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Nature and culture in a global context: A case study from World Heritage Listed Komodo National Park, eastern Indonesia

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Introduction

As the title suggests, the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage enshrines one of the most pervasive dualisms in Western thought – that of nature and culture (MacCormack and Strathern 1980).¹ The 936 properties currently inscribed on the World Heritage List are identified as either ‘natural’, ‘cultural’, or as ‘mixed’ heritage.² Although the Convention provides ‘definitions’ and ‘guidelines’ regarding natural and cultural properties, it is clear from a comparative analysis of a number of World Heritage sites that the values ascribed to nature and culture are not a global given. Nor is it necessarily the case that the invocation of the nature-culture distinction results in a set of universally uniform effects. What is clear, however, is that nature and culture are made visible in a range of inter-cultural and trans-political contexts. In the operationalisation of the Convention, member nation-states provide some of the localised venues for the invention of nature and culture, while science and other ‘expert’ disciplines provide some of the procedures for producing nature and culture in these contexts (Smith 1998; Lowe 2006).

In the case of Komodo National Park, we can readily track the historical impact of an ‘international community’ of experts upon a remote island in the eastern reaches of the Indonesian archipelago. In the same way that Celia Lowe tracked the story of biodiversity conservation in Indonesia in the period from 1988 to 1998 and, more specifically, the making of nature in the Togean Islands of northern Sulawesi, the example of Komodo National Park allows us to also follow the discursive transformation of the ‘nature’ scientifically monitored and managed by these experts – from nature as an evolutionary oddity to ideas about ‘nature in balance’, and more recently, to a bio-diverse vision of nature (see Lowe 2004, 2006). As I hope to demonstrate in this politico-

1 ‘Cultural’ and ‘natural heritage’ are defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention. In summary, ‘monuments’, ‘groups of buildings’ and ‘sites’, the latter being the ‘works of man or the combined works of nature and of man’ (UNESCO 2005:13), are considered as ‘cultural heritage’. ‘Natural heritage’, on the other hand, refers to ‘physical and biological formations’, ‘habitats of threatened species’ and ‘natural sites or natural areas’, which are of ‘outstanding universal value’ from the point of view of science, conservation and/or aesthetics (UNESCO 2005:13.). A complete definition of ‘cultural’ and ‘natural heritage’ is given as part of the definition of World Heritage in the 2005 ‘Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention’ (UNESCO 2005).

2 As of March 2012, there are 725 cultural, 183 natural and 28 mixed listed World Heritage properties, located in 153 of the 189 state parties which have ratified the World Heritage Convention.

environmental history of Komodo Island spanning a hundred years or so, the globalisation of the nature-culture distinction, and the complex of values it engenders, often encourages the very threats and dangers *the Convention* seeks to ameliorate through listing.

‘Here there be dragons’: Discovering dragons and the creation of media-genic megafauna

The scientific ‘discovery’ of the world’s largest terrestrial reptile, the ‘Komodo dragon’ (*Varanus komodoensis*), in 1912 set in motion a history of regional regulation, national legislation and international conservation measures aimed at protecting the dragon and its habitat, restricted to several islands in the Komodo archipelago.

Responding to both the problems created by scientific curiosity and the conservation concerns of scientists, during the course of the twentieth century, the islands of the Komodo archipelago were granted some form of reserve or protected area status, leading to the declaration of Komodo National Park in 1980 (PHKA and TNC 2000(1):36).

Informed by an IUCN evaluation, in 1991 the Park was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a ‘natural’ property, based upon its ‘superlative natural features’ (Criteria III) and as the ‘habitat of a threatened species’ (Criteria IV), the Komodo monitor. As indicated in the original nomination document, ‘nature’ not only includes the Park’s ‘rugged’ landscape, but it also encompasses the endangered ‘dragons’, the only acknowledged endemic inhabitants of this ‘dramatic’ space’.

Up until the mid 1990s, the ‘singular focus of the [P]ark’, and that of the previous regulations and decrees, was on the ‘very impressive and remarkable animal – *Varanus komodoensis*’ (IUCN 1991:27). Up until this time the value of the Komodo dragon to the ‘international community’ and to the general public had largely been as a scientific curiosity.

