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To cite this article: Bram Büscher (2015): Reassessing Fortress Conservation? New Media and the Politics of Distinction in Kruger National Park, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, DOI: [10.1080/00045608.2015.1095061](https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2015.1095061)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2015.1095061>



Published online: 16 Nov 2015.



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Reassessing Fortress Conservation? New Media and the Politics of Distinction in Kruger National Park

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The idea of protected areas as fortress conservation has long been debated and heavily criticized. In practice, however, the paradigm is alive and well and has, in some cases and especially due to rapid increases in poaching, seen major reinforcements. This article contributes to discussions that aim to reassess fortress conservation ideas and practices by analyzing how new online media are changing the politics of access to and control over increasingly militarized protected areas. Focusing on South Africa's Kruger National Park, one of the most iconic and mediated conservation areas globally, this article argues that new media such as online groups, webcams, and mobile phone apps encourage a new politics of social distinction in relation to the park and what it represents. These politics of distinction lead to complex new ways in which the boundaries of "fortress Kruger" are rendered (more) permeable and (more) restrictive at the same time. The article concludes that it is precisely through rendering park boundaries more permeable that new media technologies could help to reinforce the racialized and unequal hierarchies of the social order that fortress conservation was built on. *Key Words:* fortress conservation, Kruger National Park, new media, protected areas, South Africa.

受保护地区作为堡垒式保育之概念，长久以来不断受到争论且遭受严峻的批判。但在现实中，该范式却仍然活生生地存在，且在部分案例中，因快速增加的盗猎行为而特别受到强化。本文透过分析新兴的互联网媒体如何改变进入和控制逐渐加剧的受保护区军事化之政治，对于旨在重新评估堡垒式保育概念与实践之讨论作出贡献。本文聚焦全球最具标志性且受到中介的保育地区之一——南非的克鲁格国家公园，以此主张诸如互联网社群、网路摄像机与手机应用程序的新媒体，鼓励了有关该公园与其所再现之事物的社会区辨之新型态政治。这些区辨政治导致“堡垒克鲁格”的边界同时成为（更）具穿透性与（更）受到限制之复杂方式。本文于结论中主张，正是透过将公园的边界呈现为更具穿透性，新媒体技术因而助长了堡垒式保育所根据的社会秩序的种族化与不平等阶层关系。 *关键词：* 堡垒式保育，克鲁格国家公园，新媒体，受保护地区，南非。

Durante mucho tiempo, la idea de identificar las áreas protegidas como fortalezas para la conservación ha sido debatida y duramente criticada. En la práctica, sin embargo, el paradigma se encuentra vivo y bien, y en algunos casos, especialmente debido a los rápidos incrementos en caza furtiva, se ha visto grandemente reforzado. Este artículo contribuye a las discusiones que pretenden reexaminar las ideas y prácticas de la conservación como fortaleza, analizando cómo los nuevos medios en línea están cambiando las políticas de acceso y control de áreas protegidas, crecientemente militarizadas. Enfocándose en el Parque Nacional Kruger de África del Sur, una de las áreas de conservación más icónicas y reconocidas globalmente por los medios, este artículo sostiene que nuevos medios, tales como grupos en línea, cámaras para internet y aplicaciones para teléfonos móviles, estimulan una nueva política de distinción social en relación con el parque y lo que este representa. Esta política de distinción conduce a complejos nuevos modos en los que los límites de la "fortaleza Kruger" se tornan (más) permeables y (más) restrictivos al mismo tiempo. Se concluye en el artículo que es precisamente tornando los límites del parque más permeables que las nuevas tecnologías mediáticas podrían ayudar a reforzar las jerarquías racializadas e inequitativas del orden social sobre el cual fue levantada la fortaleza de la conservación. *Palabras clave:* fortaleza de conservación, Parque Nacional Kruger, nuevos medios, áreas protegidas, África del Sur.

The central tenets of fortress conservation thinking have been well rehearsed. According to Adams (2004, 112–14), they “typically involve a series of ideas about people and parks,” namely, that people do not have a place in nature, that they “threaten park ecosystems” and species, and hence that

conservation areas must be “defended” against (local) people, by force and coercion if necessary. Equally well rehearsed have been the critiques against the model from social justice, community-based, or developmental points of view, as well as its resurgence in the “back-to-the-barriers” literature (Hutton, Adams, and

Murombedzi 2005; Dressler et al. 2010). No matter how well rehearsed, though, the idea and practice of the fortress seems to have lost little of its appeal. Critical researchers find that fortress thinking persists in the governance of protected areas (Harris 2014; Kepe 2014). For many conservation managers, “the power of the fortress conservation narrative, its emotive appeal and the hard certainties it offers” (Brockington 2002, 127) might well be why they continue to adhere to the model in practice (Holmes 2013).

In this article, I do not rehearse these debates. My aim, instead, is to investigate how new media is changing the politics of access to and control over fortress conservation spaces. In so doing, I want to contribute to recent political ecology and human geography literatures that question dichotomies and boundaries around nature versus people or production versus conservation that still dominate many studies of fortress protected areas. Leach and Scoones (2013), for example, reassessed fortress logics in the measurement and calculation of forest carbon credits. They argued, “Almost by default, and often against the wishes of project designers, ‘fortress’ forms of conservation forestry in reserves, or uniform plantations, under clear state or private control, become the only way that carbon value can be appropriated through these mechanisms” (965). The fortress idea and practice in Leach and Scoones’s article is analyzed through a neoliberal politics of science around the use of carbon markets to tackle climate change. It becomes an outcome of a broader “governance logic” steeped in a “neoliberal environmentality” (Fletcher 2010) rather than an unwillingness to pursue community-based conservation.¹

Other recent contributions explore and theorize fortress conservation with an even more explicit aim of showing how their implied hierarchies and boundaries are constructed, performative, and contextual. Fortress conservation, they show, is bound up with “interstitial spaces” that highlight the “symbolic and material crossings of hegemonic conservation boundaries” (Sletto 2011, 197) by both humans and nonhumans (Sundberg 2011). Indeed, borders themselves, according to Valdivia, Wolford, and Lu (2014, 687) “participate in the reorganization” of hegemonic conservation boundaries separating production and conservation spaces. Based on a study of the Galápagos National Park, they concluded

The transitions in conservation theory and practice, from a fortress of protection to conservation without limits, occur

through the excess of human–nonhuman exchanges that unsettle—however briefly—the common sense that sustains the nature–society hierarchies and boundaries inherent to conservation logic. (Valdivia, Wolford, and Lu 2014, 699)

These studies all point to the everyday, brief, and often mundane ways through which the walls of conservation fortresses are transgressed, (re)negotiated, and (re)constructed. Yet, as Kelly (2015) argued in her article about “the crumbling fortress” on the Waza National Park in Cameroon, these transgressions can also turn the dichotomies around nature versus communities on their head entirely. She showed that in Waza it was the fortress that actually provided some relative protection to local people and gave them access to a reasonably well-managed set of natural resources. When vigilante marauders attacked the park, killed resident wildlife, and threatened their safety, local communities even demanded the fortress back.

