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CALUM BURTON[a], JAYNE M. ROGERSON[b]

Challenges of Planning and Developing an Urban Ecotourism Destination in South Africa

Abstract. Ecotourism is a major driver of tourism in rural, usually remote peripheral regions in several African countries including South Africa. The aim in this article is to examine challenges associated with planning and developing an urban ecotourism project in South Africa. The study focuses on the Dinokeng Game Reserve, which is located on the boundary of one of South Africa's major metropolitan areas and in the country's economic heartland. This ecotourism project offers a new niche product for urban tourism development. Using literature sources and information collected during 27 semi structured interviews the author analyses the key steps in the planning of this innovative urban tourism product. The study contributes to the growing body of research on South African tourism and to the broader international literature on the role of distinctive niche products in the development of urban tourism in the Global South.

Keywords: ecotourism, urban tourism, Dinokeng game reserve, urban eco-tourism, South Africa

1. Introduction

Ecotourism emerged during the late 20th century with the growth of policy interest in conservation and environmental matters (Ceballos-Lascarain, 1993). Conservation managers acknowledged the importance of tourism as a logical component of sustainable development and the need for a careful planning of ecotourism destinations (Wood, 1999). Nevertheless, the concept of ecotourism has been the subject of much debate that has given rise to numerous definitions (Spenceley and Rylance, 2021). The International Ecotourism Society defines it as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of lo-

[a] School of Tourism & Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, calumb1994@gmail.com
[b] School of Tourism & Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, jayner@uj.ac.za, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3494-1311

cal people" (Bricker, 2017, p. 1). Ecotourism is therefore associated with tourism development that follows a set of principles promoting social, environmental and economic sustainability (Bricker, 2017). For Spenceley and Rylance (2021) ecotourism is an essential element that contributes to achieving several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Ecotourism can be traced back to the 1960s and is associated with six key elements: (1) it is nature-based; (2) it preserves conservation; (3) it promotes education; (4) it encourages sustainability; (5) it distributes benefits, and (6) it is ethically responsible or aware (Donohue and Needham, 2006; Reimer and Walter, 2012; Ballantyne and Packer, 2013). Based on these key characteristics, Weaver and Lawton (2007) conceptualise ecotourism as follows: attractions should be predominantly nature-based, visitor interactions with those attractions should centre on learning or education, while experience and product management should follow principles and practices associated with ecological, social-cultural and economic sustainability. A further definition regards ecotourism as the promotion of appropriate and environmentally sensitive development, and as a way of achieving social justice and enhancing the quality of life and stability, especially for communities in the immediate vicinity of protected areas.

South Africa is one of the leading international destinations for ecotourism (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2018a; Litheko, 2022). It is rich in ecological assets and ranks as the world's third most biodiverse country (Ferreira, 2007). The expansion of nature-based tourism has proven an effective strategy for improving the quality of life for households in rural settlements, which surround protected areas and game reserves, the most well-known being that of Kruger National Park (Ferreira and Harmse, 1999; Ferreira, 2004). The historical origins of these spaces of ecotourism and struggles around the establishment of protected areas are documented in studies by Carruthers (1989, 1994). Arguably, the establishment of Kruger National Park was a critical moment in the historical evolution of ecotourism and sustainable tourism debates in South Africa (Carruthers, 1989, 1994, 2008). For several decades Kruger National Park was the focal point for conservation initiatives and incipient ecotourism developments in South Africa. This leading role continued into the apartheid period from 1948–1991. Following the fall of apartheid and the democratic transition in 1994, there was a change of focus with regard to the establishment of protected areas and sustainable tourism, with more attention paid to ecotourism impacts (Ferreira, 2003, 2004; Carruthers, 2006, 2008; Büscher and Ramutsindela, 2015). One significant example of this shift in the post-apartheid period was the establishment of peace parks and transfrontier parks, which would play a vital role in ecotourism development across the broader region of Southern Africa. Peace parks are large conservation areas

that cross international state borders with a goal to saving biodiversity, enabling community development and aiding international collaboration (Ramutsindela, 2004, 2007).