The World Heritage listing of Komodo National Park in 1991 set in motion a re-evaluation and re-presentation of this dragon-focused view of nature. As I argue in this paper, changing ‘scientific’ ideas about ‘nature’ have serious social and cultural implications for the approximately 3,000 individuals living within the Park and for a further 17,000 people living in villages directly surrounding the Park (PHKA and TNC 2000 (1):5).

Culture Wars: Part I

In his account of the American Museum of Natural History scientific expedition to Komodo in 1926, Expedition Leader, W. Douglas Burden, characterised the villagers as: ‘a degenerate lot of diseased people, that have reached such a degraded state that they don’t seem capable of curiosity’ (1927:103). In contrast, Burden valorised the ‘wilderness of romantic Komodo’ and he concluded that: ‘Komodo is a place where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile’ (1927:103). Burden’s depiction of the Komodo Islanders arguably represents the first shot fired in the twentieth century in the ensuing ‘culture wars’ aimed at vilifying the local population. Burden’s distinction between a ‘vile’ humanity and the ‘beautiful scenes’ afforded by nature on Komodo Island is a trope consistently reproduced in the history of this region as a protected area.

The ‘discovery’ of the Ata Modo

Up until 1982 it was popularly believed that the entire population of Komodo Island originated from elsewhere or that they were the descendants of ‘convicts’, while the language spoken on the island was commonly seen as a ‘mixture of other tongues’ (Needham 1986:54). However, in 1982, the Dutch missionary, Father Jilis A. J. Verheijen, published a monograph on Komodo Island, which alludes to a history of human occupation of Komodo Island spanning some 2,000

years (1982:256). The antiquity of human occupation of the island is supported by preliminary archaeology undertaken in the late 1960s (see Auffenberg 1981:350). Verheijen speaks of a distinctive Komodo people, the Ata Modo, with an independent language, in which the Komodo dragon is referred to as '*ora*' (Verheijen 1982:115). Verheijen's reporting of the existence of the Ata Modo and of their status as the original occupiers of Komodo Island is further supported by the work of a number of anthropologists (see Needham 1986; Forth 1988).

On the subject of *ora*, the people of Komodo believe that they and the dragons are descended from the same ancestral set of twins. According to these beliefs: 'if one of these animals is injured, then its relatives, who have taken the form of human beings, will also become ill' (Hitchcock [citing Bagus 1987] 1993:305). Until recently, after every hunt or fish catch, a portion of meat was left by the Ata Modo for the Komodo dragon (Ellis 1998:75–76).

It is clear from Verheijen's work that, prior to the establishment of the National Park, the Komodo Islanders enjoyed a mixed subsistence and cash economy, focused upon both terrestrial and marine environments, with edible starch from a number of palm species on the island constituting a staple food. Named garden and fishing areas, together with former settlements and clan territories are detailed on a map appended to the monograph. The map clearly indicates that Komodo Island is far from the barren landscape commonly depicted in National Park documents and in tourist guides.

'New nature'

In 1977, as part of the preparations for the 1980 establishment of Komodo National Park, a management plan was drawn up by a 'multinational team of experts under the auspices of the United Nations' (Hitchcock 1993:310). The authors of the plan were scientists interested in the zoology and botany of Komodo. The ideological emphasis in the 1977 management plan was upon restricting or eliminating the impact of humans on the environment and thus restoring nature to its proper balance. Notable among these proposals to restore 'prey/predator relationships' is the recommendation to cease baiting and the feeding of the dragons with goats purchased from the local community. Emphasising the 'wild' and 'dangerous' nature of the Komodo dragon is a critical dimension of these proposed restoration activities and associated scientific ideas about the 'normal state of nature' (Budiansky 1995:71). As such, these restoration activities were aimed at distancing dangerous dragons from defenceless human populations.

In line with the idea of nature 'in balance', and in keeping with attempts to restore it to this 'natural' state, the management plan made several recommendations to curtail and ultimately stop the hunting of deer in the Park, one of the key prey species for the Komodo monitor. Associated with the 'deer poaching' issue, the plan also identified local burning of grasslands on the island as a threat to the Komodo monitor and its primary prey species.

Notwithstanding the considerable impact of the 1977 management plan upon the local human communities within and adjoining the National Park, the plan portrays a somewhat confined view of nature, albeit one regarded as 'out of balance', but still focused upon the 'dragon' and its terrestrial habitat. However, since the 1990s, with the World Heritage listing of Komodo National Park, nature has not only been re-defined (once again), but it has also been privatised in the process.

UNESCO's 'Man and the biosphere programme', launched in 1970, signaled a new global vision of nature in terms of the idea of 'biodiversity', and the need to halt the loss of it. As Luke observes, by the 1970s the Enlightenment idea of 'nature' as 'untouched and undisturbed expanses' appeared obsolete, indeed, 'dead' (1995:12). In drawing public attention to the impact

of humans on nature in the form of wholesale extinctions, ‘industrial pollution, greenhouse gases, chemical contamination, and radioactive wastes’ (Luke 1995:12), science played an important role in bringing about the ‘end of nature’ (McKibben 1989).

Confronted with the reality that few, if any, environments were undisturbed, nature has undergone an ‘involution’ (Katz 1998:46). Natural spaces have been re-worked to produce greater ‘internal sub-divisions’ (Katz 1998:46). Biodiversity, biosphere reserves, and biodiversity ‘hotspots’ are some of the products of this redefinition. Accordingly, conservation efforts have shifted from an emphasis upon nature as a quantity (i.e. untouched expanses ‘hoarded’ for their ‘pristine appearances and organic presences’) to focusing upon the ‘quality of nature’ in terms of biodiversity, and the idea of rare or endangered species.

The redefinition of nature in terms of biodiversity not only set in motion a global program aimed at documenting the earth’s environmental riches but it also went hand-in-hand with the re-emergence of ideas about the preservation and restoration of nature. What Cindi Katz calls the ‘new enclosure movement’ (1998:47) entails setting aside ‘discrete patches of nature’ (Katz 1998:47) in the form of ‘park enhancement districts’, ‘world wildlife zones’, ‘biosphere reserves’, and so on. This strategy of ‘bio-accumulation’ and the idea of investing in nature for the future also encouraged new forms of corporate environmentalism and the ‘increasing privatization of public environments’ (Katz 1998:47). In Komodo National Park, these observations about the ‘private productions of space and the preservation of nature’ have been a reality for the past fifteen years.

In 1995, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a US-based, private environmental organisation, joined with the Indonesian National Park Authority, PHKA,³ to ‘help’ manage Komodo National Park (Michael 2001:35). Through its multi-million dollar portfolio of properties purchased around the globe, and underwritten by corporate donations and individual contributions, TNC operates ‘the largest private system of nature sanctuaries in the world’ (cited in Katz 1998:59). TNC is also the latest in a long list of international NGO’s to be involved in management of the Park since 1980. Promoted as the first example of ‘collaborative park management’ in Indonesia, TNC’s involvement in Park management is justified by the organisation in terms of its global mission to ‘preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on earth by protecting the land and waters they need to survive’ (TNC 2002:1).

While TNC presents its mission as ‘transnational’, conserving the biodiversity of Indonesia for the ‘well-being of humankind’ (TNC 2002:1), officials from the Indonesian Department of Agriculture and Forestry cite a ‘lack of government funds’ and the resulting ‘no or poor park management’ as the primary reason for this new arrangement.

As heralded in TNC promotional literature, Komodo National Park is also the ‘pilot site to test new park financing mechanisms’ (TNC n.d.:1). These new financing mechanisms refer to the Joint Venture company, PT Putri Naga Komodo (PNK), established between TNC and an Indonesian tourist entrepreneur (TNC 2002), to implement the 30 year concession to ‘manage tourism in Komodo National Park’ (TNC 2002).⁴

3 Management of national parks in Indonesia is the responsibility of the Director General for Nature Conservation and Forest Protection in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry (*Direktorat Jenderal Perlindungan Hutan dan Konservasi Alam, Departemen Kehutanan dan Perkebunan*).

4 According to a TNC-commissioned ‘Environmental Assessment Study’, undertaken as part of the compliance requirements for the World Bank’s private sector financing arm, the International Finance Corporation, for a US \$5 million bridging grant to ‘kick-start’ PT Putri Naga Komodo’s new ‘eco-tourism development enterprise’ (TNC 2005a), Mr Hashim’s tourism company is called PT Jaytasha Putrindo Utama (Singleton et al. 2002:3).

TNC's vision for 'local people' in the National Park is that they 'will be trained as tour and dive guides ... and will be able to supplement their income by designing and selling handicrafts' (TNC n.d.a:1). TNC's vision for 'local people', 'eco-tourism' and 'environmental protection' constitutes the content of the latest management plan for the Park, *The 25 Year Master Plan for Management, 2000–2025, Komodo National Park* (PHKA and TNC 2000).

As stated in the 2000 Plan, biodiversity protection is now the primary goal of management, signaling a major shift in emphasis from the previous 'dragon focused' 'nature in balance' plans. In this more inclusive view of nature, the introduced animals and translocated native species, previously hunted when Komodo Island was a game reserve, are all regarded as part of the Park's 'rich biodiversity', and thus afforded protection (cf. Lowe 2004). Dogs and cats, both of which are linked to the local residents in the Park, are the only animals identified in the management plan as 'exotics' that pose a threat to the biodiversity of the region (PHKA and TNC 2000 (1):21,(2):67).⁵

While both endemic and introduced terrestrial species are regarded as part of the Park's biodiversity, the real focus of TNC's conservation program is upon the marine environment within the Park. In this remaking and refocusing of nature, the environmental significance of Komodo National Park has been extended to the point where WWF identified it as a 'global conservation priority area' (Singleton *et al.* 2002:7). This change in significance also introduces a new role for the National Park as a 'genetic/species storehouse with which to replenish and re-colonize devastated coral habitats elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific region' (Singleton *et al.* 2002:8). The re-invention of the Komodo archipelago as an area of 'rich biodiversity' with one of the "world's richest marine environments" (TNC n.d.b:1) has some serious consequences for local people.

Culture Wars II

The 2000 plan identifies the human population of the Park as 'already over the carrying capacity of the area' (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):66) and states that 'human population pressure' is 'leading to degradation of the terrestrial resource base' and 'overharvesting of marine resources' (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):67). These Malthusian scenarios of unchecked population growth and dramatic resource depletion pivot upon the construction of local people as both ignorant and immigrant.

In the management plan, the 'low level of education' of the villagers in the Park is seen as a major obstacle to 'economic diversification' among the local population (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):66) and, as such, an impediment to the Government's attempts to financially attract people living in the Park to resettle elsewhere. There is also a strong suggestion in TNC's promotional and educational materials that the villagers' 'low level of education' lies behind their "destructive fishing practices and overfishing of the Park's marine resources" (TNC n.d.c:1). There is little or no realisation that the implementation of previous management regulations, particularly the prohibition upon harvesting terrestrially-based staple foods, has directly contributed to the scenario today where the villagers are 'wholly dependent upon marine resource utilization' for both their incomes and food sources (see Pet and Djohani 1998:18).

Indeed, the current management plan attempts to rewrite the long human occupation and economic history of the Park by stating that 'few are farmers and little land is used for agricultural purposes within the park'. As this statement indicates, the villagers' aboricultural productions and agroforestry practices do not fit into the official view of field/food-crop agriculture as the only form of landed productivity, while the 'barren' features of the Park do not conform with the

⁵ A similar situation emerged in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, established in Botswana in 1961. As Adam Kuper reports, 'environmentalists complained that residents were keeping donkeys and goats that interfered with the game and that they were engaged in poaching' (2003:393).

ideas presented in the plan of fertile anthropogenic landscapes. The effect of these erasures and this kind of revisionism is to create an ahistorical landscape, populated by recent resource raiders, engaged in nothing more than ‘extractive-economies’ (Peluso 2003:212).

In the Master Plan for the Park, immigration is seen as the primary source of the ‘exponential’ population increase and resulting human pressure upon the Park’s biodiversity. The alleged ‘steady influx of migrants into the area’ (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):64) is also held responsible for the importation of destructive fishing methods and modern external influences, such as television and radio. Furthermore, immigration is directly linked to the loss of ‘traditional customs’, language and ethnic identity (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):64–67). However, as Verheijen reported, the human history of Komodo Island is one of settlement, migration and immigration, reflected in the fact that the original language of Komodo incorporates vocabulary from languages spoken on nearby islands, particularly Manggarai, spoken in western Flores (Verheijen 1982; Needham 1986). Indeed, in origin narratives from Komodo, the historic arrival of people from Sumba, Sumbawa, Flores and Ambon is presented as an essential development in the foundation of the village of Modo on Komodo Island. When coupled with the written historical record, these origin narratives point to a long tradition of human movement and settlement in the region. As McWilliam (2002:18) and other anthropologists have observed, ‘orders of precedence’, based upon relative priority in time or place, constitute a fundamental form of social organisation throughout eastern Indonesia. Thus, contrary to the image presented in the management plan, migration in the area is not a recent response to a situation of scarce resources or growing population pressure elsewhere.

While the plan acknowledges that the Ata Modo are the ‘original people of Komodo’ (McWilliam 2002:18), it further states that “there are no pure blood people left and their culture and language is slowly being integrated with the recent migrants” (McWilliam 2002:18). It seems that for the people of Komodo no sooner had their culture come into view than it was deemed to have disappeared.

Reflecting The Nature Conservancy’s preservationist view of nature as either valorised pristine areas or demonised expendable environments, the current plan thus separates the population of the Park into a near (if not already) extinct Indigenous minority and an endangering immigrant majority (see Pannell 1996).

The 2000 Master Plan for Komodo National Park also carves up the marine and terrestrial environment into seven new protection zones (with additional sub-zones) (see Figure 1).⁶ The activities of villagers within the Park are now restricted to miniscule areas of land and sea designated as part of the ‘traditional use zone’. Technology permitted in this zone is restricted to ‘traditional tools’, while the use of these tools is ‘licensed by the Head of Komodo National Park’ (Pannell 1996). In this respect, the Plan reflects an earlier ecological assessment, which concluded that ‘limited eco-tourism and research’ are the ‘only true sustainable uses’ of the terrestrial portions of the Park.

For local people, the new zoning system transforms what is an inhabited environment into a ‘dartboard’ of pristine ‘natural’ areas, which not only limits or prohibits their future use and occupation but also gives priority to tourist access and use of the Park. As this last point suggests, these ‘dartboards of nature’ are ‘often constructed and overseen by non-residents whose livelihood is not dependent on the preserved environment’ (Katz 1998:55). Indeed, in the management plan, tourism is depicted as an ‘eco-friendly’ activity and is associated with minimal environmental impact, as opposed to the high impact, ‘destructive’ practices of local people. Locking up biodiversity in a complex zoning and buffer system, it is clear that management of Komodo National Park is now focused upon preserving nature outside of culture, or in spite of it.

⁶ They are: core zone, wilderness zone with limited tourism, tourism use zone, traditional use zone, pelagic zone, special research and training zone and traditional settlement zone (PHKA and TNC 2000 (1):44).

Figure 1. The proposed system of zoning for Komodo National Park.

Source: PHKA and TNC 2000.

The Good, the bad and the ugly: A postcard from Komodo National Park

While it might appear to visitors to the National Park that scientific 'management' of the World Heritage Listed natural values of the Park amount to nothing more than guiding fee-paying tourists to and from the official dragon viewing site for a couple of hours per day, for non-visitors, however, management has more serious consequences. In 2001, for example, 38 villagers were given jail sentences, ranging in length from 6 months to 3 years for 'deer poaching' and 'illegal fishing' activities. What is not reported in TNC-sponsored reports are the deaths and injuries resulting from the 'enforcement and protection' strategy, implemented as a result of the 2000 Management Plan. As reported by the peak Indonesian conservation NGO, the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI),⁷ routine 'floating' patrols within the Park 'have operated in an extremely violent fashion, beating and shooting fisher folk they encounter' (WALHI 2004). According to WALHI, in a four-month period in 2002–2003, three fishermen were shot by Park and allied government officers on the patrol boat *Ora*, while 'at least 40 fishermen have been tortured and arrested [and] several fishermen and their families have been exiled from the National Park zone' (WALHI 2004).⁸ In response to these deaths and beatings, members of the affected community destroyed the National Park post in Sape, Sumbawa, and took control of the local passenger ferry operating between Sape and Labuan Bajo, the gateway town to the Park.

The Islanders' battle for cultural survival is also apparent in the tension between them and the Park Authority regarding feeding of the Komodo lizards. As previously mentioned, from the

⁷ WALHI stands for 'Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia'.

⁸ It appears that this kind of extreme policing of the waters of the National Park continues into the present. On 29 March 2012, The Jakarta Post newspaper reported that a Komodo National Park ranger had shot and killed a fisherman from Sape, Sumbawa, and, in the same incident, the ranger also shot three other fishermen in the boat of the deceased, inflicting life-threatening injuries. According to the report, the four fishermen were accused of using explosives to catch fish in waters west of the National Park.

inception of the Park in 1980 and up until 1994, Park rangers regularly fed the ‘dragons’ with goats purchased from the local community. The ‘ritual’ feeding of the dragons for the benefit of tourists neatly dovetailed with the Islanders’ belief that they have a kinship obligation to ‘look after their twin brother’ and provide *ora* with a portion of each catch (Ellis 1998:75). The Park Authority’s decision to cease the ‘goat-gobbling’ (Ellis 1998:84) spectacle on Komodo was based on the scientific fashioning of nature as ‘wild’ and ‘pristine’. From the point of view of the Komodo Islanders, however, rather than restoring the balance of nature, the intervention of science has threatened the very survival of this nature. Komodo Islanders state that the dramatic decline in the number of Komodo dragons on the island soon after regular feeding stopped is due to starvation (in 1997 the population of dragons on the island was recorded as 1,722, a year later only 1,061 lizards were recorded) (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):21).⁹ As these and other restrictions in the name of ‘conservation’ exemplify, the World Heritage listing of the Park and its current management plan ignore the ongoing connections between the local population and ‘nature’, and disregard the values that local people attach to the Park’s so-called ‘natural heritage’.

WALHI’s allegations about TNC’s management of Komodo National Park stand in stark contrast to the rhetoric of management produced by The Nature Conservancy through its internet website, its Bali-based, ‘Coral Triangle Centre’, and its reams of glossy information sheets and up-beat media releases. In this respect, TNC is highly successful in its management of the virtual environment of Komodo National Park. In the new millennium, we see that the role of international conservation organisations and national environmental agencies in managing nature increasingly revolves around image management and the manipulation of the eco-tourism experience. In order for the nature produced by these forms of political ecology to be perceived as environmental realism, the anthropogenic conditions of its production must be concealed or certainly back-grounded.

Based on the history and experience of Komodo National Park, serious questions need to be asked about the identities of the producers and consumers of this nature. For example, ‘from whom’ and ‘for whom’ is TNC ‘saving the last great places on Earth’ (TNC logo). Given the numerous references in TNC-produced material about the ‘destructive fishing practices’ of local people, the answer to the first part of this question seems obvious.

While the evidence strongly supports the claim that the preservation efforts of TNC ‘insistently evict people from nature’ (TNC logo), as the example of Komodo National Park illustrates, only certain kinds of people are affected. ‘Eco-tourists’ and the ‘nature lovers’ from around the world who underwrite TNC’s international biodiversity investments are certainly not amongst those evicted from nature.

As evident in Komodo National Park, The Nature Conservancy and the World Heritage Committee are assisted in their efforts to ‘save’ nature for (certain kinds of) humanity by an international array of scientists and other experts. As governments and regional authorities increasingly look to World Heritage listing as a means of delivering economic benefits and a much-sought after international status from global tourism, expert input and advice is accorded greater political currency and leverage. In this commonly found scenario, as Harrison concludes: “‘supervision’ by experts sometimes comes to mean domination by experts” (2005:8–9).

As the example of Komodo National Park indicates, using nature preservation as the ‘measure and arbiter’ (Katz 1998:57) of rightfulness and what constitutes a global good produces an ugly environmental politics. It also produces a landscape of ‘nature cemeteries’ (Luke 1995:17), for

9 Walter Auffenberg (1981) recorded a population of 2,348 dragons on Komodo Island in 1970. The Park Authority states that ‘the decline appears to be due to high mortality rates in the young and juvenile classes’, but also suggests that fluctuations in population size may be an ‘artifact of the methods employed’ (PHKA and TNC 2000 (2):21).

the most part, off limits to the living. In the context of Komodo National Park, the production of these very un-natural spaces, wiped clean of culture, is further reified by the World Heritage listing of the Park solely for its natural values. Like so many other 'natural heritage' properties on the List, the inscribed values of Komodo National Park both conceal and reflect certain cultural assumptions, as well as a history of ideas, about nature.

The example of Komodo National Park, like so many others, also alerts us to the fact that the international presentation and 'protection' of 'nature' is 'linked to power: the power to impose a view of the world' (Harrison 2005:9). In Komodo National Park, the world view promulgated by TNC and the Park's management authority, together with the many local effects resulting from this imposition, stands in stark contrast to UNESCO's promotion of World Heritage as a global public good, in which we all 'join hands to protect and cherish the world's natural and cultural heritage'.

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