This article contributes to these critical reassessments of fortress conservation by examining the relation between new media and the politics of access to and control over protected areas. Interestingly, although the preceding and many other studies on protected area conservation are attentive to the manifold ways in which borders of fortress parks are transgressed and mediated, they have paid scant attention to the role of new media. This is odd, considering that new media are rapidly changing the politics of access to and control over protected areas and how fortress ideas and practices are represented.² This article aims to fill this gap by presenting research on Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa. KNP is an interesting case because it is one of the most iconic and mediated parks globally, long regarded as a classic conservation fortress (Carruthers 1995). After apartheid ended in 1994, there have been serious attempts to break through the fortress, but much of the limited progress has recently come undone by the massive “green militarization” triggered by rampant rhino poaching in the KNP (Lunstrum 2014). The result is a return of Fortress Kruger, a term actually used by those involved in protecting KNP from poaching incursions (interview, Kruger National Park staff officer, 6 February 2014, Skukuza, South Africa).

These two developments—new mediation and green militarization—are currently redefining the politics of access to and control over Fortress Kruger. Although the KNP experience is unique in many respects, these developments are not, and hence the Kruger case could shed light on contemporary fortress conservation dynamics more generally. One of the

most important of these, I argue, is that new media encourage a new politics of social distinction in relation to parks and what they represent socially. These politics of distinction function in two integrated ways, namely, how new media offer individuals new tools to distinguish themselves and make new distinctions by inscribing boundaries into the social space. Together with new virtual and material relations to and dynamics in parks triggered by new media, this leads to complex new ways in which the boundaries of Fortress Kruger are rendered (more) permeable to some and (more) restrictive to others. By focusing on mediated dynamics of social distinction, I show not only how the boundaries between inside and outside remain starkly racialized in Kruger but that it is precisely through rendering park boundaries more permeable that new media technologies might help to reinforce the racialized and unequal hierarchies of the social order on which fortress conservation was built.

The argument is based on nearly three years of research, including nine months of fieldwork in South Africa between late 2012 and mid-2014. During the course of this research I conducted more than seventy semistructured interviews with key actors involved in or associated with online activities focused on conservation and KNP. I also conducted a survey with tourists at three KNP entry gates ($n = 570$) and participated in and observed tourist and other activities in KNP and surrounding private reserves, including a standard three-day KNP package tour. Finally, I conducted extensive online research, including participatory observation in Facebook groups and other new media focused on KNP.

In what follows, I first give some historical and recent background to the (new) mediation and green militarization of KNP, after which I discuss different new media dynamics and how these are changing access to, control over, and representations of the park through a politics of distinction. In the conclusion I return to the main argument around reassessing fortress conservation.

Kruger Mediations

Kruger is South Africa's most famous park, visited by more than 1.4 million tourists annually (South African Tourism 2014). It boasts all of the familiar wildlife that visitors generally want to see in Africa. Kruger has also long been a highly developed and highly mediated park (Carruthers 1995). Social media and Web 2.0 technologies are now taking these dynamics to new levels, leading to new virtual-

material interactions in (relation to) the park and to new articulations of the values generated by the park for different actors. As the analysis of several prominent new media forums will show, intense mediation has led to changed experiences and expectations of the park but also changing material dynamics in the park. To situate these changes I briefly discuss the history of Kruger mediations in relation to KNP's fortress characteristics.

Carruthers (1989, 1995) showed that mediation played a crucial role in the development of KNP. In the 1920s and 1930s, dedicating an enormous tract of land to wildlife did not sit well with Afrikaner lower classes, who could not see the value in "unproductive" conservation (Carruthers 1989). Support was ultimately garnered by the symbolism that KNP acquired through adopting the name of Transvaal president Paul Kruger and its role in bringing together English and Afrikaans interests in the developing nation. By the 1920s, "all the daily newspapers in the country welcomed the formation of a national park and even vied with each other to be the scheme's greatest supporter, stressing the common heritage and values which wildlife represented for whites and how these could strengthen national unity" (Carruthers 1995, 62). This symbolism was attuned to and significant within the emerging apartheid political economy. Through KNP, whites were able to bond with an Edenic Africa, filled with "unspoiled" nature and wildlife, and simultaneously control African peoples (Carruthers 1989; Hughes 2010). As narrated by Carruthers (1995):

In exploring the idea that whites romanticized their past through the natural landscape and its wildlife, it is imperative to take cognizance of the fact that whites chose to disregard the role that Africans had played in that past. African attitudes and interests were ignored or over-ridden. One can, however, argue in this respect that what the national parks did accomplish as far as Africans were concerned was to deny them access to a large portion of the Transvaal. . . . In South Africa it appears that the considerable African resistance to the game reserves may actually have accelerated the formation of the national park precisely because tighter central administration was considered to be a deterrent to African occupation of the area under consideration. The new park must therefore be seen as a means of providing more effective control over both neighbouring Africans and the few who still resided within the park. (65)

The symbolic importance of Kruger as a romanticized white fortress was reflected in iconic mediations of the park geared toward the developing tourist industry (cf. Neumann 1998). Waterhole photography,

especially, helped to capture African wilderness, which, in turn, as argued by Bunn (2003), provided ways to make sense of larger political-economic and social changes. Building on Benjamin's critique of industrial modernity, Bunn argued that Kruger was "a typically modernist form of symbolically enclaved space" that was to provide protection from "the destructive force of early twentieth-century industrialisation, mechanisation, and shocking new experiences of time" (207–08). Rapid political, economic, cultural, social, and war developments between the 1920s and the 1950s were believed to have widespread negative effects on people, with a main threat being the numbing of the senses. In response, "Wilderness experience would simply restore the deadened, instinctual power of the sense, and the beautiful, mirroring semblance of the waterhole photo was designed to achieve just that sort of sympathetic reawakening" (207–08).

