Chapter 6

The Contribution of Tourism to Peacebuilding Processes:
The Case of African Peace Parks

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ABSTRACT

The concern for environmental protection within an increasingly globalised international system has led to the planning of Transfrontier Conservation Areas, among which Peace Parks aim to achieve or maintain peace across borders. Based on the growing importance that tourism practice has for the sustainability of Peace Parks, this chapter reflects on how the tourism activity developed within Peace Parks can contribute to peacebuilding processes. This dynamic is addressed by analysing a case study, focused on the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. It shows that tourism has the potential to positively contribute to sustainability, creating better living conditions for the local population and, consequently, promoting the achievement of peace. However, it also shows that tourism may have the opposite effect if national interests dominate, if there is insufficient consultation of local communities' interests or if sensitive border and land-use issues are not overcome.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the impact tourism activity has on peacebuilding processes, in the context of African Peace Parks. The objective is to understand how tourism activities developed within Peace Parks can contribute to peacebuilding. The underlying research contributes to analyses of conflict transformation, focusing on concrete economic activities, which articulated with environmental protection objectives, promote the achievement of a positive peace. It moves the focus of analysis away from violence and

explores the potential for transforming a conflict into non-violent dynamics. By focusing on tourism's potential for promoting and consolidating peace, this perspective not only makes a theoretical contribution to Peace Studies and Tourism Studies, but also provides the basis for improving peace promotion policies.

The concept of peacebuilding adopted in this chapter is environmental peacebuilding. Besides the focus on the impacts that a conflict has at the socio-economic and political levels, this process addresses environmental issues as a means to promote long-term sustainable development (Bronkhorst & Bob, 2010). Environmental peacebuilding processes have already proven to have a positive impact on inter-state conflict resolution through the establishment of Transfrontier Conservation Areas (Ide, 2018) and are a strong instrument for conflict transformation (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2018). The concept of Peace Park is related not only to the concept of environmental peacebuilding, but also to the concept of conflict transformation. A Peace Park can be considered a practical example of a conflict transformation process, sustained by an environmental peacebuilding perspective. The economic activities that emerge in and around Peace Parks are driven by this initiative and, at the same time, they prove to be a crucial tool for the sustainable management and maintenance of those parks (Peace Parks Foundation, 2019c). Working along with other instruments, these activities enable Peace Parks to remain active and thus continue to be drivers for sustainable and positive peace (Hsiao, 2007). By 2018, the community development programmes implemented in some African Peace Parks had already proven to have a positive impact on the lives of over 20,000 people living in and around these parks (Peace Parks Foundation, 2018).

Tourism is the main economic activity analysed in this chapter, as it constitutes the main financial contributor to this type of conservation areas (Peace Parks Foundation, 2019c) and stimulates economic growth and job creation in rural and marginalised regions within and around the parks, thus contributing to poverty reduction (Southern African Development Community [SADC], 2012). In South Africa, 1 in 20 people depends directly on tourism for a job (Peace Parks Foundation, 2019c). With the growing importance of tourism for Peace Parks' sustainability, it becomes relevant to study how best to frame and plan this kind of initiatives, which have an intrinsic peacebuilding effect in the areas where they are located. Thus, the main research question addressed in this chapter is as follows: *how do tourism activities developed within Peace Parks contribute to peacebuilding processes?*

In order to answer this question, the analysis is framed within discussions on peace and violence, environmental peacebuilding and violent conflict transformation. The methodological approach adopted includes a literature review and document analysis, using a case study to better substantiate the argument that guides this chapter. Information sources include public data provided by Peace Parks Foundation, the main organisation responsible for African Peace Parks' management and maintenance, and other institutions that study and manage these parks, such as the Southern African Development Community, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Commission on Protected Areas, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature and the United Nations University for Peace. The chapter includes a detailed analysis of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, established in 2002, which links the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, the Kruger National Park in South Africa and the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe. Among the 18 existing African Peace Parks, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park was one of the first formally established in Africa and it is one of the largest in the world. Only African Peace Parks were considered, since this continent has the highest number of Peace Parks in the world.

The chapter is organised into two parts. The first section addresses the theoretical framework used to analyse Peace Parks, including peacebuilding concepts, setting the stage for discussing their articulation with tourism activities. The second section focuses on the analysis of Peace Parks as peacebuilders and

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