2 The responsibility to consume

Excessive "environmentourism" against rhinoceros extinction in South Africa

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The responsibility to consume: Excessive "environmentourism" against rhinoceros extinction in South Africa[1]

Since 2007, rhino poaching grew rapidly in and around Kruger National Park, South Africa, until 2015, when rhino casualties started to go down again. Many attempts to curb this poaching crisis, and the concomitant, oft-proclaimed extinction of the rhino, have been taken by government, civil society, and private actors, including the dehorning of rhinos, "educating" local communities about nature conservation and, most prominently, the militarization of conservation areas (Büscher 2016; Büscher and Ramutsindela 2016; Duffy et al. 2019; Hübschle 2017; Lunstrum 2014, 2018; Morais et al. 2018). Increasingly, the tourism industry has also started to play an important role in curbing the crisis. I contribute a "philanthrocapitalist" analysis of several recent anti-poaching initiatives set up by the high-end, privatized, or "excessive" tourism industry, informed by anthropological theory on giving, ethnographic data and discourse analysis. The tourism industry is excessive in the sense that it promotes elitist lifestyles in which exorbitant material consumption has become the standard: "late capitalist societies (whether in the West or Third World) are characterized by the normalization of excess – the desire for the best, biggest, tallest, richest, most original" (Kapoor 2020: 16). Such lifestyles raise important questions of the responsibility that exorbitant consumption and related giving patterns highlight: the wealthy are often considered as having a big responsibility to curb environmental crises since they are also the biggest polluters. This chapter addresses the question how this responsibility is articulated in the culture, social relations and real-life situation of the South African tourism industry in relation to rhino poaching and what the consequences of this are.

On the private nature reserves to the west of Kruger – an area referred to as the "Greater Kruger Area" – the already high number of luxury tourist lodges keeps growing (Hoogendoorn, Kelso, and Sinthumule 2019). And many tourists, when they learn about the rhino poaching crisis, "in some way want to be involved in the fight against poaching" (Lubbe et al. 2019: 14).

Therefore, the discourse of the rhino as close to extinction has set in motion many philanthropic initiatives to "save" the species for tourists to provide financial gifts as well as in-kind support. Subsequently, tourists can now, for example, physically take part in activities to "chip" rhinos and their horns, that is, to implant microchips in the horns and ears so as to build a national DNA database and potentially track down criminals (see for instance Kings Camp n.d.); visit and donate gifts to a rhino orphanage (Rhino Revolution n.d.); do a tour to an anti-poaching unit; visit the world-famous, all-female, and unarmed anti-poaching unit the Black Mambas (Pondoro 2017); or join a translocation of rhinos to "safer" havens, often combined with large gifts for the translocation project.

I investigate discourses of extinction and how these are used to articulate *an ethical responsibility* for wealthy tourists, who are urged to consume such activities to "do good" and to give financial gifts. My analysis of what I call "environmentourism" provides for a further conceptualization of this niche type of tourism, in which *the impact of tourism itself* on an environmental problem (in this case rhino extinction) is at the core of the tourism experience (cf. Baptista 2017). Exorbitantly luxurious, excessive tourism activities tap into fantasies of the white saviour of African nature. Its conceptualization is informed by literature about philanthrocapitalism (Bishop and Green 2010; Edwards 2008; Kapoor 2013; Koot and Fletcher 2021) and anthropological notions about "giving" (Hites 2019; Mauss 2002). Thus far, anthropological literature has hardly engaged with philanthrocapitalism (notable exceptions are: Hites 2019; Vasquez 2021). This gap is addressed in this chapter, bringing together political economy with (economic) anthropology, focused on ethical responsibility and giving. In environmentourism, wealthy tourists are not only persuaded to forms of excessive consumption and giving to "good causes", they come to see this as their ethical responsibility. In this way, new niche types of ethical tourism are portrayed as sustainable and "responsible", all the while legitimating the further expansion of neoliberal capitalism as something innately good (cf. Duffy 2015; Fletcher 2011). However, in this chapter I argue that environmentourist activities function to depoliticize the rhino poaching crisis from its socioeconomic and historical context, thereby legitimizing luxurious tourism and exorbitant consumerism as a solution for social and environmental crises.

Methodology

The findings of this chapter are based on a combination of ethnographic research and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The ethnographic research was focused on tourism in relation to the rhino poaching crisis and the broader "wildlife economy" on and around private nature reserves in the GKA. Fieldwork took place between September 2016 and June 2019 for almost five months in total. During this time, I conducted 87 semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were selected based on their involvement in either

the wildlife economy and/or rhino poaching, after which a snowballing method was used by asking for more potential interviewees at the end of interviews. Thirty-nine interviewees work(ed) in the tourism industry (e.g. lodge owners, managers) and these form the core of the empirical results informing this chapter. Furthermore, I participated in some of the high-end tourism "anti-poaching" activities, including a visit to a rhino orphanage, a visit to a "poacher's garden" and an activity organized by a lodge to visit the Black Mamba's all-female anti-poaching unit.

Additionally, CDA was an important methodology (Fairclough 2012; Van Dijk 1993). CDA focuses on "*the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance* [which is] the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality" (Van Dijk 1993: 249–50, emphasis in original). CDA very specifically investigates "what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction" (Van Dijk 1993: 250; see also Fairclough 2012). Its focus on the (re)production of social power is important in this chapter; it aligns with an explicit critique on philanthrocapitalism, namely its concentration of power (Edwards 2008; Kapoor 2013), and an analysis of discourse as presented by "those in power" is therefore an important addition to the ethnographic material. In my selection, I focused on popular and marketing outings (i.e. travel magazines, websites) by the tourism industry about ethical, nature conservation activities offered to tourists, with a focus on private nature reserves and tourist lodges in the GKA. More specifically, I centre on the South African rhino poaching crisis targeted at high-end tourists, particularly if these initiatives were presented as having a positive impact on the crisis. However, it soon became clear that many linkages were to be found with other areas in, and sometimes outside of, South Africa, due to the often regional and/or (inter) national work of the philanthropic initiatives. One thread of media sources that is especially important for this chapter is the African Ark project with actress Uma Thurman and Wilderness Safaris, which was covered by the popular magazine *Town & Country* (Glowczewska 2015a).

Environmentourism and philanthrocapitalism

Environmentourism

Tourists travelling to Africa do this mostly from a relatively safe "tourist bubble", "created to host visitors, the arrangements for their travel, stay, well-being and above all for their safe return home" (Van Beek and Schmidt 2012: 13). Most tourism in southern Africa, whether focused on backpackers or more on high-end lodges, is nature-based with a specific focus on wildlife in the large amount of national parks, game reserves and other protected areas. Much of this, however, has developed in enclaves, often separated

from local communities (Mbaiwa 2005). A past of colonialism, racism and apartheid has left its traces in the region and today tourism is still a predominantly white-dominated industry (Koot 2016; Koot, Büscher, and Thakholi 2022; Mboti 2019). This reflects in white articulations of belonging in and beyond tourism (and nature) all over southern Africa (see e.g. Burnett 2019; Fumanti 2021; Gressier 2015; Hughes 2010; Kepe 2009; Koot 2015), showing clear traces of former colonial and apartheid structures in society that have perpetuated until today (Alexander 2002; Bundy 2014; Koot, Büscher, and Thakholi 2022; Mboti 2019; Mpofu-Walsh 2021; Saul and Bond 2014).

The rhino poaching crisis is loaded with imagery of suffering animals, which are in urgent need of protection (Büscher 2016; Lunstrum 2014), and this protection can now ostensibly (partly) be achieved through what I term "environmentourism". The neologism "environmentourism" is inspired by "developmentourism" (Baptista 2017), in which the focus of the *development impact of tourism itself* is crucial, since "the merging of development and tourism" into one single practice means the two are not distinct, and thus "should appear as a single word and a single morpheme" (Baptista 2017: 94). In environmentourism, tourists can tap into fantasies about themselves as responsible white saviours, who are needed to save African nature from brutal, mostly black, poachers (Abidin et al. 2020). Based on colonially grounded, racial inequalities, conservation creates "space for white saviors to make their mediagenic interventions" (Abidin et al. 2020: 10; cf. Mbaria and Ogada 2016).

Environmentourism differs from other types of ethical nature-based tourism, including ecotourism. As a niche type of tourism, environmentourism lacks a core characteristic of ecotourism, namely that "local communities" are included to be "developed" and benefit from the tourism activities (see West and Carrier 2004). While ecotourism has a specific focus on sustaining "the well-being of the local people" (The International Ecotourism Society 2015), environmentourism *only* focuses on addressing environmental concerns, and thus ignores local communities' well-being. Furthermore, like ecotourism, recent articulations of "responsible tourism" are different from environmentourism for the same reason: responsible tourism also attempts to create tourist experiences "through more meaningful connections with local people" (Goodwin 2014). As this chapter shows, the involvement of "local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances" (ibid.), another core characteristic of responsible tourism, is largely absent in environmentourism, despite appeals to tourists' feelings of responsibility.

This does not mean that specific lodges might not also support some type of "community project" elsewhere, but an environmentourist activity itself is one solely targeting a specific environmental problem. And although environmentourism overlaps with other types of ethical tourism such as volunteer tourism, it still shows important differences: when compared to volunteer tourism, environmentourism has a stronger focus on a nature-based

tourist experience infused with wealth and luxury, thereby taking place in an environment of excesses and exorbitance. Furthermore, while it also "creates value in the trade of experiences in or with 'nature' ", environmentourism still differs from volunteer tourism because "voluntourists" are mostly "young people [who] will gain experiences necessary to compete in a highly competitive economy" (Brondo 2015: 1405–06). Volunteer tourism projects thus target ecological projects that are also opportunities for self-development (Strzelecka et al. 2017). Environmentourism, however, is focused on people who already *have* become successful in the economy (i.e. wealthy people), most of whom are not "young" anymore and who do not need to gain self-development experience anymore to become successful in today's competitive economy.

Philanthrocapitalism

Environmentourism strongly aligns with some core principles of philanthrocapitalism, in which former types of philanthropy are regarded as largely ineffective, due to their limited integration of basic business principles (Bishop and Green 2010; Farrell 2015). Philanthrocapitalism has become an important element of the contemporary global political economy. According to Bishop and Green (2010: 2), "much philanthropy over the centuries has been ineffective. They [philanthrocapitalists] think they can do a better job than their predecessors [by] trying to apply the secrets behind that money-making success to their giving". "Giving" is thus a central feature in philanthrocapitalism. Anthropological literature has shown that gifts are important in cultural and social processes (Malinowski 2002; Mauss 2002; Rosman and Rubel 1972). Following Marcel Mauss's essay on the gift, when someone gives something to someone else, one tends to put oneself in a superior position, thus making the other "smaller", a characteristic highlighted by anthropological analyses of gift-giving generally (Mauss 2002). Indigenous gift-societies were long considered self-destructive and irrational under colonialism (Wolf 1999). However, Mauss (2002) showed how gift societies functioned beyond competitive capitalism as a form of social cooperation. Giving provides an important sociocultural role in the obligation to reciprocate in indigenous gift economies. This contains a struggle by "Big Men" for dominance that aligns with philanthrocapitalists' attempts to distribute gifts under their control (Hites 2019; Sahlins 1963): an important point of critique on philanthrocapitalism is that it allows for a concentration of power and prosperity among the wealthy (Edwards 2008).

This concentration of power is evident because, based on "private visions of the public good" (Raddon 2008: 38), philanthrocapitalist funding is not democratic: decisions are taken by a wealthy elite, and the ideology behind philanthrocapitalism infuses competitive principles into civil society (Dean 2005; Edwards 2008; Giridharadas 2018; Reich 2018). Thus, there is a lack of accountability and political legitimacy, which ignores attention

for structural social changes in the broader political economy (Edwards 2008). This is especially relevant when investigating the articulations of philanthrocapitalists' responsibility and what the consequences of their actions are. In the end, efforts to counter contemporary ecological problems have increasingly been addressed by engaging the same capitalist markets and mechanisms that are for a large part *responsible for* these environmental problems (Fletcher 2014; Büscher et al. 2012). Complex social and environmental issues are presented in a simplified manner, leading to commodification of the problems, and presenting markets as "common sense" (Farrell 2015). Despite these important critiques, philanthrocapitalism's influence is growing (Giridharadas 2018; Reich 2018).

Often framed as successful, philanthrocapitalists set a standard for a much larger culture of consumerism: although philanthrocapitalism is conventionally associated with the "very rich", "the essential features of philanthrocapitalism" can today be made available "to everyone" (Bishop and Green 2010: 239). Therefore, it is "not just billionaires and their mega-foundations that command attention" (Reich 2018: 9). Seen as a "movement *led by* these super rich" (Bishop and Green 2010, xi, emphasis added), philanthrocapitalism is followed by many others (Koot and Fletcher 2020), including wealthy tourists. Therefore, it is relevant to ethnographically study philanthrocapitalist behaviour of excessive consumerism and giving from an anthropological point of view to better understand why and how such an ideology translates in a real-life setting.

Environmentourism against rhinocide?

Since apartheid was abolished in 1994, disparities in wealth in South Africa have endured, particularly regarding land, which is still largely controlled by a predominantly white minority (Bundy 2014; Burnett 2019; Green 2020; Koot, Hitchcock, and Gressier 2019; Mpofu-Walsh 2021). An important reason is that private interests have become prioritized, including those of mining, agriculture and tourism. Communities around the GKA suffer from bad public services, and at times have set up protests on the entrance roads towards Kruger National Park. By closing roads with debris and burning tires, they have prevented international tourists to enter the park, at times throwing stones and intimidating tourists (De Villiers 2018). The protests did not necessarily seek a response from tourists, but by affecting tourism a quicker response is expected from officials. This situation led a tour operator to explain that tourists "have to sometimes give up their dream of having one day in the Kruger National Park", while the industry has "become pawns in the non-delivery protests, and I wonder when the police and government are going to act and protect us?" (ibid.).

Against this background, several interviewees explained they lost trust in the government to address the issue of (rhino) poaching, due to corruption and disinterest. As a lodge owner stated, "I think the private operators,

the lodges, are doing far more than the government does" (interview, 15 November 2017). Especially the Sabi Sands private reserve was often presented as a role model, since it "is relatively affluent and can therefore afford higher anti-poaching costs when compared to most other reserves", resulting in much lower poaching numbers. This is regarded as "marketing for our owners, who can explain this to their tourists" (interview, 25 June 2018). However, the protests as described above are part of the broader racial, socio-economic and political context in which contemporary environmentourism thrives. Although it is not my intention here to say that the specific examples in this chapter are directly related to these activities, or that the industry is to blame for them, I suggest that the industry plays a crucial role in local and national politics: as a white-dominated industry in post-apartheid South Africa, it needs to legitimize its own presence and influence in the area, and the implementation of environmentourist activities supports this legitimization.

For many tourism operators, neighbouring Botswana is considered a better place for nature conservation. For this reason, a lodge and landowner explained he had donated an airplane to the government of Botswana to support their anti-poaching efforts. Moreover, he is involved in rhino translocations to tourism property in Botswana together with another wealthy philanthropist from Europe. He explained that the enormous growth of luxurious lodges in the GKA is disturbing from an ecological point of view and therefore "Botswana is great: at a certain point they have made the choice for top class tourism with high prices so that much money will trickle back into the industry without creating an overload" (interview, 10 November 2017). However, this high-value/low-volume tourism has received substantial criticism (Magole and Magole 2011; Mbaiwa 2005), including on how at one point it led to a shoot-to-kill policy in protected areas under the Khama administration (Duffy et al. 2019). But this was quickly dismissed by the same interviewee as "very exaggerated […]. It is not as if the Batswana government are just shooting at everything and everybody there, but if they are being shot at, they will shoot back" (interview, 10 November 2017). Environmentourism's activities are thus not separated from their wider social and political context, and the activities themselves have important consequences for nature and people. I now zoom in onto one project, described as Afrika's Ark in the popular magazine *Town & Country*.

"Only tourism can save them": Appeals to tourists' responsibility

The high-end tourism company Wilderness Safaris has long cooperated with the Botswana government, in particular the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), which provides military transport planes and soldiers to assist with rhino translocations. As one of the biggest high-end tourism operators in southern Africa and a self-declared "**leading conservation and tourism**

company in the industry today" (Wilderness Safaris 2015, emphasis in original), Wilderness Safaris initiated the Botswana Rhino Reintroduction Project in 2001 as a solution against the local extinction of the black rhino in Botswana (Wilderness Safaris n.d.). The project takes a central position in a magazine article called Africa's Ark, marketing this project as a tourist attraction in which tourists can experience "[e]ight adrenaline-fueled days rescuing rhinos in South Africa and Botswana" (Glowczewska 2015b). The popular magazine, *Town & Country*, is all about luxury, style, travel and leisure, presenting rhinos as facing extinction due to poaching by 2024 (Glowczewska 2015b), since "wildlife experts estimate they may be gone in just 10 [years]" (Glowczewska 2015a: 159). Furthermore, the urgency to act is emphasized by Wilderness Safaris' CEO explaining that "[w]e have to do this *now*" (cited in Glowczewska 2015a: 163, emphasis in original). Booking company Explore Inc., which is where this eight-day trip can be booked exclusively, also emphasizes the importance to stop "the seeming unstoppable rhino holocaust" (Briggs n.d.). To join this fight against extinction, tourists are offered the eight-day rhino relocation trip. Described as a "safari like no other", this trip provides tourists "[a]n unprecedented opportunity to participate in the most dramatic conservation story of the 21st Century" (Glowczewska 2015b). The magazine article (Glowczewska 2015a) and the description of the trip on the *Town & Country* website (Glowczewska 2015b) are both focused on potential high-end tourists, attempting to lure them into the Botswana Rhino Reintroduction Project. Dramatic narratives about helpless rhinos, their expected extinction and ruthless poachers are easily alternated with descriptions of the safari as luxurious and exorbitant, and how one should act responsibly and become part of the solution.

The trip starts off with a charter flight from Johannesburg to the Royal Malewane safari lodge at the Thornybush Private Nature Reserve in the GKA, which is "as opulent as safari lodges get [and where you can b]eat your jetlag with a massage or a swim at the spa" (Glowczewska 2015b). The lodge is a proud founding member of the Greater Kruger Environmental Protection Foundation (GKEPF), a military anti-poaching initiative that would not "be possible without the valuable patronage of our guests, many of whom generously contribute additional funds after coming face to face with these majestic creatures [rhinos] at Royal Malewane" (Royal Malewane n.d.). By doing this, guests thus also support the increase of militarized interventions to prevent poaching through giving. During the first three days at Royal Malewane, tourists receive an introduction to nature conservation, they do several game drives, a walking safari, sundowners and star constellation watching. On day four, they fly to Johannesburg and stay there for one night. In the afternoon and evening, they can consider any type of "urban" activity, to continue the journey to Botswana the next morning. Alternatively, tourists can choose to book a charter from Royal Malewane (at additional cost) straight to Wilderness's Mombo Camp in the Moremi Game Reserve, Botswana (Glowczewska 2015b). Just like Royal

Malewane, Mombo Camp "is luxury au naturel: canvas tented suites on raised wooden walkways, indoor and outdoor showers, 100 percent solar-powered (Wilderness Safaris walks the sustainability talk), with private and public bars, generously stocked" (Glowczewska 2015a: 172). Here the tourists stay for the last three days. On arrival, tourists receive a briefing on how Wilderness Safaris supports rescuing rhinos during high tea; they can experience a (relocated) rhino capture from a helicopter; they can monitor their whereabouts and health; they can fit the animals with tracking devices; if lucky, they can even witness the release of a rhino back into the wild. Furthermore, because it is "largely Botswana's diamond wealth that enables its exemplary conservation stance" (Glowczewska 2015b), it is also possible to visit a diamond mine run by the world's second-largest diamond company DeBeers. The trip is expensive: US$ 18,655 per person and a tax-deductible gift is required of US$ 25,000 per person for the Wilderness Wildlife Trust to Rhino Conservation Botswana (Glowczewska 2015b; see also Wilderness Wildlife Trust n.d.).

Importantly, the project was supported by Botswana's former President Ian Khama and his brother the former Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, Tshekedi "T.K." Khama. While the protection of natural resources in Botswana used to be the main mission of the BDF (Glowczewska 2015a), former president Khama is one of the shareholders of Linyanti Investments, a subsidiary of Wilderness Holdings, and his nephew and lawyer are also on the board of Wilderness Holdings (Ntibinyane 2011). This could explain why Wilderness Safaris is Botswana's "longtime partner" (Glowczewska 2015a: 161), in the country where T.K. Khama proudly articulated the urgency to shoot potential poachers if "they do not surrender their arms immediately on request" (Glowczewska 2015a: 201). Political and economic elites were complemented by further including Hollywood actress Uma Thurman. In the *Town & Country* article, the eight-day trip is promoted with "tough girl" Thurman as "the tourist". Her support is meant to attract "passionate travelers with a deep interest in conservation", whose trip "will closely parallel Uma's adventure" (Briggs n.d.). Thurman agreed to support the prevention of what she dubbed "rhinocide" (in Glowczewska 2015a: 161). In the extensive article, she also functions as a model on pictures, branding luxury clothes and jewellery with their prices, including Purdey, Ralph Lauren, Rolex and Chopard (Glowczewska 2015a). This shows the opulent character of the high-end tourism industry, related media, and private nature reserves, but seems to be taken as a given.

As Thurman reflected on the trip, she concluded: "[t]here is always hope" (Glowczewska 2015a: 202). The eight-day trip, or environmentourism more generally, is an important exponent of this hope: appealing to feelings of responsibility, it promises tourists that they can be an important part of the solution against poaching by joining luxurious tourist experiences and giving large donations. And in some cases (potential) tourists are literally alerted to their responsibility to take part in the fight against rhino poaching,

which they can address by consuming environmentourist products or giving. Wilderness' CEO, for instance, explains "how crucial all tourism in Africa is to the survival of wildlife and the wilderness. [Without tourism,] African communities will lose the jobs tourism generates" (Glowczewska, n.d.). The owner of Explore Inc. added that, "this is what 'tourism' is all about – conserving the last havens for wildlife in our fantastic natural world. African wildlife is under siege [and *o]nly tourism can save them*" (Briggs, n.d., emphasis added).

This core idea – that tourism is crucial to solve rhino poaching – is widely shared among lodge owners and managers in the GKA. One lodge owner and investor in several reserves explained that he is often blamed for his high prices, but that this is needed to protect the animals: "If you as tourists do not want to pay for it, then there won't be any rhinos anymore. [...] *The tourist also has a big responsibility here*: a tourist must be willing to pay for this" (interview, 10 November 2017, emphasis added).

Saving rhinos and racial inequality

Tourists' excessive consumption patterns thus also potentially include giving, and this has now also been articulated as a "responsibility". However, these environmentourist activities forsake in-depth analysis of broader racial and socio-economic structural problems relating to the rhino poaching crisis. This includes often deplorable labour circumstances at the private nature reserves and in conservation, often failing public services and racial and socio-economic inequalities, and land ownership injustices that have historically been created under colonialism and apartheid (Hübschle 2017; Kepe 2009; Mboti 2019; Morais et al. 2018; Mpofu-Walsh 2021; Ramutsindela 2015). One could argue that such structural inequalities are crucial causes of poaching, but that does not withhold some tourism entrepreneurs to regard "the rich" philanthropists as *the* saviours, as several of them explained that this income was crucial to save the rhino or for conservation more generally. Others, however, are very critical about "selling" environmentourism as "philanthropic", and they do not consider such activities conservation but simply business.

In this line, Ramutsindela (2015: 2260) calls this type of environmental philanthropy "extractive", meaning that it achieves three interrelated objectives, namely "to push back land claims, to give wealth-generating activities a human face, and to control a labour pool for purposes of upmarket eco-tourism ventures". However, an owner of various lodges in the area, who is himself involved in several philanthropic endeavours, considers large-scale land privatizations (that are essentially in conflict with a variety of land claims) as "very important for the numbers of wildlife and the ecology" (interview, 10 November 2017). Nature is thus often prioritized, and environmentourist activities disentangle it from socio-economic structures,

especially racial inequality (Thakholi and Büscher 2021), and disregard problematic histories. By doing this, environmentourism legitimizes the existence of high-end privatized tourism, its excessive consumerist lifestyles and the land it needs. This gives the capitalist activities an "ethical" twist and a "conscience" (cf. Farrell 2015). It raises the question, however, whether tourists and the tourism industry should also be held accountable and responsible for these problems. Most tourism operators point at the government and consider corruption the main problem. This does not mean that they are not aware of racial inequality or problematic histories, and some are indeed engaged in small community development projects to address these problems. However, awareness about their own structural role is often lacking, for example in relation to the land they occupy or the cheap (mainly black) labour they benefit from.

This does not mean that lodges and reserves do not collaborate with communities, for example by setting up community tourism camps (that operate separately from the luxurious lodges) to provide local people with jobs. These are based on the classic philanthrocapitalist idea that "the only way to make this a success is to run it as a proper business" (interview, 10 November 2017). However, one lodge manager emphasized that community tourism and the jobs that tourism generates more generally are very limited, and that structural issues are more demanding, explaining that "you can't have this disparity between very poor people and extremely rich people literally a mile apart" (interview, 15 November 2017). Furthermore, in the highly competitive GKA with a growing number of high-end lodges, it becomes increasingly important to show your "uniqueness". Simply more luxury is not enough anymore and although it remains attractive, it clearly has its limits. An extinction crisis, however, can reinvigorate a unique tourism possibility, fulfilling one's search for meaning and creating a potential to philanthropically fulfil one's ethical responsibility, either by consuming ethical tourist activities and/or by giving donations.

Environmentourism beyond the GKA

The examples given above do not stand on their own. For instance, the two luxury tourism companies &Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve and Great Plains Conservation collaborate in a project called Rhinos Without Borders; an initiative that "calls on all members of the travel industry to join hands in order to make a difference" (Rhinos Without Borders, n.d. (a)) to be able to translocate rhinos from private game reserves in South Africa to Botswana. Similar to Wilderness Safaris, it also presents the rhino as nearly extinct, offering tourists a "fundraising safari", to support 100 rhinos' translocations "from South Africa to safe havens in Botswana" (Africa Discovery 2014b), which, according to the Great Plains CEO, "has an excellent security system in place" (Africa Discovery 2014a).[2] In fact, "both

Great Plains Conservation and &Beyond will announce specific fundraising initiatives to enable tourism stakeholders, travel partners, tour operators and guests to help save this iconic species" (Africa Discovery 2014a). In this case, an eleven-day safari costs "only" USD 13,200 per person, including a gift for Rhinos Without Borders, but if a tourist is willing to donate between USD 250,000, and USD 1 million he/she also receives a nine-day safari for two people (Lunstrum 2018), showing how a big gift can reciprocate. Additionally, there are possibilities to book a "rhino conservation experience" (including de-horning and rhino notching/tagging), a "rhino notching experience" or a three or four-day "rhino conservation safari" (including darting and notching) (Rhinos Without Borders n.d. (b)).

Environmentourism is not limited to southern Africa or the rhino. &Beyond, for instance, has now started "more interactive itineraries such as the Phinda Impact Small Group Journey and the Oceans Without Borders Small Group Journey or our Travel With Purpose tours in South Africa and East Africa" (McNicoll 2018). Some safari lodges offer the opportunity to tourists to fit elephants with GPS collars to reduce human–wildlife conflict in Tanzania. Promoted as "safaris with a purpose", tourists can join a four nights/five days full board safari, including game drives, all meals and beverages, gin, archery, wine tastings and tennis from "USD 19,464 for 4 people plus a tax deductible contribution of USD 25,000 per person" for the collaring project (Singita n.d.). Again, philanthropic gifts are promoted as an important element of this type of tourism. Moreover, tourists can also experience exposure to "high tech anti-poaching headquarters, training with the new canine unit, learning more about the Environmental Education Centre and other community outreach projects", all the while enjoying luxurious accommodation facilities (Singita 2018). Collaborations with communities, however, should, according to the CEO of &Beyond, be done with community development committees that are "as *apolitical* as possible" (McNicoll 2018, emphasis added). This again confirms findings in critical literature regarding the continued marginalization of surrounding communities and the de-politicization and de-historicization of structural causes of the rhino poaching crisis and conservation more generally (Hübschle 2017; Ramutsindela 2015). Moreover, it disregards problematic aspects of neocolonial, racial and ethnic power inequalities within the South African tourism industry (Koot 2016; Morais et al. 2018), an important issue in philanthrocapitalism far beyond South Africa (see, e.g. Brown 2012). De-politicization, in this context, refers to "the removal of public scrutiny and debate, with the result that issues of social justice are transformed into technocratic matters to be resolved by managers, 'experts', or [...] celebrities" (Kapoor 2013: 3). Environmentourism thus provides for unique, de-politicized and de-historicized consumption experiences. I now move to the conclusion of these findings in relation to philanthrocapitalism, giving and dynamics of responsibility.

Conclusion: Responsible consumption and giving in the environmentourism bubble

Environmental problems such as rhino poaching are often presented in a reductionist and simplified manner, disregarding important social, political economic and historical contexts. These are also largely neglected in environmentourism, a niche in nature-based tourism that focuses on wealthy tourists' responsibility to join in solving such problems. But, as this chapter has shown, focusing on one responsibility can mask one's role in other "responsibilities": taking responsibility by "doing good" can divert attention from one's role and responsibility in larger, structural issues.

Environmentourism contains two core characteristics. First, tourism itself impacts a specific environmental problem, and second, this happens in an elitist environment. Regarding the latter, Hübschle (2017: 440) explained that current conservation initiatives are often based on "archaic and elitist preservation and conservation paradigms that discount the potential for harmonious relationships of local communities and wildlife". The rhino poaching crisis was commodified through the presentation of solutions, dressed-up as tourism spectacles, that people urgently need to take part in through "doing" as well as "giving". However, the translocation of rhinos to "safer haven" Botswana indeed used to be safer *for rhinos* due to a shoot-to-kill policy *directed at people*. Moreover, the Botswana style of tourism, which is focused on the promotion of high-end luxurious tourism, is often considered *the* solution against extinction, despite the creation of "enclave tourism", the removal of profits from Botswana, the ownership of many tour operators by foreigners, and separating large parts of the rural population from natural resources (Magole and Magole 2011; Mbaiwa 2005). Nonetheless, this type of tourism is what many reserve and lodge owners envisage in the GKA. In line with philanthrocapitalist ideology, many private operators stated a broad distrust in the (South African) government and civil society, and they generally believed they could do much better.

