meetings that I spoke with Dr. Magome and sought his support for my dissertation work. In 2004, I sent an email to Dr. Magome requesting official permission to conduct research at SANParks, and he subsequently confirmed his support. Between 2006 and 2007, he enabled my data collection by helping me gain access to senior executives and official documents. However, I ensured that my relationship with Dr. Magome did not bias my interviews with other park officials. I never discussed with him the contents of other interviews besides leveraging his expertise and in-depth knowledge about SANParks transformation in refining my interview questions and archival research.

- I visited SANParks corporate office to collect documents and make observations related to the study, and during these visits I took the opportunity to engage in informal discussions with SANParks staff as a way of gaining insight and clarifying matters of interest in this study. This served to build trust and rapport with identified SANParks members, and stimulate their interest and support for my research.
- I used official documents to gain an understanding of the issues relating to transformation so that my interview schedule would be tailored and adjusted to address the issues emerging in the documents. This process was helpful in

familiarizing me with SANParks and its transformation efforts. Simultaneously, I was reviewing literature and theories relevant to the study so that I bring them to bear on my interviews and observation.

- I attended Dr. Magome's public presentations/meetings where he discussed transformation of SANParks conservation policy and practice, including the issue of elephant culling. These meetings were important because they reflected SANParks' attempt to engage its stakeholders on pertinent conservation issues as well as shift public opinion on certain matters.

The manner in which I gained access was swift because of the social networks involved as well as the belief by Dr. Hector Magome that my research would provide invaluable insights into the question of transformation beyond what his doctoral research had covered. He was very supportive and vouched on the value of my research, and this provided an exceptional opportunity to be granted access without any difficulties.

Sampling

The sampling for this study was purposeful, and informed by the need to meet its theoretical objectives. In order to explore the central hypothesis, it was important to purposively sample an organization that would provide a rich, in-depth case to illuminate the particularities of the case and provide opportunities for the emerging theoretical arguments (Bryman 2001; Miles & Huberman 1984). Therefore, the selection of the case is criterion-based and focused on learning critical issues relevant to the study. In previous sections, I explained how SANParks meets the demands of the research questions and serves as suitable case to address the interest of the research.

However, the purposively sampled key-informants were identified on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of both historical and contemporary transformation issues at SANParks, and therefore would provide quality data and knowledge about the subject matter. This is consistent with the study's focus on transformation and change in

conservation policy and practice. As result, I focused on senior executives (the strategic apex) of SANParks since they are involved in shaping the trajectory of transformation as well as charting strategies for changing policy and practice.

Similarly to the challenges faced by Nyambe (2005) in his study of strategy and organizational culture in a South African provincial conservation authority, I realized it was impossible to study every aspect of transformation in a large, complex organization like SANParks. As such, I had to select certain aspects of transformation that I deemed critical to the issues being considered in this study while ignoring others. Such discrimination was important for both practical and theoretical reasons. I interviewed eight members of the executive, two former Board members, and seven middle managers. This number might appear small but satisfies the requirements of theoretical sampling given that the purpose of the study was theoretical representation through depth of insight as opposed to generalizability (Nyambe 2005). The fact that the sample of executive management interviewed was approximately three quarters means that in essence there was an extremely high coverage of executive perspectives. I then incorporated middle managers, and interviewed former Board members to gain additional perspectives.

Data Collection Methods

The qualitative nature of this study required that I adopted data collection methods that would provide rich, in-depth material and be flexible enough to accommodate emerging issues. The multi-dimensionality of transformation (the issue under study) required that different data collection methods be employed to capture multiple perspectives, complexities, tensions, and nuances. In-depth interviews with key-informants, document reviews, and observation were deemed appropriate data collection methods.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth, elite interviews were conducted using an interview schedule with purposively selected key-informants and employees who had deep knowledge about SANParks transformation and people-parks issues. These included SANParks senior executives, middle managers, former Board members, and a government official at the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Informal discussions with staff from an international environmental non-government organization provided further data on changes in environmental policy and protected area management practices in South Africa.

The interview process provided leeway to the interviewees in terms of how to reply, and probing questions were necessary to follow on emerging issues. The idea was to gain in-depth understanding of how the interviewees frame and understand issues and events associated with transformation. Therefore, the interviews incorporated both “conversational” style and interview schedule in order to accommodate the sensitivity and complexity of transformation. I allowed the conversation to flow from answers to questions to more of a narrative (Courrau 2002), and I paid attention to what appeared to fascinate the interviewees by probing further their comments, terms and metaphors. The interview protocol was designed to obtain evidence of and information on the critical incidents associated with the transformation process at SANParks. It also ensured comparability across interviews as well as helped focus the interviews on themes relevant to the study. I organized the questions in the interview schedule under different thematic headings, and they emerged from observations and desk reviews of documents and previous research on SANParks’ transformation process.