As can be seen, ecotourism and nature-based tourism in South Africa has an extended and chequered history. One common thread, however, is that the development of ecotourism projects in South Africa — as is the case with most of the world — has been associated with rural spaces, which are often remote locations in peripheral regions of the space economy. It is against this backdrop that the aim of this article is to examine challenges surrounding the development of an *urban* ecotourism project in South Africa. The study concerns the Dinokeng Game Reserve, located within one of South Africa's major metropolitan areas and in the country's economic heartland. Two sections of discussion and analysis are presented. The next section provides the wider context within the literature on urban tourism in general, and on tourism in South Africa in particular. This section is followed by the analysis of the challenges encountered in the process of planning and establishing this urban ecotourism destination in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

Urban tourism remained an unrecognised category in research until the 1980s (Law, 1993), since it was not viewed to be significant enough to merit consideration in policy, frameworks and planning. Nevertheless, cities in the Global North, such as Amsterdam, New York, Hong Kong, London and Singapore were slowly being recognised as vibrant urban tourism destinations (Rogerson and Visser, 2006). Arguably, the topic of urban tourism remained a poorly understood research category during the 2000s despite its global importance and growing role in modern urban management (van den Berg, van der Borg, and van der Meer, 1995). A surge in urban tourism was driven by two important factors. First, tourists became increasingly interested in urban destinations to experience their heritage sites, cultural attractions (such as museums) and events/festivals. The second impulse came from urban policy makers aiming to revitalise urban economies through urban tourism as part of place-based economic development programmes (Rogerson and Visser, 2006, 2007). As van der Borg (2022, p. 1) points out, "many cities started to understand that the continuously expanding tourism market offered them concrete possibilities for enlarging their economic bases which had been eroding rapidly because of deindustrialization". These developments significantly strengthened urban tourism as a major gateway for different types of activities (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2021b).

Cities offer a range of attractions for business and leisure tourists (including day trippers) as well as those visiting friends and relatives (Law, 1992; Page and Connell, 2006). Tourism initiatives are encouraged by local (and national) governments as they can serve as an opportunity to expand the market and encourage social and economic development of cities (Law, 1992). This can be enhanced through three basic elements: a city's image, the quality of the tourism product, and the expected effectiveness of tourism development over time (Law, 1993). As noted by van der Borg (2022), many urban centres in the Global North began to systematically pursue policies for tourism development to make themselves more attractive for both tourists and local residents. Efforts focused on developing strong brands to enhance city images and new tourism products including waterfront developments, museums, festivals, events, sports complexes, heritage and entertainment centres (Law, 1993). As a whole, this was the making of an 'infrastructure of pleasure' that would assist in building urban tourism destinations (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2017, 2021a).

As pointed out by Van der Borg (2022, p. 2), the result was that urban tourism "grew to become one of the most important segments in the global tourism market". One outcome of its emergence has been an expansion of research interest and a surge of publications about urban tourism in many cities in the Global North. The research often concerned issues of urban regeneration, rebirth, reinvention and re-imaging (Aall and Koens, 2019; van der Borg, 2022). Rogerson and Rogerson (2021b) note that the growing number of studies on tourism and cities was a response to, on the one hand, booming tourism in cities and, on the other hand, the growing policy significance of tourism in urban planning. In pre-COVID-19 times a burst of research on urban tourism was triggered by concerns about the impacts of 'overtourism' and its management in cities like Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen and Venice. Rogerson and Rogerson (2021b) mention scholarly debates surrounding 'overtourism' and 'tourismphobia' in many European cities including Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Dubrovnik, Florence, Lisbon, London, Palma (Majorca), Paris, Seville and Venice. Important studies were devoted to overtourism and protest movements taking place in cities of the Global North (Milano, Novelli, and Cheer, 2019; Diaz-Parra and Jover, 2021; Pasquinelli and Trunfio, 2020).

Similarly, many cities in the Global South have also become tourism destinations (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2021c). However, national tourism policies in this region, and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa, often tend to focus on nature-based tourism and its impact on rural development and therefore tend to overlook issues of urban tourism (Rogerson and Visser, 2004; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2018a). In sub-Saharan Africa, the development of urban tourism has mainly occurred in South Africa's cities (Rogerson and Visser, 2004; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2017,

2021a). Urban tourism — both in major cities and small towns — has a long history in South Africa as has been documented in several articles by Christian Rogerson and Jayne Rogerson (see Rogerson, 2002, 2006, 2019, 2020; Rogerson, 2011a, 2011b, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2022). Arguably, historical research on urban tourism can greatly enrich our understanding of contemporary events (Saarinen, Rogerson and Hall, 2017; Rogerson and Baum, 2020).