Excessive environmentourism in the GKA has thus become an important form of "ethical consumption", based on self-congratulatory rhetoric about its beneficial outcomes while obscuring environmental and social consequences (Fletcher 2014). This goes even further when industry representatives say that wealthy tourists are *responsible* for saving the rhino through consumption, so that without doing their "duty", the rhino would go extinct. Such a narrative promotes philanthrocapitalist ideologies for many others to "buy ethically", ensuring that "consumers are induced to become de facto philanthropists" (Kapoor 2013: 66), boosting corporations' brands and giving them legitimacy. The urgency of the rhino poaching crisis creates an anti-intellectual attitude that urges people not to *think*, but to *do*, unquestioningly accepting the status quo as presented by the tourism industry.

This acceptance is also the case when giving (extra) donations to specific causes: wealthy tourists decide which causes are to be supported, and which ones are not. In this case reciprocal giving then happens *within* relatively closed elitist networks (environmentourists, tourism operators, conservationists, journalists, celebrities). In that sense, philanthropic giving in environmentourism indeed keeps the other smaller (Mauss 2002), but with the important note that "the other" in this case remains absent from the interaction. The gift is done to support an environmental cause, to save rhinos, and local people are nowhere to be seen in these initiatives, unless as cheap labourers. At this level, however, gift-giving (and consumption) also functions as an important form of social cooperation, just as it did in indigenous societies (Hites 2019). In this social structure, one takes responsibility for the rhino poaching crisis, but simultaneously disregards responsibility for socio-economic issues that are a crucial cause behind poaching. In contrast to Mauss' description of indigenous gift-giving societies, however, philanthropic giving in environmentourism does not go *beyond* capitalism, but is an essential part *of* it, keeping capitalism going despite its destructive socio-economic and environmental effects at the global and local level. In that sense, philanthrocapitalist gift-giving societies are self-destructive and irrational through the continuous promotion of consumerism, something that indigenous gift societies have been accused of under colonialism (Wolf 1999).

The presentation of Uma Thurman as a "Big Woman" of nature conservation shows how celebrities play a crucial role in reproducing elite social networks (Brockington 2009). They create opportunities for "everyday people" to mimic the powerful and famous (Igoe 2017). Typical of philanthrocapitalism is that celebrities and their charity work function as *a promotion of* capitalism as the solution to contemporary social and environmental problems, leaving the governing elites not responsible for their role in larger structural environmental and social issues (cf. Kapoor 2013). Thurman's modelling for luxurious brands, aimed at wealthy tourists inspired by the African Ark story, shows how "the excess of the powerful and wealthy itself serves as advertisement, spurring mimetic consumption by those at the middle and bottom of the social ladder" (Kapoor 2020: 104). However, most of the burden of an exorbitant lifestyle is put on marginalized groups around the world, for example, through the climate crisis or abhorrent labour circumstances in sweat shops or because their access to land and natural resources is severely limited.

Today, "opportunities to participate in philanthropic activities, are often part of the appeal of nature experiences that tourists choose between" (Igoe 2017: 30). The safe African tourist bubble created for the consumption and commodification of nature provides environmentourists a platform on which they can have such "authentic" experiences of being responsible, a means to address their fantasies of themselves as white saviours through creations in the tourism industry. Altogether, this leads me to argue that philanthropic

environmentourist activities are based on a reductionist articulation of the rhino poaching crisis, depoliticizing it from its socio-economic and historical context. Meanwhile, it legitimizes privatized, luxurious tourism and pushes for exorbitant consumerism and giving as a solution for social and environmental crises, often framed as a "responsibility" of this privileged elite.

Notes

1 Parts of this chapter also appeared in 2021 in "Enjoying extinction: Philanthrocapitalism, *jouissance*, and 'excessive environmentourism' in the South African rhino poaching crisis" (Koot 2021).
2 In 2020, after tourism had reduced tremendously due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of poaching incidents were rising in Botswana. The Great Plains CEO blames this on the absence of safari tourists and subsequent reduced human presence (Maron 2020).

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