The ordering of questions was also important since it required starting with the general, broad questions and gradually increasing the complexity of the questions to address the pertinent ones on transformation aspects. I realized that having targeted questions on race and racism in protected area management would be inappropriate and potentially cause tension in the interview process taking into account their emotional aspects linked to the legacy of apartheid and the contested nature of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. So I probed with sensitivity the issues of black

empowerment, affirmative action and hiring of black professionals and the responses of whites to transformation efforts. These became proxies for understanding issues of race in the transformation process. It should be noted that the ordering did not follow a linear, fixed progression but was adapted to suit the emerging dynamics of the interview process as well as respond to respondents' comfort levels with the issues at hand.

I recorded on all the interviews with the permission of the interviewees, and I explained the benefits of tape recording and how anonymity would be guaranteed whenever required by the interviewee. Tape recording the interviews enabled me to listen carefully during conversation and reduce note taking to a minimum. I jotted down the reminders during the conversation so that I could make reference to them when transcribing the recorded interviews.

The interviews were on average one hour and thirty minutes long. Given the “conversational” style of the interviews, the respondents could easily present transformation issues from their perspective without being constrained by a structured format. This suited the research objectives and provided opportunities to capture emerging perspectives and insights, which I probed further whenever necessary. However, I found that being a black student researching issues of transformation presented a challenge to both black and white interviewees, and I had to avoid personal opinions on the issue. Whenever I was asked a question that required my opinion, whether intellectual or personal, I had to be diplomatic in expressing my reluctance to share it since I felt it would unduly influence the interview.

Another challenge with the face-to-face interviews was ensuring viable interpersonal dynamics given the high prospects of poor interpersonal communication. Some of the interviewees used some their ethnic words to communicate, and I did not understand them. And this language problem/barrier might have resulted in loss of the deeper meaning of the word and thereby diminish their value in the interview. Notwithstanding these limitations, I strongly believe that the interview process provided immense benefits for this study and suited its objectives.

The purposive sampling of key-informants was essential and suited the prerequisites of theoretical sampling, designed to confirm the emerging theoretical framework (Bryman 2001; Huber & Van de Ven 1995; Yin 1994). Theoretical sampling involves sampling interviewees until your categories achieve theoretical saturation, and choosing further interviewees on the basis of emerging theoretical focus. During the course of the interviews, I also made use of snowball sampling by following additional leads in terms of contacts that I was referred to by initial contacts. Snowball sampling seemed to fit well with theoretical sampling in this qualitative research (Bryman 2001). Therefore, the interviews I conducted with the selected key-informants provided theoretical saturation, and I felt no additional interviews were necessary.

Documentary Review

Documentary analysis of official documents involved review of archival materials such as annual reports, business plans, newsletters and related materials. I collected some of the material from the organization's library at the Corporate Office in Pretoria, and other documents were downloaded electronically from the official website. Access to both documents in the public and "private" domain provided opportunities to understand the official perspective that reflected public and private statements of interest respectively. The issue of transformation had profound public interest implications, and as such I felt official documents shared with the public would be helpful in showing SANParks' professed values, strategies, goals and philosophy of transformation and conservation in society.

I reviewed documents specific to SANParks in order to unearth data and information relevant to the study, and this should not be confused with general literature review which focused on other issues related to concepts and general issues of conservation (protected area management) and organizational transformation. The literature review provided conceptual insights and previous research findings on organizational transformation, conservation bureaucracies and protected area

management. I used the documents to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.

Observations

I participated in public seminars held by Dr. Magome where he presented SANParks perspectives on elephant management. My participation in these seminars was restricted to observing public reactions to the elephant management issue. I interacted with some junior-level employees in order to gain their views on transformation. By spending time “hanging around” SANParks premises, I was able to capture employees’ views, utilize the library and increase my visibility that proved useful for future interactions and building trust. I frequented the catering room (canteen) during tea breaks and lunch hour to just hang out and informally build relationships. The interactions with employees at Corporate Office provided invaluable networks that I relied on to gain relevant information and data. I also observed cultural artifacts, how people interacted, and employees’ reactions to issues of transformation whenever the subject emerged. During my observations, I wrote down notes to capture things that stood out and seemed relevant to the issue of transformation. I jotted down notes regarding my observational experiences.

Table 6-3 provides a quick overview of methods of data collection and sources of data used in this study.