It has been shown that the modern phase of urban tourism development only started in post-apartheid South Africa thanks to local and regional strategies formulated to support the development of cities and small towns (Nel and Rogerson, 2005; Rogerson and Visser, 2007; Butler and Rogerson, 2016; Visser, 2019; Donaldson, 2021). Interest in urban tourism research was sparked in response to the development of the tourism infrastructure, i.e. the construction of new museums, flagship projects such as waterfront entertainment complexes, sports stadia, heritage projects, and the hosting of a range of events and cultural festivals (Ferreira and Visser, 2007; Rogerson and Visser, 2007; van der Merwe, 2013; van der Merwe, 2019; Hartzenberg and Rogerson, 2022). Johannesburg's hosting of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 is considered a landmark event that led to the construction of conference centres in other South African cities (Rogerson, 2002; Rogerson and Visser, 2004, 2007).

Urban tourism is now an established segment of South Africa's contemporary tourism economy. It is associated with the global rise and change in lifestyle patterns: heightened work stress prompts people with limited amount of leisure time to look for short-haul breaks (van der Borg, 2022). As regards tourism policy, South African cities mimic global trends of establishing strategies to enhance or develop urban tourism centres (Law, 1992, 1993). The growing body of research on tourism in African cities addresses a number of different topics. These include the development of accommodation services, events and festivalisation, heritage and urban development, informal sector tourism, poverty tourism, the discovery of the importance of understanding past urban tourisms, and COVID-19 impacts (Rogerson, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Greenberg and Rogerson, 2015; Tichaawa, 2017; Greenberg and Rogerson, 2018, Rogerson and Rogerson, 2018, van der Merwe and Rogerson, 2018; Booyens and Rogerson, 2019; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2019, 2020; Visser and Eastes, 2020; Booyens, 2021; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2022; Hartzenberg and Rogerson, 2022). As regards sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of publications concerning urban tourism focus on South Africa. Indeed, over the past 20 years for South African tourism geographers, urban tourism has been one of the growth areas in research (Visser, 2016; Rogerson and Visser, 2020). Arguably, the key topics in recent research on urban tourism in South Africa include

the role of tourism in urban economic restructuring, initiatives for employment creation, and poverty reduction (Visser, 2019; Rogerson and Visser, 2020). With increasing rates of unemployment and the stagnation or decline of manufacturing activity, the majority of urban local governments across South Africa have shifted towards supporting competitive tourism economies, which are expected to foster local economic growth, employment creation and small enterprise development (Nel and Rogerson, 2016; Kontsiwe and Visser, 2019; Visser, 2019; Rogerson, 2020).

Innovation and innovative product development are of critical importance to maintain and strengthen urban tourism economies (Booyens, 2012; Booyens & Rogerson, 2017). Innovation can be built upon local tourism assets (Rogerson, 2020; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2020). In the post-apartheid period all South Africa's major cities started using local assets to develop tourism, create new jobs and stimulate inclusive growth (Rogerson, 2013; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2014; Rogerson, 2020). These urban tourism projects target international and domestic tourists (Rogerson and Visser, 2006, 2007). It can be observed that in the search for more competitive tourism offerings, the development of urban tourism in South Africa has followed different pathways (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2017). The product base of South African urban tourism has been strengthened by the emergence of niche forms of tourism, such as food and drink tourism, heritage tourism, poverty tourism, creative tourism, volunteer tourism and adventure tourism (van der Merwe, 2019; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2021b). One highly distinctive niche has been the establishment of a game reserve in the city as an ecotourism destination.