These basic tendencies of romanticization of the land, control over black Africans, and the idea of Kruger as a "modernist form of symbolically enclaved space" (seemingly) separate from the destructive forces of global capitalism were reinforced during the apartheid regime and continued to influence Kruger mediations. Carruthers (1995, 67–88) showed that after the 1920s, Kruger was firmly cemented into the Afrikaans nationalist project that combined apartheid white supremacy and religious fundamentalism into a fortress park that "became increasingly controlled by a growing team of scientists and efficient bureaucrats." This changed with the demise of apartheid in 1994, although the idea of the park as Edenic Africa, unspoiled by (black) people, and the emphasis on top-down bureaucracy and science continue to influence practices and representations of KNP (Carruthers 1995; Maguranyanga 2009; Butler and Richardson 2014).³ Still, after 1994, KNP's fortress properties loosened somewhat, culminating in several community-based programs and one case of successful land restitution (Tapela and Omara-Ojungu 1999; Dressler and Büscher 2008; Ramutsindela and Shabangu 2013). Official representations of the park also changed and the notion that Kruger was a heritage of all South Africans became a leading theme for South African National Parks (SANParks). Instead of communicating Kruger as a fortress protecting nature from outside influences, mediation revolved around a policy focused on making "National Parks accessible (at affordable prices) to communities that were previously

excluded to [sic] the biodiversity, cultural-heritage and other experiences that South Africa's national parks can offer" (SANParks 2006, 8).

Since 2008, however, the idea and associated mediation of breaking down the fortress and letting local communities benefit from the KNP has come under strain due to the rhino poaching crisis in South Africa, which is centered on Kruger as the park with the largest population of rhinos globally (Duffy, Emslie, and Knight 2013).⁴ In December 2013, a flagship community-based resource-harvesting project was cancelled (personal communication, Kruger National Park staff, 4 February 2014, Phalaborwa, South Africa), for example, whereas more general fortress tendencies are making a violent return. Since the start of the crisis, KNP has seen massive investments in green militarization (Lunstrum 2014), with the military commander now in charge of antipoaching stating in an interview that he plans to establish a Fortress Kruger: an "Intensive Protection Zone, which will be a sanctuary within a sanctuary" (interview, Kruger National Park staff officer, 6 February 2014, Skukuza, South Africa). As a result, mediation of the park also dramatically changed. Next to the standard images of the park as an unspoiled African Eden, Kruger is now also portrayed as a war zone.⁵ These starkly contradictory images both find expression in the new mediation of Kruger.

Fortress Kruger's New Mediation

New media consist of social media like Facebook and Twitter and general Web 2.0 technologies that facilitate online cocreation. Important, therefore, is that online information is not simply consumed but actively modified, shared, liked, or otherwise coproduced by users (Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). Online natures, similarly, are actively cocreated or coproduced by users and form a mix between (representations of) material natures, the imaginations of users, and facilitating technologies (Büscher forthcoming). In this same vein, Kruger is cocreated through many online forums, including Facebook groups, Twitter, tourism Web sites, discussion groups, YouTube channels, wildlife cams, mobile apps, and more. This online cocreation changes the politics of control over and access to parks and their resources, although some platforms obviously have more effects on park dynamics than others.

To be sure, “traditional” (pre-Web 2.0) media also influenced control over and access to parks, especially by influencing representations and selecting what information would become public.⁶ New media, however, present a qualitative change because of their ability to let anybody with Internet access not only represent or mediate the park but actively influence, modify, or contest representations on potentially large scales. This has particularly affected conservation authorities, as it makes it harder for them to control information and representations. One example concerns rhino poaching statistics. Although rhino poaching statistics in South Africa are officially released by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), they are checked and challenged by online activist groups like the Outraged SA Citizens Against Poaching (OSCAP) and Save Our Rhino Facebook groups that made it a sport to be ahead of official statistics and be a more trustworthy source (Figure 1).

There are many ways in which new media are affecting protected areas, yet important to emphasize is that these changes can strengthen and challenge ideas and practices of fortress conservation, sometimes simultaneously. Take, for example, the “Battle at Kruger” YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU8DDYz68kM>). According to the *Mail & Guardian*, “This is the ultimate Kruger video, and, with over 72m views on YouTube, it’s certainly the most famous. Professional camera crews would kill to have witnessed a scene such as this one—in which a herd of cape buffalo, a pride of lions, and some crocodiles go head to head” (Baker 2013). What makes the video interesting for so many viewers is not just that it “compresses what is often seen on TV wildlife documentaries as staple iconic fare” but that it was made by tourists (Blewitt 2010, 60–61). The video’s shaky images and “fairly low resolution” add “to the aesthetic authenticity of the event” and hence the idea is that “anyone who happens to be in the right place at the right time can distribute what professionals produce

over much lengthier periods of time at a cost of millions of dollars” (Blewitt 2010, 60–61).

Rijsdijk (2010, 369) argued that “Battle at Kruger maintains a precarious balance between the sober, scientific observations of wildlife typical of wildlife filmmaking in the mid- to late-20th century, and more recent forms of radical individual accounts of wildlife captured in a more reflexive and personal manner.” It is precisely this precarious balance that strengthens and challenges the idea of parks as pristine wildlife fortresses. On the one hand, documentaries normally made by authorized experts are real: It can now be shown that spectacular wild Africa scenes occur in everyday life as well. On the other hand, because the scene was shot by amateurs, everybody can—in principle—access and share these spectacular sights normally only disclosed to authorized experts. Thus, “Battle at Kruger” reinforces and challenges certain hierarchies associated with the fortress model.

This example, however, is still rather indirectly related to fortress ideas and practices. New media offer far greater possibilities to garner influence over the politics of access to and control over fortress parks. A particularly important dynamic through which hierarchies and boundaries are transgressed and reconstituted, I argue, concerns how new media change the politics of distinction around fortress parks.

New Media and the Politics of Distinction

For the South African state and SANParks, Kruger is a profitable asset through which South Africa brands itself as a prime tourist destination of the spectacular wilderness kind. This renders certain representations of KNP highly valuable, visible, and political. With the majority of KNP’s visitors being (South African and foreign) whites, the Edenic, unspoiled fortress image has remained a crucial part of KNP’s representation, irrespective of the need to ensure the park’s social viability toward neighboring communities and South Africa’s black majority (Butler and Richardson 2014). It is in relation to these representations that new media offer individuals new tools to distinguish themselves and make new distinctions. They can support or disrupt certain representations, make them go viral, or completely ignore them. Through individual and mass actions on new media—based on complex individually and socially mediated tastes and preferences—certain elements might be emphasized or placed in a particular light. This follows Bourdieu’s (1984, 6) argument that

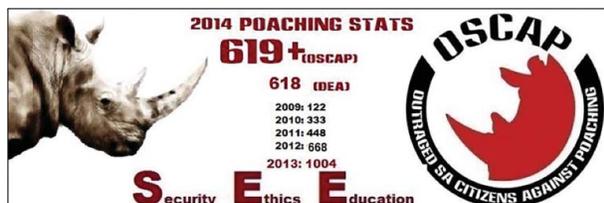


Figure 1. Group photo of OSCAP Facebook group, 31 July 2014. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/OSCAP/> (last accessed 10 December 2014). (Color figure available online.)