Table 6-3: Research Methods Used

Data Collection Methods	Sources	Within Case Sampling
In-depth Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducted between 2005-2007 	Key Informants (n=20) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior executives (n=8) ▪ Middle managers (n=3) ▪ Former Board members (n=2) ▪ Government and NGO officials (n=4) ▪ Experts in park management and environmental policy (n=3) 	Theoretical Sampling

Document Analysis	Official documents and archival material (1991-2008) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SANParks annual reports, business plans, newsletters, reports etc. ▪ Government documents; consultant reports & survey data (n=1295 respondents) 	Census of all identified documents describing organizational change processes in SANParks (former NPB)
Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2004; November - December 2007; June 2008 	Author <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observations at Corporate Office; visit to Kruger National Park in 2006 ▪ Public seminar on elephant culling 	Opportunistic Sampling (Patton 1990)
Informal Discussions	Junior SANParks employees (n=10); academic experts and environmental sociology graduate students on parks-people (n=8)	Opportunistic Sampling
Relevant recent scholarly research on transformation of SANParks and the conservation sector in South Africa in general	Doctoral dissertations by Magome (2004); Nyambe (2005) Masters research by Reed (2000) and Picard (2002) Selected publications by Child (2004); Cock & Fig (2002), Hall-Martin & Carruthers 2003)	Census of relevant publications

Data analysis and interpretation

Data capturing, coding and analysis were treated as an iterative process that evolves to suit the emerging demands of the study. The systematic identification of themes and concepts, and patterns was done both manually and through the use of computer-assisted software (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet). The transcribed data from in-depth key informant interviews and official documents were entered into computer-assisted analysis software. This data analysis helped to generate descriptive and coding patterns (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). From such analysis, thematic patterns, meanings and relationships were described and identified (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Miles & Huberman 1984), and used in building the conceptual framework of transformation.

To gain in-depth insights and capture multiple perspectives on the multi-dimensionality and complexity of transformation, exploratory and interpretive methods of qualitative research were deemed appropriate. I therefore had to identify a process of data analysis that would provide structure and opportunities for capturing meanings, and it encompassed the following stages:

Stage 1: Detailed understanding of recorded interviews and transcribed texts

Transcribing tape recorded interviews verbatim. Before transcribing, I had to listen to the tapes at least twice so that I familiarize myself again with the accent and tone. Listening to the tapes was an essential part of immersing in the data and provided a quick frame of reference when doing detailed analysis. I personally transcribed every interview verbatim, detected inconsistencies, and did minor cleaning of sentences. I then emailed the transcribed notes to the interviewees for them to verify the accuracy of the data. I intended the transcribed notes to help the interviewees authenticate their statements as well as identify some contradictions therein. Once the transcribed notes were verified by the respondents, I then synthesized and tracked emergent insights, searched intra-interview similarities and contradictions. The identification of initial codes and general themes in this stage sensitized the author to the narratives raised by respondents.

Stage 2: Identify and synthesize crosscutting issues and emergent phenomena

At this stage, I was more concerned with deeper understanding of the issues emerging in the transcribed interviews. The in-depth, intra-interview analysis of the edited interview transcripts required careful reading and paying attention to dominant themes. The dominant themes and designated codes facilitated organization and meaningful categorizations, and as such directing reading of the edited interview transcripts. The coding process itself is an important element of organizing data into

meaningful categorizations that assist interpretation and presentation. Similarly to Nyambe (2005), I used open coding that allows meaning to emerge from the data, and codes created and adapted to test that data. Therefore, one does not start with predetermined set of codes (Nyambe 2005). I identified and organized themes and meaning units under short phrases related to the theme. Such basic coding provides a framework for further complex, detailed, in-depth analysis (Creswell 2003; Merriam 1998).

The re-reading of the interview text (transcripts) kept revealing additional detailed coding profiles, which I revised and narrowed on issues relevant to the study. Given the multi-dimensionality of transformation, I had an interview schedule that was issue-focused as a guide, and therefore I was more concerned with ensuring that I pay attention to patterns amongst the codes. Inevitably, I had to assign some texts to multiple codes. For example, a description of black empowerment might be referenced with the codes “Africanization,” affirmative action, support and empowerment of local entrepreneurs, equity initiatives. Such multiple coding proved relevant and useful. However, some themes were not relevant for every interview, and thus necessitating the reorganization of coded portions of interview texts (Nyambe 2005). In some instances I had to make a decision as to which heading would best suit excerpts that contained several themes. In some instances, I cross-referenced the excerpts whenever necessary. I also developed summaries of narratives for each interview, which I felt would provide a quick reference of key themes and interrelationships within the interview text. This intra-interview analysis served as an invaluable snapshot, with important nuggets for data analysis.

Stage 3: Dialogue between data analysis and interpretation

Having gone through stages one and two, I focused stage three on identifying common themes across interviews. The search for in-depth understanding of themes and issues across interviews and interrelationships in the interview material formed the critical phase of the data analysis. I often went back to the original interviews to clarify issues in the narrative summaries, and this iterative process proved useful in identifying

duplications and redundancies (Nyambe 2005), and making informed judgment on which themes to combine or ignore. Notwithstanding the perceived subjective choices of the author in this regard, it was important to ensure that a coherent grouping of themes emerged, and I relied heavily on the language of interviewees to capture common themes and meaning. What best can describe something than the respondents' narrative or own words?