3. The Planning and Establishment of an Urban Eco-tourism Destination

3.1 Methods

The following study is based on the analysis of documents, including planning reports, official government reports produced by the Gauteng Provincial Government as well as existing studies on this ecotourism project. These sources are supplemented by qualitative data collected in 2017–2018 during 27 semi-structured interviews with land owners and accommodation service establishment operators — mainly of game lodges — in the Dinokeng Game Reserve. Detailed information concerning these interviews is provided by Burton (2023).

3.2. The Dinokeng Project Planning

The Dinokeng project was part of a broader economic development plan developed in the early 2000s by the Gauteng Provincial Government through its agency Blue IQ and seeking to implement several new economic zones with a goal of providing the basis for holistic and sustainable programmes through spatial development (Pillay, 2004). The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site (COH WHS) and Dinokeng were sister projects, which concentrated on the development of geospatial tourism within the Gauteng Province (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2006). The policy development and planning of these two projects was undertaken by the Gauteng Provincial Government. Challenges encountered by public-private partnerships involved in the infrastructural development of the Cradle of Humankind project have been documented elsewhere (Rogerson, 2016). The focus of this study is specifically on the Dinokeng Game Reserve, which served as the anchor project for the Dinokeng area, located within the Tshwane metropolitan area, with Pretoria, the country's capital city at its heart. The project was led by

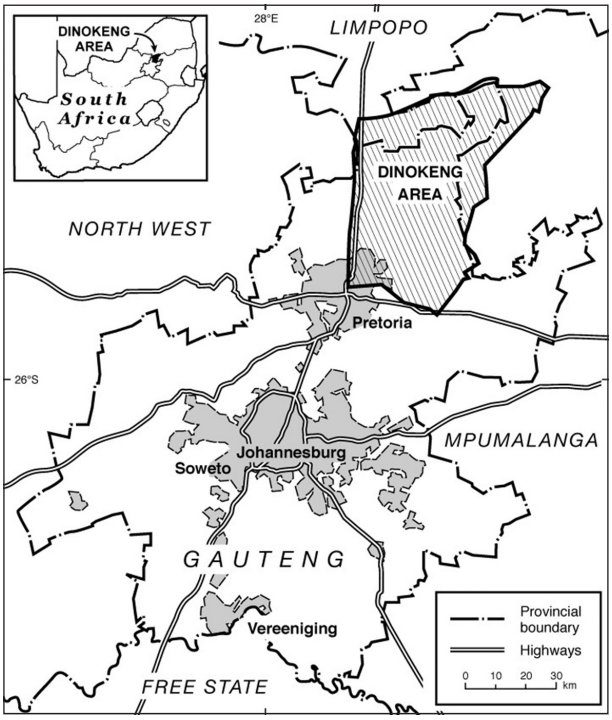

Figure 1: The location of the Dinokeng project
Source: Authors

the Gauteng Department of Economic Development and aimed to create jobs and work opportunities while alleviating poverty and unemployment through investment in bulk infrastructure (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2017). The goal of the project was to create a number of natural, cultural and historical attractions encompassing a variety of thematic tourism experiences (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011).

Planners of the Dinokeng project wanted to establish a premier tourism destination on a 240 000 hectare site in the north-east of Gauteng Province, neighbouring the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011). The goal was to offer potential tourists and investors a range of leisure and business opportunities while encouraging conservation, sustainability and economic growth for those who lived and worked within or around the Dinokeng project area. According to the policy documents, the rationale for the project was to contribute towards economic growth and employment creation within this most economically backward and impoverished zone of South Africa's wealthiest province (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2014, 2015). The project involved a range of tasks and activities to encourage investment in visitor facilities, strategic economic infrastructure and private sector tourism (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011). Furthermore, in line with national government objectives for Black Economic Empowerment, the project was to promote the development of small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMME). An important element for SMME development was the creation of a number of tourism routes which would connect a network of existing and planned attractions in the area (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011). The Integrated Tourism Development Master Plan (ITDM) for Dinokeng was launched in 2001 and envisaged the development of three themed tourism hubs and five themed tourism nodes, linked by a set of scenic routes that would create a destination that provided an "Africa in One Day" tourism experience (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011, 2015). The primary attraction was the Dinokeng Game Reserve featuring the 'Big Five' species (lion, rhino, leopard, elephant and buffalo); the other two tourism hubs were the Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve and Cullinan (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011, 2015). The Roodeplaat Dam offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including bird watching, game viewing and a range of water sports including freshwater angling. The Cullinan area is a long-established tourism area with a diamond mine and numerous heritage attractions (van der Merwe and Rogerson, 2018).

The project area is located between two national highways, which are in close proximity to the metropolitan areas of Pretoria and Johannesburg (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011). During the 1990s, this area was the most economically depressed region of the province, characterised by semi-rural set-

tlements and experiencing high levels of poverty and unemployment (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010, 2011). Despite being situated within the bushveld biome and deemed unsuitable for agricultural practices, the Dinokeng area was home to a large number of landowners who were engaged in some kind of farming (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010). Understanding the area's history from the perspective of farmers and landowners who lived through and witnessed the development of the reserve provides added insight of the area's historical spatial transition.

Throughout the 20th century the area that would become Dinokeng experienced a range of land use changes and development. At the end of the Second World War, between 1944 and 1946, the government subdivided the land into 1000 hectare sections. According to one interviewee (a lodge owner and former vice-chair of the land owner's association) these portions of land "would be sold to people coming back from the war at reasonable rates and conditions." The most significant development of land occurred between 1985 and 1989, when the apartheid government expropriated 4000 hectares of land which was to be incorporated into one of the Bantustans or homelands designated for the Black African population. Nevertheless, according to another interviewee, with the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, after 27 years of imprisonment, the planned incorporation of these areas was abandoned and the 4000 hectares of land remained undeveloped. It is this land that would later be used in the first phase of the Dinokeng Game Reserve as it officially belonged to the government. During an interview, an operations manager of another lodge described the area during the 1990s as characterised by brothels, low income dwellings and farms. According to the respondent, "the area was earmarked for celebrities as a safe haven or a place to hide".

It is evident from these accounts and documentary sources that for over a decade the Dinokeng project area remained relatively undeveloped, which is why it was later identified as having the potential to serve as an eco-tourism destination (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010). During the 1990s the North Eastern Gauteng region was predominantly agricultural and with some pockets of land used as public resorts, residential clusters, small-scale mining operations and light industry (DACEL, 1999; Moeng, 2004). This rural area included 123 small to medium-sized farming units and about 60 farms with mixed land-use activities. Nevertheless, the region is not well suited for intensive agricultural production as it receives little rainfall and does not have fertile soils. Many farms were limited to a certain area for irrigation purposes, which meant the majority were producing vegetable crops and only a handful of farms were engaged in animal husbandry or dairy farming (Moeng, 2004). As most farmers in the area believed agriculture to be barely profitable, they sought to diversify their activities and for many this would

involve discontinuing agricultural practices (such as cultivation and grazing) and instead to maintain a conservancy (Moeng, 2004).

Overall, the area's location in the vicinity of South Africa's major urban centres and its environmental conditions made it an ideal space for the planned development of a game reserve. The ultimate goal behind increasing the number of conservancies was to promote landowners' switch to conservation and improve opportunities for tourism by removing fences between farms and replacing domestic animals with game species (Moeng, 2004). In this way, landowners would focus on non-agricultural activities that would conserve the natural environment and its resources whilst increasing the economic viability of the area by benefiting from opportunities for tourism (DACEL, 1999). Indeed, this gradual shift by landowners away from agriculture to conservation practices (through the creation/joining of these conservancy groupings) encouraged the province's Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs (DACEL) to investigate alternative land uses in the area (DACEL, 1999).

3.3. The Unfolding Project

A marketing strategy report by DACEL included results of feasibility studies regarding the development of a tourism initiative using the existing infrastructure and tourism assets, namely 13 private game and resort lodges, the Roodeplaat dam and the diamond mine at Cullinan, which attracted significant numbers of tourists (DACEL, 1999). This led to the inception of the North-Eastern Gauteng Initiative (NEGI), which sought to establish a viable pilot project on state land to serve as an indicator of interest in the area. The plan was that after a successful pilot DACEL would move to establish a 'Big Five' game reserve, encompassing state and private land without the need for any forced removals or property buyouts from unwilling owners (Moeng, 2004; DACEL, 1999). Thus, individuals not interested in taking part in these conservation/tourism activities could continue with their normal practices. The difficulties of engaging with large numbers of landowners were acknowledged in one interview with a lodge owner who stated that "there was not a model in the world that we could copycat" because "we have so many landowners with so many views". The reason for so many landowners was because the area had been divided into very small 21–23 hectare farms, which practiced cattle or game farming.

The viability of the project would be demonstrated by the effect it had on the landowners, many of whom indicated their broad acceptance of the project (Moeng, 2004). When the Dinokeng Project was launched in 1995, a number of landowners immediately applied to the local municipality, mostly for permissions to

establish new lodges or for exemptions to own and farm game. It turned out that the majority of landowners (56 out of 99) were positively influenced by the establishment of the reserve as numerous applications for proposed land use changes utilised the potential of the project to their advantage (Moeng, 2004). Many landowners believed that once Dinokeng was established and functioning, it would limit land use and restrict development and encourage landowners to adapt their land use practices to the project's goals rather than waste time and resources trying to contest the project (Moeng, 2004). This belief was confirmed by the establishment of additional conservancy groups consisting of landowners interested in joining the project (Moeng, 2004). Most of these new conservancies were not yet part of the project albeit had applied for town planning permits to build and operate lodges on their properties, where many landowners already owned game (Moeng, 2004). One of the earliest conservancies created as a result of the Dinokeng Project was Amakulu. Many of its members discontinued farming practices to develop the conservancy's management structure (DACEL, 1999). However, these members and other landowners were later unhappy as the initial central core area of the Dinokeng Project excluded their conservancy (Moeng, 2004). This became a problem as the DACEL had entered into a collaboration with two private landowners in order to establish the reserve and put forward proposals to incorporate neighbouring farms, some of which were part of a land reform pilot project (DACEL, 1999). Several state land portions/parcels had also not yet been added to the project or allocated to any particular department, despite their potential to strengthen the project as a whole. The seeming lack of government commitment discouraged the area's major private enterprise Elandsdrift Game Ranch, which had restocked 12 000 ha with elephant, rhino and buffalo (Moeng, 2004; DACEL, 1999). It was argued that the government needed to commit to the project by stocking their farms with the 'Big Five' species and other game before approaching this major private landholder and investor. (Moeng, 2004). Further dissatisfaction with the role of the government was due to the fact that the relevant local government had not considered any of the land use change applications submitted between 1995 and 1997 due to its lack of capacity. Seemingly, the local authority also was waiting for clarity from DACEL regarding processes to ensure there would be no detrimental effects on the project. This sluggish response by provincial and local government administrators has a negative impact on the pilot project and ultimately limited landowners' involvement (Moeng, 2004).

Disagreements mounted between government and landowners about the slow implementation of the project. During the late 1990s many landowners complained about the lack of adequate progress relating to the proclamation of the project and identification of the pilot site. One of the biggest issues was choosing a pilot site

based on the availability of state land and surrounding private properties (Moeng, 2004). At one point there was concern that the project might be scrapped by the DACEL, which had sidelined the Dinokeng conservation project in favour of focusing on other projects (Moeng, 2004). Since its inception in 1995, the project had been unable to demonstrate tangible positive results, with no progress on state properties or any implementation consideration by major private property stakeholders. By 2000 it had been expected that agreements between government, state land user departments and private landowners would make it possible to designate the area as a biosphere reserve. During an interview, a manager of a bush lodge said that the serious government commitment to the project was sealed only after a visit by the Premier of Gauteng Province in the late 1990s, who flew over the area in a helicopter and recognised that "this is a great place for a game reserve".

A critical turning point in the project's unfolding history was the drafting and publication of the Dinokeng Integrated Tourism Development Framework (DITDF) in 2001, which cemented the government's conviction to initiate the Dinokeng project (DACEL, 2001). This framework would be utilised as a tool for detailed planning, to guide tourism development and intended to inform key management decisions as well as furnish technical advice (DACEL, 2001). The DITDF was considered the second phase of addressing the tourism potential of the Dinokeng Project. This new framework recognised that the previous first phase strategy was tedious and failed to produce any significant results due to a lack of medium — and long-term planning (Moeng, 2004). It was determined that the project should reach its medium-term operation status by 2012 and long-term operation status by 2022 (Moeng, 2004; DACEL, 2001). Failure of the DACEL's initial plan to establish the project through a stand-alone approach or go-it-alone strategy demonstrated the need for the involvement of landowners, surrounding communities and a facilitation entity, which was initially known as the Dinokeng Tourism Company. Administratively, Dinokeng was paired with the Cradle of Humankind (COH) project through a shared Chief Directorate. This new concept plan for Dinokeng aimed to re-kindle interest of the area's disaffected landowners as DACEL shifted from its former failed approach and re-opened negotiations with landowners. These negotiations also included the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provincial governments in order to broaden the project scope beyond Gauteng and thereby forge a tri-province operation. This change was an attempt by DACEL to regain landowners' confidence and acceptance by addressing several of their complaints (DACEL, 2001).

The Dinokeng Game Reserve was planned as a 'Big Five' location, which was to comprise a mosaic of state — and privately-owned properties to show the dedication of the government, landowners and neighbouring communities to work

together in a partnership (DACEL, 2001). The project was expected to contribute to economic growth, alleviate poverty, maintain a pristine 'African' appearance, and stimulate the development of a wildlife-based tourism industry (DACEL, 2001). Tourists were to be exposed to 'authentic' African landscapes and biodiversity through game-viewing and nature-based experiences. The project was supposed to maximise income streams, foster job creation, small business development and investment opportunities while helping to distribute land by resolving land claims and offering benefits and opportunities to locally disadvantaged communities (DACEL, 2001). A phased development approach was adopted to focus on geographical areas where implementation might be most practical. The decision was taken to concentrate on two areas. The first one was situated in the western part of the Dinokeng Game Reserve (approximately 22 143 hectares) and consisted of land used by an air force base, a provincial nature reserve, cattle and game farms and some successful ecotourism ventures; most private landowners in this area expressed interest in joining the project (DACEL, 2001). The second, larger area was situated in the eastern part of the reserve (approximately 53 854 hectares), which consisted mostly of state-owned properties located across the three provinces of Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo and included two existing provincial nature reserves (DACEL, 2001). The greatest challenge in this area was the lack of a clear and determined direction from the government to resolve long-standing land reform issues (DACEL, 2001).

The conversion of Dinokeng into a premier tourism destination would be achieved by establishing trading entities within the Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GDED). The most significant one was the Dinokeng Trading Entity, which was derived from Blue IQ Investment Holdings (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2017). The Dinokeng Trading Entity is managed by the GDED, which used to be the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015, 2017).

Initially, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment (GDACE) was responsible for both the Cradle of Humankind and its sister Dinokeng project (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015). Eventually, the supervision over the Dinokeng Project was taken over by the GDED in April 2016 (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2017). The GDED's vision was to radically transform and modernise Gauteng's economy through a 10-pillar programme stressing equity and economic inclusion (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015, 2017). The Dinokeng Trading Entity was therefore required to operate in a complex and challenging institutional environment, which called for partnerships with various departments and stakeholders, within and outside of the government (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015, 2016, 2017).

3.4. The Establishment of the Dinokeng Reserve and Implementation Challenges

Dinokeng was established in January 2006 after extensive negotiations with 200 landowners (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2006). Legal agreements reached during these negotiations laid out certain conditions that had to be met by the Dinokeng Game Reserve Management Association (DGRMA) (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2006). Among other things, Dinokeng was obliged to comply with targets for Black Economic Empowerment, implement socio-economic plans (to promote the interests of current occupants and workers) and invest a certain percentage of profit into community development programmes to support local/surrounding communities (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2006).

The establishment of this game reserve as a potential urban eco-tourism destination faced many challenges. One of them was the physical expansion of the game reserve to ensure sustainability. In 2006, the area of the game reserve was expected to exceed 25 000 hectares and potentially reach 45 000 by 2011 (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2006). However, by 2009 only 13 500 hectares had been consolidated as part of the start-up area (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010). A significant portion (5 000 hectares) was added a year later, after incorporating some private land and a military base (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010). Fence construction commenced in 2006 and was completed by 2010 (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010), the first internal infrastructure element to be established. The fence was necessary in order to enable the introduction of rhino, lions and elephants into the reserve.

Dinokeng opened in September 2011, with 18 500 hectares of land, which was much below the target size of 40 000 hectares required to ensure ecological and economic viability (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2014). Four of the 'Big Five' species had been introduced at the time of the reserve's official opening; the fifth — buffalo — was introduced in 2012. The expansion of Dinokeng to 40 000 hectares depended on the willingness of potential landowners to incorporate their pieces of land into the reserve. Another issue were frequent resignations of members serving on the Expansion Subcommittee, which delayed the finalisation of the share model (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015). By 2014, the perimeter fence had been extended to a total length of 206km (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2014). The construction of the five planned gates was completed in 2010 (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010). A further development took place in 2014, with the implementation of a ticketing system (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2014). In terms of ecological management, the Dinokeng Game Reserve maintains an open natural landscape for ecological continuity and rehabilitation operations (Gauteng Provincial

Government, 2015). Ecological field assessments and bio-monitoring (e.g. veld[1] condition, game counts, river health) serve as tools to reinstate former ecosystem health and ensure sustainability (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015). The establishment of self-drive tourist routes was an opportunity to utilise state land, situated within Dinokeng, to choose community projects that could be developed along the routes (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2014). The routes which cross private properties and government-owned land, with a total length of 66 km, were created between November 2014 and January 2015 (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2014, 2015).

An application to declare Dinokeng a protected area (Formal Protected Status) was submitted for approval in 2009 (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2010). However, despite constant engagement, the granting of a protected area status kept being delayed because of unresolved land claims (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2015, 2018). According to the 2019/2020 Gauteng Provincial Government Report, the "Dinokeng Game Reserve has not been declared a protected area because of the lack of funding and delays caused by unresolved land claims. The issue of funds will still need to be addressed". The most recent annual report issued by Gauteng Provincial Government (2021) states that in the next five years the size of the Dinokeng Game Reserve would be increased to the 40 000 hectares as required to ensure self-reliance and self-sustainability. In addition, it was stated that the authorities had secured a renewed commitment from public and private land owners to incorporate their land into the Reserve (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2021). Consequently, during the period of the COVID-19 crisis formal protected status had still not been granted to Dinokeng Game Reserve.

4. Conclusion

Product development and innovation is essential to the success of urban tourism destinations. This study has explored the complex planning challenges associated with the establishment and development of an innovative tourism product, namely a 'Big Five' ecotourism destination located on the periphery of the Gauteng Province. It is a case study in the area of collaborative tourism development in a Global South destination. The analysis of the key steps in the development of the Dinokeng Game Reserve, situated in close proximity to a major metropolitan centre, contributes to the body of research on urban tourism in South Africa and provides new perspectives on game reserves and national parks.

[1] The term used to describe open country in southern Africa

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Wyzwania związane z planowaniem i tworzeniem miejskiego projektu ekoturystycznego w RPA

Streszczenie. Ekoturystyka stanowi główną siłą napędową turystyki na peryferyjnych obszarach wiejskich w kilku krajach afrykańskich, w tym w RPA. Celem tego artykułu jest opisanie wyzwań związanych z planowaniem i realizacją miejskiego projektu ekoturystycznego w RPA, a mianowicie rezerwatu dzikich zwierząt Dinokeng, który znajduje się na granicy jednego z głównych obszarów metropolitalnych RPA i w gospodarczym sercu kraju. Celem projektu było stworzenie nowego produktu niszowego w ramach turystyki miejskiej. Korzystając ze źródeł literaturowych i informacji zebranych podczas 27 częściowo ustrukturyzowanych wywiadów, autorzy analizują kluczowe kroki procesu planowania tego innowacyjnego produktu turystyki miejskiej. Badanie stanowi wkład do rozwijającej się literatury poświęconej turystyce południowoafrykańskiej oraz do międzynarodowej literatury dotyczącej roli produktów niszowych w rozwoju turystyki miejskiej na globalnym Południu.

Słowa kluczowe: ekoturystyka, turystyka miejska, rezerwat dzikich zwierząt Dinokeng, ekoturystyka miejska, RPA