“social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make.” A politics of distinction, therefore, refers to two meanings of distinction: setting oneself apart from others and inscribing boundaries or differences into the social space.

These practices of distinction are not done in isolation. They take place in reference to social orders that are already “progressively inscribed in people’s minds” through such dynamics as “the hierarchies and classifications inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions, . . . or simply in language,” among others (Bourdieu 1984, 470–71). Hence, it is important to again emphasize that fortress conservation is the outcome of a particular social order associated with certain hierarchies, classifications, institutions, and language. Thus, when actors advocate for reinforcing Fortress Kruger or for reinstating the hierarchies, classifications, institutions, and language associated with fortress conservation, they—advertently or inadvertently—reinforce (the legitimacy of) a particular social order or political economy of power. This, in turn, has consequences for other actors, which I return to in the conclusion.

At the same time, Bourdieu (1984) shows that distinctions are not linear or one-sided: There are numerous social forms and axes that overlap and compete. Thus, new media are not simply added onto myriad other forms of distinction; they extend and widen the differential spaces through which distinctions are practiced and operate. Hence, a focus on new media is, again, not to say that there were no politics of distinction in relation to “old” media. The point is that new media enable different forms of distinction and that analyzing them illuminates what actually happens in terms of the changing politics of access to and control over fortress spaces.

One important change was already noted, namely, the (further) erosion of a form of authority whereby “official” organs—usually the state—control most information about parks and how they are represented. Another key change builds on Andrejevic’s (2013) point about the “generational shift” toward the “fragmentation and nichification of audiences in the contemporary media landscape.” He argued that this was not simply an outcome of the proliferation of (new) media outlets, but also “a reconceptualization of news as a customizable commodity subject to the vagaries of taste that govern other forms of consumption” (48–49). New media have contributed to this reconceptualization in a major way by allowing people to customize their preferred

representations of KNP. These representations, especially in relation to fortress ideas and practices, help some actors to place themselves in a privileged position with respect to the park, while shutting out or bypassing others. The next sections analyze four important new media that are changing dynamics of access to and control over Fortress Kruger: wildlife cams, Facebook groups, the SANParks forums, and an app called Latest Sightings. All these could, I argue, strengthen and challenge fortress dynamics in their transgression of park boundaries, although they do so differentially, with each successive forum tipping the balance more decidedly toward strengthening Fortress Kruger.

Wildlife Cams

Wildlife cameras—webcams that allow viewers to see wild nature around the clock—have become very popular (Kamphof 2013). The world’s first wildlife cam was www.africam.com, “the first company to broadcast live refresh images from the African bush back in 1999, and in 2006 it again was the first to stream a live 24/7 feed from Nkorho Pan” (Africam.com 2014), located in a private reserve next to Kruger. In an interview, the former director of Africam stated that his philosophy “is being passive, a Zen type approach, animals must come to us; it is about peace tranquility, ambience, etc, that is what we are trying to create.” Because they don’t do postproduction, he reckoned that they have a particular viewing demographic, which comes to “probably 200,000 unique visitors per month.” He estimated that “70 percent of our viewers are women over thirty-five/forty and older” and that “there are also lots of older people in old-age homes” watching wildlife cams, especially in the United States and Europe, as they cannot afford to travel to South Africa (interview, director of Africam, 24 January 2014, Johannesburg, South Africa).

This might sound as though wildlife cams are passive only: They allow people to access parks from a distance but do not give them any control. Yet this is not entirely correct. According to the director, many people are very active in discussion forums around the webcams and regularly try to intervene after watching events: “They ask us to interfere; even people from U.S. calling to say we must bring in SPCA to shoot an elephant that seemed injured, but was actually pregnant.” The same thing also happened with an “example of a lion that got hurt,” and hence he argued that “people react with their emotions and say that if we don’t do anything about it they make

our lives difficult and they do!” (interview, director of Africam, 24 January 2014, Johannesburg, South Africa). Although these attempts are perhaps laughable to some, webcams can trigger people to attempt to influence park governance.

The founder and former owner of Africam, who currently owns a private game reserve next to KNP and also hosts wildlife cams, corroborated these comments. He said that people are very active on discussion groups, that they know the animals better than he does, and that they track all their daily movements on the cameras. A more intimate group of people controls the webcams, and does so around the clock, in rotating shifts in different time zones. He mentioned that people also tried to force him, on two occasions, to intervene in his reserve, after they had seen dynamics that seemingly warranted intervention. Ultimately, he did not, but in the meantime he was threatened with legal action, typecast in a negative way in various media, and put under pressure in various other ways (interview, game reserve owner, 14 February 2014, Hoedspruit, South Africa). This goes to show that even though wildlife cameras do not allow direct access or control, they do influence the way in which those who grow emotionally attached to what they see on the cameras⁷ are able to assert pressure on park governance. It does not mean that this limited influence promotes parks as fortresses—the relations that people develop with animals through webcams and their resultant (emotional or other) responses are simply too complex (see also Candea 2010). This changes, however, with Facebook groups.

Facebook Groups

Facebook has become one of the most important social media platforms and a prime organizing platform for many social, political, economic, and other interests, especially through Facebook groups.⁸ It therefore has the potential to quite significantly influence issues of access to and control over Kruger, particularly because social media are taken very seriously by SANParks: All South African parks have their own Facebook pages, many have their own Facebook groups, and SANParks has staff working full time on engaging the public through Facebook and other social media. In an interview, a SANParks media and communication officer remarked that due to the rise of social media, “we are now forced to listen to the public’s opinion on a daily basis. Now we cannot ignore them anymore—we have given them a platform where they

can express themselves, and they can share their views, good bad or ugly, and we take them very seriously” (interview, SANParks media and communication staff, 11 February 2013, Pretoria, South Africa). Kruger is well represented in different Facebook groups and it is interesting to see how they represent the park and how members distinguish themselves in relation to Fortress Kruger. These dynamics, again, are complex and multidimensional, but two distinct and prominent uses of these groups stick out.

The first relates to the general prominence of the rhino poaching crisis on Kruger or SANParks-related Facebook groups. On the official SANParks Kruger Facebook group managed by the SANParks Web Forum and Online Stakeholder Practitioner, for example, more than 22,000 members discuss a variety of topics. Many are related to sightings, but issues such as the rhino poaching crisis, the way SANParks is run, or the use of social media in parks—among others—are also discussed. In an interview, SANParks social media staff mentioned that they were struggling with the “rhino issue” in particular. Over the past years, conservation supporters have put increasing pressure on SANParks to communicate information on the crisis through social media. The staff mentioned that if they do not respond the same day, or sometimes within two hours, people think they have something to hide and start rumors, which can lead to uncomfortable situations (interview, SANParks staff, 11 February 2013, Pretoria, South Africa). Another example is the aforementioned OSCAP and related rhino poaching activist groups, which exert influence by constantly pushing SANParks and the South African government on the rhino poaching issue. Not only do they follow and broadcast everything that happens in relation to the crisis, but close observations also show that they influence more mainstream media, thus increasing pressure on SANParks to pursue the green militarization of Kruger. In these ways, online “netizens” distinguish themselves and pressurize the management of parks in a fortress direction.

Netizens, however, also distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, especially in how they represent the park. Of particular importance in this respect is the fact that several of the largest groups exist solely to appreciate KNP. One group with more than 39,000 members is Kruger National Park—Best Place on Earth. Its introductory message states:

The intention of this site is for members to post and share their wonderful experiences in the Greater Kruger

National Park and to support these with photos, videos and comments. The good news, and good feel, of the Group needs to be maintained and no amount of negativity or commentary on this site will produce any action or activity from SANParks, as this Group is NOT affiliated to SANParks. (Kruger National Park—Best Place on Earth 2014)

Browsing through the group's wall shows that most posts are indeed dedicated to this feel-good aim. It focuses on Kruger as though it does not function in context but solely on animal sightings, camp facilities and the like. KNP, in this and many similar sites, is consumed as a depoliticized, decontextualized, ahistorical fortress. Here political issues such as the rhino poaching crisis are seen as negative and could provoke a moderator comment such as the following:

The original intention of this site was for members to post and share their wonderful experiences in the Greater Kruger National Park, and to support these with photos, videos and comments. The good news, and good feel, of the Group has transgressed into negativity around the activities of Poachers. Whilst we do not condone the death of one single Rhino, no amount of commentary on this site will produce any action or activity. . . . We have therefore decided that the site will revert back into line with the original intentions of being a positive, good feeling and good news, site for all Kruger National Park lovers. (Kruger National Park—Best Place on Earth 2014)

Similar discussions and warnings have been aired on the Kruger Appreciation Society Facebook group, and several others, clearly with an aim to create an online space of controlled representations of the African Eden kind. That is what *positive* and *good* refer to here, obviously leaving out the many negative and bad aspects of Kruger as a fortress space to those who do not have the same feelings toward the park as the groups' members. Much governance (and disciplining) goes into maintaining a focus on the positive, feel-good essence of Kruger that fits neatly with fortress conservation ideas of people-free, wild nature.

All of these examples come from prominent and visible Facebook groups, and a distinctive feature of all of them is that their membership is overwhelmingly white. This is clear from screening the members' sections of these groups and interviews with group moderators, and this is also in line with KNP visitors' profiles (Butler and Richardson 2014). Although not surprising, it does say something about the potential influence of one segment of the public over SANParks in relation to others. Because SANParks takes social

media very seriously as part of their corporate outreach, disproportionate weight is given to the types of discussions and images that appear on these Facebook groups vis-à-vis other voices; for example, black Soweto township residents surveyed by Butler and Richardson (2014). Hence, forms of distinction are created simply by the proportionality of social media users and their preoccupations. This imbalance is reinforced by SANParks' dependence on tourism income, which for a substantial part is generated precisely by those active on the aforementioned Facebook groups (and other social media). A rapidly increasing amount of tourism bookings is generated through online e-business, which the SANParks senior manager believes has a close link with the organization's activities and presence on social media (interview, SANParks staff, 24 February 2014, Pretoria, South Africa). In this way, fortress conservation-oriented publics are able to foreground their outlook by their distinctive use of social media.

The extent to which this has an effect is hard to gauge but should not be over- or underestimated. It should not be underestimated exactly because prominent uses of Kruger-related Facebook groups directly promote Kruger in its fortress form. It should also not be overestimated because even if SANParks takes social media seriously, the relations of Facebook group members to animals and the park are more complex than these two prominent uses suggest, although many of them are not very active and stand quite far from SANParks. This is different with the SANParks forums.

SANParks Forums

The SANParks Web site has its own discussion platform: the SANParks.org Forums (SANParks 2004). As of May 2015, the forums had more than 27,800 users ("forumites" or 'mites) and many hundreds of discussion threads under forty-two primary topics. This Web 2.0 space differs from Facebook groups in that it is integrated into SANParks and the core active community is more tightly knit and more involved in the organization than most Facebook group moderators, although all of them seem to spend much time online in these capacities. According to one Forums moderator, she spends more than forty hours per week online, "whether in the weekend or at night" (interview, Forums moderator, 5 May 2014, Somerset West, South Africa). Forums moderators are like honorary SANParks employees without a

contract, although they occasionally get costs associated with their volunteer work reimbursed.

The Forums have an elaborate code of conduct and set of rules for online behavior and the work involved in managing this is considerable. According to a former moderator, “SANParks wants moderators online 24/7 to catch drunk, or racist comments. Basically to patrol and to clean—those are the two main tasks of the moderators” (Interview, former Forums moderator, 4 December 2013, Dordrecht, The Netherlands). In return, the moderators, but also other active members, distinguish themselves in relation to the organization and get rewarded for this. Since May 2010, the long-standing SANParks honorary rangers’ organization added the “virtual region,” which introduces itself as follows: “We are located in cyberspace, with members in all parts of the country and even as far as the Netherlands. The SANParks Forums is our home park where we promote the South African National Parks” (SANParks n.d.). Virtual Honorary Rangers (VHRs) from this region can distinguish themselves through their contributions (posts and otherwise) and so move up from junior to senior, distinguished, and even “legendary” VHRs.

A major difference between the virtual and other honorary ranger regions is that the SANParks forums are accessible to everyone with an Internet connection and hence many people come there for information about South African parks (interview, former Forums moderator, 23 November 2013, The Hague, The Netherlands). Thus, according to a moderator, forum assistants, moderators, and other distinguished VHRs play an important role in giving people information, fundraising, and so on (interview, Forums moderator, 5 May 2014, Somerset West, South Africa). In return for this labor, the most active members get special access to Kruger and SANParks, such as an invitation for an annual braai in Kruger, “which is a chance for forumites to meet with SANParks personnel,” to play cricket and do joint fundraising (interview, former Forums moderator, 4 December 2013, Dordrecht, The Netherlands). A corollary is that forumites distinguish themselves from other visitors to the park. Forumites are, for instance, supposed to put yellow ribbons on their cars so that they can identify each other and meet and greet in the park. But this is not easy, according to one forum post:

By the time I see forum members’ yellow ribbons while driving, it’s normally too late to say hi because we have already passed each other so an idea I have is what about selling those yellow wrist bands to forum members with

say “SANParks Forum Member” written on it and that way when you are relaxed and in the camp you will be able to meet fellow forum members. . . . If it takes off then extra colors could be added to identify the members’ “rank” as a forum member, say yellow for a regular, green for a Virtual Ranger, red for a Moderator, etc.

Other members liked the idea, and one of the moderators replied, “We (as in the forum members led by a committee who are working with the VHRs and SANParks) are in the process of determining a logo specifically for the online community and the idea is to then sell branded merchandise to raise funds for anti poaching, etc.”

Through these and other distinctions, SANParks Forums VHRs distinguish themselves, and influence access to and control over the park. It is therefore important to see who (active) forumites are and, as expected, they are “mostly white,” according to a former moderator (interview, former Forums moderator, 4 December 2013, Dordrecht, The Netherlands). Another moderator stated, “We don’t have black members on the forum, which is a big challenge for me.” Referring to a talk by a prominent SANParks employee, she argued that Kruger

was dominated, or owned by a certain group, which is the Afrikaans community—it was like a pilgrimage; to go to the Kruger every year. And we see a large group of people battling with the fact that it is not like that anymore, that they have to share the park with the rest of South Africa and the world. I cannot understand that this group doesn’t change—and they are the most negative group and they use social media to vent that. But they don’t realize things have to change. And also the communities around the park, if they don’t benefit, they would want to farm the area, claim the land, etc. If they feel they benefit they will fight for it—and if they don’t benefit there is no Kruger. . . . The forum is mainly white, it is not a true reflection of the clientele and stakeholders of SANParks. (interview, Forums moderator, 5 May 2014, Somerset West, South Africa)

In effect, there is still a fortress conservation mentality among a large segment of white South Africans who were used to having the park for themselves, and they actively use new media to counter any transformation agenda that SANParks embarks on. One issue brought this out especially well: the plan to build a luxury hotel to attract the emerging black middle class to the park, which led to a heated race row. As reported in the *Mail & Guardian* on 1 July 2011:

SANParks chief executive David Mabunda this week lashed out at the “racial slurs” expressed by members of a vocal lobby group set up in May to oppose the proposed hotels. Called Aikona (Against Interference in Kruger Our Nature Asset), the group says it has a membership of more than 250. Its criticisms on social media have been particularly vociferous. “The racial slurs expressed by some members of the public professing to be supporters of Aikona have not only surfaced in the Lowveld media but also in various newspaper letters, blogs, SANParks forum, Facebook and Twitter. It has become one of Aikona’s hallmarks,” Mabunda wrote. (Macleod 2011)

This meant that also on the SANParks Forums, drastic action was needed in response to this issue, according to a moderator:

We have strict rules, and got rid of a lot of people who posted racist comments, and we have flushed out the majority—some of whom started their own groups. The issue of the hotel is a good example: complete and utter negativity—they stir passions, have contact in the De Beeld newspaper. People even started lawsuits against SANParks—they cannot accept that SANParks has to change and it is no longer the pristine park they can visit. (interview, Forums moderator, 5 May 2014, Somerset West, South Africa)

In other words, an influential and vocal group of whites that think they “own the park” ferociously defend a particular social order in Kruger, associated with racialized and unequal hierarchies, classifications, institutions, and language. A luxury hotel does not fit in there, but as Bunn (2003) noted, a traditional-looking African thatch rondavel hut does. Although some of these are very luxurious, they at once signal native dwellings through “which the white presence is able to stage itself as though adapted to the African environment” (212) and something to be left behind for blacks, as argued by SANParks staff (interview, former Forums moderator, 4 December 2013, Dordrecht, The Netherlands). At the time of writing (December 2014), no decision on the hotels has been taken, which testifies to the powers behind trying to maintain a Fortress Kruger that resembles a former (but still influential) social order.

The official policy on the SANParks.org Forums is one of transformation of the old social order. Many active forumites, especially the moderators, are in favor of transformation and try to represent the organization as best as possible. They are therefore quite different from the “influential and vocal group of whites who think they own the park” and whom they had to

“flush out” of the Forums. In this sense, their actions undermine the fortress mentality. At the same time, the Forums still reflect the old social order in terms of racial composition and a particular outlook on a romanticized African wilderness. So although moderators and active forumites promote transformation, there is also a certain ambiguity in their trying to be closer to a transforming SANParks while vying for privileged access to Kruger. The latter ambition is why some of the most active members joined the Forums in the first place and how they distinguish themselves vis-à-vis other visitors. This Forums case, therefore, shows that there are major ambiguities and important degrees in kind when it comes to promoting fortress conservation.

Latest Sightings

Latest Sightings is an animal sighting service where Kruger visitors are able to share sightings through their mobile devices over an app, Twitter, Facebook, or a dedicated Whatsapp group.⁹ A young teenager from South Africa, Nadav Ossendryver, started the service because he was bored driving around the park “seeing nothing.” In many online interviews, like this one from 2012, he relates how the idea got started:

“Whenever we came here I used to beg my parents to stop every car passing and ask them what they’d seen,” remembers Nadav, who is currently a grade 10 student. “After a while they got irritated, so I was thinking, what’s an easy way of getting people to share their sightings without having to stop every car?” (Kermeliotis 2012)

He started a blog and a YouTube channel for Kruger videos, which became so popular that he developed a smartphone app. The commercialization of his adventure started when he became a YouTube partner, which earned him advertising income and allowed him to start employing people. With success—Latest Sightings has become the best-viewed South African YouTube channel (Figure 2)—rhetoric around Latest Sightings also changed. Nadav was branded by South African *Entrepreneur Magazine* as a role model young entrepreneur (Todd 2013), won several other entrepreneurial awards,¹⁰ and was courted by Facebook, Google, and others. Latestsightings.com now introduces Nadav as follows:

Nadav Ossendryver is one of those teenagers you just hope your child is going to be like. Part techno-boffin, part drummer, big part tennis player, A-grade Matric



Figure 2. Nadav Ossendryver receives award for most viewed South African YouTube channel. *Source:* <https://www.facebook.com/latestsightingskruger?fref=ts> (last accessed 10 December 2014). (Color figure available online.)

scholar! He was just 15 years old when he established Latest Sightings and never imagined that it would be a fulltime business before he even finished school. He also couldn't have imagined that it would lead him to meeting Barack Obama or Kingsley Holgate, or gracing the boardrooms of Microsoft and Nokia. Despite his profile he remains a conservationist and the bush is definitely his place to be. He's far more at home in a tent and next to the campfire than at his desk studying for his next maths distinction! He gets his biggest kicks from spotting wild dogs or meeting community members to chat about what they have seen!" (Latest Sightings, n.d.)

Never mind the failed attempt to balance idolatry and modesty; with Nadav's rapidly changing fortunes, his rhetoric also changed. In an interview from October 2014 he elaborated again on the Kruger beginnings:

People go and they hate it because they see nothing and they think it's so boring. I got a friend who went just from the gate to the camp and saw nothing and he left that day, he couldn't handle it. And I hated that. I hated listening to people because when I go, you know, we always have a latest sighting that I am thinking I wish if these people just saw a lion . . . they would enjoy it. That is one of the reasons why I created Latest Sightings, to make people enjoy the Kruger; to create a love for wildlife. (Gareth's Guests 2014)

So from a boy frustrated about not seeing wildlife, Nadav now aims to help people "create a love for wildlife" and so develop a (new) sense of appreciation for Kruger. This new sense, then, is clearly different from simply driving around the park and enjoying whatever comes one's way. Through new media, people are able to not only share sightings but also chase sightings by others. This can change dynamics in parks

considerably, as I have noticed myself while using Latest Sightings on several research trips to KNP between January and May 2014. The types of spectacular sightings (of lions, cheetahs, etc.) seemed to attract more people more quickly than before, something that many have been complaining about, including SANParks.org Forum members.¹¹ Complaints noted often were that it leads to speeding to catch a sighting in time and that it devalues an appreciation for the park as a whole by focusing only on spectacular sightings.

More generally, Latest Sightings has led to a dramatic intensification and extension of an older politics of distinction in the park, namely, around animal sightings. In Kruger tours and drives, sightings are everything and visitors spend countless hours discussing and comparing them. I was reminded of this when I joined a safari tour in late February and early March 2014 in Kruger. The first and main distinction for every tourist is having seen the "big five" of lion, elephant, leopard, rhino, and buffalo. After that the gradations are endless: How many times have you seen the big five? Were they doing anything spectacular like hunting? How close to the road were they? How long have you been able to see them? From there, distinctions are built up around a more intimate knowledge of the park: how many times and how long one goes to Kruger, what the good spots and strategies are for sightings, and so on.

These politics of distinction are now taken to a new level through Latest Sightings and similar initiatives. They enable people visiting KNP to broadcast their sighting distinctions onto the Internet and for others to vicariously enjoy sightings from a distance. This is another way in which the boundaries of Kruger are transgressed and (literally) mediated. The idea of access to and control over Fortress Kruger has changed in another important way, however, through Latest Sightings and the intensified politics of distinction it has brought. It has, I argue, further "spectacularized" the park in its fortress form. That is, Latest Sightings transforms the relations between humans and nature by further turning it into Igoe's (2010) rendition of Debord's spectacle, namely the "mediation of relationships between people and the environment by images" (376).

By focusing exclusively on individual and preferably on spectacular sightings (of the more charismatic animals doing cool things) and sending these in ever greater numbers into cyberspace, Latest Sightings helps people to consume fortress conservation images of timeless nature without people or context. In turn,

Andrejevic's (2013, 48–49) argument about online content as “a customizable commodity subject to the vagaries of taste that govern other forms of consumption” further enables fragmented and “nichified” audiences to focus on building this spectacular relationship with the kind of nature they love. Hence, this argument includes but also moves beyond Andrejevic's (2013) point of “the commercial logic of customization in which marketers seek to manage consumers by tapping into a dominant feeling-tone or ‘sentiment’” (50).

It is clear that young entrepreneur Nadav has become a successful commercial marketer of customized images that tap into a particular feeling-tone or sentiment dependent on fortress parks as “quintessential landscapes of consumption” (Neumann 1998, 24). The hallmark of new media, as mentioned, however, is cocreation and, hence, he has helped to allow an entire community to market, share, and tap into these feeling-tones and sentiments. So when Nadav in a TV interview said that what makes Latest Sightings so successful is that it promotes a community of like-minded individuals interested in sharing sightings, he was exactly right. He did not, however, add that this community is mainly white and to a great degree still invested in a fortress conservation social order in which KNP plays a vital symbolic role. With this in mind, the following conversation between TV host Bruce Whitfield and Nadav becomes especially revealing:

Bruce: You love the bush and you don't mind sitting out there but you don't have to do it all yourself because it is about creating that community of interest and what latestsightings.com has done is created a destination for nature-lovers to go to, to share the content. . . .

Nadav: And that's I think the key to getting the most unbelievable content because you know, as you said, one cameraman goes and waits a whole year to get like maybe an hour worth of unbelievable footage but when you expand that to over 100,000 people going, one of them are bound to see something unbelievable every single day. And you know that is basically what happens. And when they are part of this community and share that with the rest of the world, the rest of the world watches and I think that's what really has been able to grow our . . .

Bruce: Okay, I want to see some cool content. (*Tonight with Bruce Whitfield* 2013)

Later in the interview, Nadav explained that he wants to start paying “members of the community,”

hoping that “if you can go to the Kruger and get paid, you would send in the most unbelievable videos and also sightings and it also kind of locks you into the community.” But not only does it lock people into the community, it also helps to lock the community further into the social order that they are already invested in, locking out those who seek to change this order. This, to be sure, is not inevitable or to argue that all Latest Sightings community members are 100 percent fortress minded. The realities of mediated relations between people and nonhuman natures are simply too complex, as I argued earlier. The point here, however, is that on the platform there is hardly space for more nuanced discussions around the politics of access to and control over Kruger as a contested space. The very format of focusing on sightings ensures a singularity that neatly fits the fortress narrative while shutting out other, more complex narratives. It is in this specific sense that I am arguing that Latest Sightings strengthens the fortress mentality of KNP visitors. Although KNP management insists that Latest Sightings does not influence park management (interview, Kruger National Park management staff, 6 February 2014, Skukuza), it is clear that strengthening the fortress mentality among those that bring in most of the much-needed tourism income for the park could “further undermine alternative ways of understanding and connecting to the environment” (Igoe 2010, 391) and make more radically democratic options involving black neighboring communities more difficult.