I benefited widely in conducting the data analysis from Nyambe (2005) since his work involved organizational analysis and theory. I used Nyambe's (2005) data analysis strategy as a "tool-kit" for my own study. The final challenge in data analysis and interpretation entailed making choices in terms of the excerpts to include in the text from the interview transcripts. This might appear like a simple choice but when confronted with fascinating narratives and multiple perspectives on transformation, the choice is difficult. I was confronted with a variety of perspectives from respondents of different races, gender, and professional standing. I had to be constantly sensitive to the research question and broader context as I made decisions regarding excerpts for inclusion. I also captured verbatim excerpts from official secondary documents to capture official views on issues. Excerpt analysis had to be fairly balanced in terms of incorporating a variety of perspectives on particular topics and issues.

I used the steps outlined above to analyze the data and drawing conclusions. This required data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman 1994). In writing up the case study, I attempted to present empirical information in a factual manner, and whenever possible avoided paraphrasing the respondents' comments but offer them verbatim. The empirical accounts focused on specific aspects of interest related to the research questions. The abovementioned processes of data collection, data reduction, data display and writing case study were iterative and interwoven, and satisfied qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994). This allowed me to return to data collection whenever I sensed ambiguities and need additional data to answer a research question. For example, I approached the Chief Operating Officer for additional insights regarding SANParks organizational climate survey. I also revisited data reduction and

data display stages to extract information I had initially overlook and sought rival factors challenging “enlightened self-interest” concept and the proposed “enlightened transformational pragmatism” framework.

Ethical considerations

This study was governed by acceptable research ethics in social science research or boundaries of defined ethics with regards to the protection and preservation of the rights and integrity of interviewees. The rights of respondents, and their individual identity were safeguarded by use of an identification number for purposes of anonymity and confidentiality whenever the interviewee expressed that preference. I recorded the interviews on tape with prior permission/authorization of interviewees. I committed that recorded interview materials would not be made accessible to a third party whatsoever without prior consent of the respective interviewee. Whenever the key informants expressed reservation on specific issues being highlighted in the dissertation, I noted the comments and deleted the material when I was transcribing the tapes.

This study was conducted independent of financial support from South African National Parks, and therefore the conservation agency or its senior executives had no ulterior motives in shaping the questions and issues raised in this study. SANParks’ senior executives provided unwavering support for this study because they believe that independent research would shed some new light on the transformation process in the organization. Such support reflected to me an organization that is willing to learn itself through scrutiny and independent research.

Conclusion

This dissertation employed a case study methodology to explore SANParks transformation. Based on a longitudinal study and focus on context, the case reveals the

temporal interconnectedness of organizational change and the complexity and dynamism of SANParks transformation.

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5. 'Kruger is our Amazon' *Mail and Guardian* March 4-10 2005, p.24
6. 'People, not tahr, damage mountain' *Mail and Guardian* May28-June3 2004, p.3
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8. 'Calling on people to go wild' *Mail and Guardian* May 7-13 2004, p.31
9. 'A sound regulatory environment' *Mail and Guardian* October 7-13 2005, p.8
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11. 'Transformation' *The Sunday Times*, October 28 2007, p.22

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1. 'South African National Parks Organizational Climate Survey' November 2007, Organizational Diagnostics, Johannesburg
2. 'Macro-economic Impact Assessment of SANParks' March 2008, SANParks, Pretoria

Selected List of Key Interviewees

SANParks Executive Management Interviews

1. Mr. Sydney Soundy, the Chief Operating Officer
2. Dr. Hector Magome, Managing Executive, Conservation and Scientific Services
3. Dr. Razeena Omar-Waiget, Managing Executive, People and Conservation
4. Mr. Paul Daphne, Managing Executive, Parks
5. Mr. Glenn Phillips, Managing Executive, Tourism Development and Marketing
6. Ms. Wanda Mkutshulwa, Head, Corporate Communications
7. Ms. Pauline van der Spuy, Executive Manager, Chief Executive and Board Support
8. Mr. Leonard Mavuso, Head, Human Resources

Expert Interviews

1. Dr. David Fig, former SANParks Board member, environmental policy analyst, and consultant
2. Dr. Howard Hendricks, Policy Development expert, Conservation Services, SANParks
3. Mrs. Sibongile Masuku van Damme, General Manager, People and Conservation, SANParks
4. Mr. Fulufhelo Edgar Neluvhalani, former Manager, Cultural Heritage; recently appointed General Manager, People and Conservation, SANParks
5. Prof. Marshall Murphree, Expert on wildlife management in southern Africa, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe
6. Dr. Phaniel Mugabe, Expert on community-based natural resource management, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe