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**Nustad, Knut G. 2015. Creating Africas:
Struggles over Nature, Conservation and Land.
Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal
Press/London: Hurst & Co. xii + 192 pages.**

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The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) regularly publishes a list of territories declared as “Protected Areas” which are defined according to standardised criteria. The 2014 report proudly states that the number of Protected Areas had risen from 9,214, covering 2,400,000 square kilometres in 1962, to 209,429 protected areas, covering 32,868,673 square kilometres in 2014; this is a twentyfold increase in the number of protected areas which today cover a space more than 13 times they covered half a century ago. It is not surprising that conflicts in and around protected areas are on the rise as well; so is the literature dealing with these conflicts.

At first sight, Knut Nustad’s book *Creating Africas: Struggles over Nature, Conservation and Land* is just another example of a work studying these conflicts. But the first part of the title *Creating Africas* gives the reader a hint that Nustad’s book is more than just a case study about the struggles of various stakeholders over the same resources. It is also a reconstruction of what the various groups of stakeholders wanted the contested area to be. Nustad’s study conceptualizes struggles over a particular protected area in South Africa as performances through which various – and often conflicting – imaginations of the world are put on stage. The changing relations between groups of human stakeholders, animals or flora around the protected area Nustad examined appear as performed realities. This is the reason why Nustad argues that indeed multiple “Africas” are created and eventually enacted. The question to be answered then is under which context and by using which strategies some actors are able to impose their version of the world, at the exclusion of other versions, and to realise this version practically at a given time in history.

The various claims and the enacted performances of “worlds” (or Africas, for that matter) resulting from them do not at all have the same reach. In particular protectionist imaginations claim universality, thereby degrading other claims as merely “local.” This is an all too obvious parallel to colonial or religious fervours which motivated the missionary projects of the colonial conquest.

Nustad puts his case study of conflicting land uses in and around the iSiamangaliso Wetland Park into a historical context, reconstructing the various uses and claims in detail. He shows that today's tensions between various stakeholders about the park's resources are the outcome of conflicting performances of what the park area ought to be: hunting ground for locals, source for ivory-trade dominated by white colonialists, arable land for small farmers, industrial agriculture of sugar cane, animal husbandry and, as the most recent performance, the re-enactment of "pristine" or wild nature. Nustad demonstrates that this last performance in particular is an instance of Western dualism between the social and the natural (or between culture and nature). He seeks to show that this dualism is not only implicated in the historical origins of the current conflicts, which he thoroughly reconstructs and unfolds, but that this dualism still besets the language and concepts of solutions proposed by the group of protectionists (especially of the neoliberal variant who promote win-win ideas). Nustad takes his analysis to an ontological level; I doubt, however, whether the contestants in the park will follow here. But they will surely follow his argumentation when he depicts the ongoing tensions as a political struggle that is decided on the basis of power relations rather than on that of "objective" scientific results.

Nustad here uses arguments the reader of works on political ecology is surely familiar with. His book is also a contribution to the current debate in the anthropology of human-environment relations that seeks to overcome Western dichotomist thinking. As far as the nature-culture dichotomy is concerned, this debate is linked to the names of Tim Ingold or Philippe Descola and to the concept of the Anthropocene. Nustad's book is a valuable contribution to this debate as he succeeds in putting nature conservation into the historical continuity of dichotomist thinking, and of Western dominance, oppression, and deprivation of ownership or use rights. *Creating Africas* is a well-written and well-organised book that makes reading a pleasure. Its balanced theoretical assessment of the arguing of the nature conservationist strips their position of its alleged moral, quasi religious superiority and turns it into but one of – multiple – African realities over which political struggle is unfolding in the era of the Anthropocene.

Georg Klute