Conclusion

This article sought to contribute to recent discussions on boundaries and borders in fortress conservation spaces by bringing new media into the analysis. Through engagements with four new media platforms, I aimed to give insight into the added complexities brought by new media in terms of the control over and access to fortress conservation spaces. Wildlife cams allow people to cross the boundaries of parks virtually, and virtual possibilities offered by Latest Sightings allow those in parks to help mediate their and other's relationships with Kruger in a very focused, even narrow manner. Clearly, a reassessment of the idea and practice of fortress conservation is in order, particularly regarding the classic boundaries and dichotomies of nature versus people or production versus conservation.

Recent studies have started this reassessment by focusing on how borders in fortress conservation spaces are transgressed and so form production and protection assemblages (Valdivia, Wolford, and Lu 2014) that result in many different, and sometimes unexpected, human and nonhuman political configurations (Sundberg 2011; Kelly 2015). An underlying tendency of these contributions is to show that borders, boundaries, and hierarchies are inherently “leaky” despite the fact that “asymmetrical relations within structures of power guide the valuation of border crossings” (Valdivia, Wolford, and Lu 2014, 698). What the preceding analysis shows, however, is that this very leakiness might in fact reinforce the hierarchies that boundaries represent. Through the transgressions of social media, several basic tendencies of fortress conservation are being strengthened rather than weakened, as became clear through a focus on the politics of distinction.

Through new media, a particular community of actors has been able to find new ways to distinguish themselves in relation to Fortress Kruger and to enhance the power of distinctive representations of the KNP. Both this community and the distinctions they promote are still largely steeped in a social order associated with certain hierarchies, classifications, institutions, and language. What is more, as I have shown, these distinctions are backed up by and mediated through particular political economies of power, in this case the purchasing power of whites and how through the neoliberalization of park governance, Kruger depends almost exclusively on tourist income.

This also goes a long way to explain why local communities hardly played any role in the analysis. It is not because they are not on new media; to the contrary. They are simply not nearly as invested in the new media spaces that influence representations of the Kruger as SANParks might like them to be. New media around the park reflects the political economy of the park, which is still deeply steeped in the fortress social order on which the park was built. The nichification and fragmentation of audiences through new media (Andrejevic 2013), in turn, might also account for the fact that I encountered so little resistance to these images on the platforms discussed here. As the cases showed, there was dissent and disagreement—sometimes hectic and sharp—but mostly among whites, rarely between black and white.¹²

This adds another layer of complexity to Maguranyanga’s (2009, 183) conclusion that the “de-racialization” or “Africanization” of park management

does not necessarily ensure the “transformation” of park management practices. This added layer relates to a new politics of distinction that enables certain people to garner access to the park in new ways. As I have shown, particularly through the SANParks.org Forums, people distinguish themselves by resisting and supporting the transformation agenda, but the very racial composition of those active in new media platforms and their own desires regarding access to the park render even their actions in favor of transformation highly ambiguous. In this way, the forums neither strengthen nor challenge still-dominant fortress conservation ideas.

These ambiguities might also be present under the surface of the case of Latest Sightings, yet I argued that the platform’s format hinders these from appearing openly. Focused on utterly atomized sightings, Latest Sightings fits the fortress framework extremely well and leaves little space for alternative conceptualizations of or contexts around the park, such as claims by communities living on the edge of Kruger. This does not mean, however, that no contexts are taken into account. One is highlighted often, also in Latest Sightings: the rhino poaching crisis. Yet this context further strengthens Fortress Kruger, although ironically new media enable certain individuals to gain access to Kruger precisely by calling for the reinforcement of its fortress properties. New media focused on the rhino poaching crisis, therefore, are breathing new life into the idea of Kruger as a “modernist form of symbolically enclaved space” (seemingly) separate from the destructive forces of global capitalism (Bunn 2003).

I would even argue that the rhino poaching crisis reinforces this tendency despite its opposite effects in practice. The poaching crisis resembles the greedy and destructive human element that needs to be eliminated from Kruger, and many white new media users emphasize this point (Büscher and Ramutsindela forthcoming). This, then, is where the Kruger case might shed some light on fortress conservation dynamics more generally. As the destructive forces of global capitalism continue to impact the world’s biodiverse spaces, access to and control over fortress conservation spaces likely to intensify and hence also the role that new media play in this. Obviously, the precise nature of these dynamics will depend on the unique attributes of the parks in question, including their relative importance in global and local imaginaries and the number of people prepared to engage with them through new media. Yet important to keep in mind from the Kruger case is that new media and conservation boundaries might interact in counterintuitive

ways: As the boundaries of fortress conservation parks are ever more frequently and intensely transgressed and reconstructed through new media, they might equally strengthen rather than weaken the racialized and unequal hierarchies these parks were built on.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Alice Kelly, Rob Fletcher, and the anonymous reviewers for insightful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this article.

Funding

The research in this article was made possible by a Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research Veni grant, Dossier number 451–11–010.

Notes

1. Although it could, of course, be argued that neoliberal market mechanisms have an in-built tendency to enhance inequality and disfavor the already marginalized (Büscher 2013).
2. Obviously, there are still many remote protected areas where wifi is not (fully) available, although—if participatory observations at the World Parks Congress 2014, held in Sydney, Australia, from 12 to 19 November 2014 are anything to go by—this is changing rapidly.
3. Butler and Richardson (2014) recently conducted a survey in the famous Soweto township of Johannesburg and concluded that “it is clear that national parks are still viewed as white leisure spaces in South Africa despite considerable political and organisational changes since 1994” (17).
4. In 2013, more than 600 rhinos were poached in KNP, and 2014 figures exceeded 800. See Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (2015).
5. See, for example, Lapidés (2013) or New York Times Editorial Board (2014).
6. The influence of traditional media on park access and control, however, is an understudied phenomenon.
7. See, for example, the weblog of a self-proclaimed “Africam addict” at <http://mavimet.com/about/> (last accessed 22 October 2014).
8. Groups are dedicated Facebook spaces that can be secret, closed, or open (public), representing degrees of control over who can see and participate. During my research, I became a member of the most active and biggest conservation Facebook groups dedicated to KNP and South African conservation issues. For more than a year I followed them very regularly (almost daily) and took regular notes and print screens.
9. I have been following Latest Sightings since it began in 2011 on Facebook and www.latestsightings.com. In

early 2014, I joined the Latest Sightings Whatsapp group, which I have been observing daily since.

10. Including the Young Jewish Entrepreneurial Award 2014, the Nelson Mandela Young Leadership Award 2014, and others.
11. This is something that is hard to verify, however, and KNP management actually noted that they do not see much bigger congestions (interview, Kruger National Park management staff, 6 February 2014, Skukuza).
12. One major exception, among others, is a radio discussion on “Do you care about Rhino” by DJ Eusebius McKaiser on 19 February 2014, which was heavily discussed on Facebook.

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