

Community participation in natural resource management: some challenges faced by South African rural communities

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Submitted to *Town and Regional Planning*, 20 December 2002, revised 13 May 2003.

Summary

Rural communities living in the neighbourhoods of protected areas are among the most disadvantaged in South Africa. This article focuses on community based natural resource management as a strategy towards sustainable community development for those communities. Two case studies are presented: the Makuleke community neighbouring the Kruger National Park and the communities adjacent to the Mkambati Nature Reserve in the Eastern Cape Province. A study of the situations of the Mkambati and the Makuleke people, indicates that a number of challenges face rural communities who wish to participate in the management of natural resources:

- Both situations indicated the need for government leadership and guidance in terms of Community Based Natural Resource Management.
- Communities should be wary of placing too high expectations on natural resources, for instance, tourism should not be seen as the magic wand that will solve all their problems and ensure prosperity for everyone.
- It is vital to establish guidelines to define "local community", or it could become contentious.
- Communities should first establish land tenure. It is a slow process, but fundamental to establish the rights of the community
- The role of local communities in the management of natural resources should facilitate and not inhibit trans-frontier and regional integration of conservation areas.
- Effective outsourcing of activities and the establishing of a workable partnership with the private sector are crucial to the success of the process.

GEMEENSKAPSDEELNAME IN NATUURLIKE HULPBRONBESTUUR: ENKELE UITDAGINGS VIR SUID-AFRIKAANSE LANDELIKE GEMEENSKAPPE

Landelike gemeenskappe in die onmiddellike omgewing van bewaringsgebiede, tel onder die mees agtergeblewe gemeenskappe in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie bydrae fokus op natuurlike hulpbron-bestuur gebaseer op gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid. Twee gevalle word bespreek: die Makuleke gemeenskap langs die Nasionale Kruger Wildtuin en die gemeenskap langs die Mkambati Natuurreservaat in die Oos-Kaap. Uit 'n ondersoek na die omstandighede van die Mkambati en Makuleke gemeenskappe is o.m. bevind dat landelike gemeenskappe wat wil betrokke wees by die bestuur van natuurlike hulpbronne in hulle omgewings, voor 'n aantal uitdagings te staan kom:

- In albei gevalle bestaan 'n behoefte aan leiding van owerheidsweë.
- Gemeenskappe moet daarteen waak om nie te hoë verwagtinge van natuurlike hulpbronne te koester nie; toerisme moet, byvoorbeeld, nie gesien word as die oplossing van al hulle probleme en die sleutel tot algemene welvaart nie.
- Die 'plaaslike gemeenskap' moet volgens algemene riglyne vasgestel word om te verhoed dat dit betwis word.
- Die gemeenskappe moet eers eienaarskap van hulle grondgebied verkry voordat hulle regte uitgeoefen kan word.
- Die betrokkenheid van plaaslike gemeenskappe by die bestuur van natuurlike hulpbronne moet die ontwikkeling van Oorgrens-bewaringsgebiede en streekparke bevorder en nie belemmer nie..
- Die sukses van so 'n proses berus op die effektiewe afhandeling van aktiwiteite en die totstandkoming van 'n haalbare vennootskap met die privaatsektor.

HO NKA KAROLO HWA SECHABA PABALLONG YA DIHLODILWENG: TSE DING TSA DEPHEPHETSO TSE TOBILENG DICHABA TSE PHELANG MAHAENG AFRIKA BORWA

Dichaba tse phelang dibakeng tse tshireleditsweng ke tse ding tsa karolo e kgolo e sekisetwang mona Afrika Borwa. Pampiri ena e shebane le mekgwa e ka latelwang ke sechaba e le ho leka ho baballa dihlodilweng e le hore ho tie ho fihlelwe ntlafatso e nepahetseng. Ka hona pampiri ena e fana ka mehlala a mmedi moo sechaba se ileng sa nka karolo paballong ya dihlodilweng. Mohlala wa pele ke wa motse o haufi le sithi sa pokello ya diphoofole tse hlaha sa Kruger provinsing ya Limpopo. Ha mohlala wa bobedi ona e le wa motse o haufi le sithi sa diphoofole tse hlaha mane Mkabati provinsing ya Kapa-Bophirima. Ho latela maemo a sechaba se phelang dibakeng tsena tse pedi, ho fumanehile hore hona le diphephetso tse mmalwa tse hlahang mme tse tobileng dichaba tse phelang mahaeng mme tse ka ratang ho nka karolo paballong ya dihlodilweng. Har'a diphephetso tsena re ka qolla tse latelang:

- Mehlala ena ka bobedi e bontshitse tlhokahalo ya hore mebuso e etelle sechaba pele e le ho ba bontsha tsela e nepahetseng ya ho baballa dihlodilweng.
- Ho bohlokwa hore dichaba di se bee tshepo e phahameng hodim'a dihlodilweng. Ha re etsa mohlala, ho ya lokeleha ' hore bohahlaudi bo se shejwe jwaloka mohlolo o ka rarolang mathata ohle hoo qetellong motho e mong le e mong a ka fihlelang leruo.
- Ho bohlokwa hore ho be le mekgwa ya ho supa tsela e ka hlalolang ka botlalo hore bochaba ke eng.

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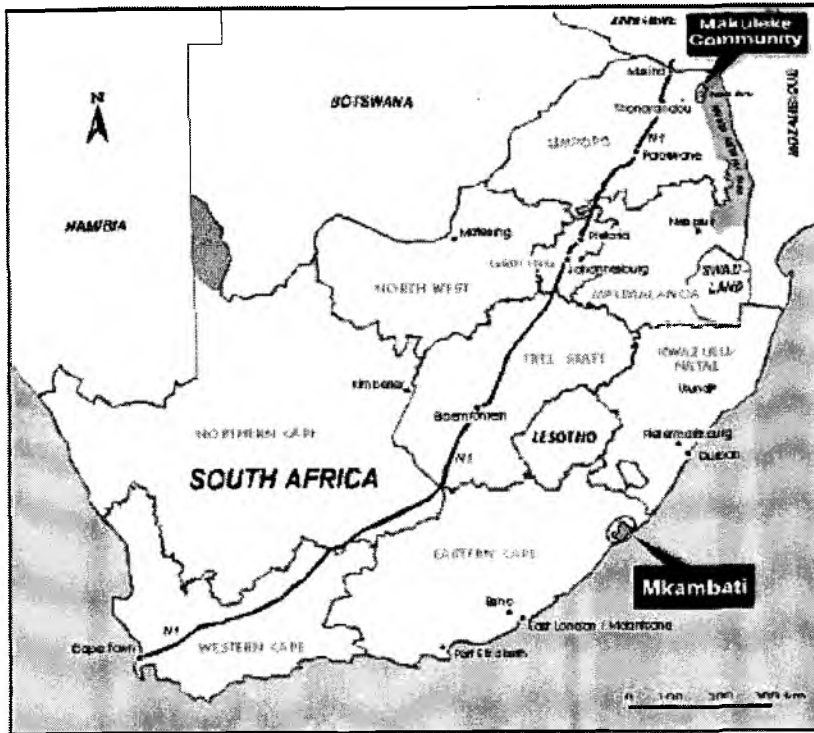


Figure 1: Location map of Mkambati and Makuleke

- Dichaba di lokela hore di fumane ditokelo tsa mobu pele. Leha e le ntho e diehang ho etsahala feela, ke ntho ya bohiokwa kahq dichaba di ka fumana ditokelo tsa bona ha feela di ena le ditokelo mobung.
- Karolo yo sechaba se ka enkang ho baballeng dihlodiweng e fana ke monyetla e seng ho sitisa ntafatso.
- Ho bohiokwa hape hore mesebetsi e meng e nehelanwe ho sechaba, le hore ho etswe dikamano tse ntle tsa ho sebetsa le mekgatlo e ikemetseng e le hore tsamaiso ena e tsebe ho tsamaya kamoo e lebeletsweng kateng.

1. Introduction

Rural communities living adjacent to protected areas in South Africa are among the least developed in the world. This paper presents two case studies of such communities: the Makuleke community neighbouring the Kruger National Park and the communities adjacent to the Mkambati Nature Reserve in the Eastern Cape Province (Figure 1). The two communities are quite remote, and in different situations. Makuleke suffered through forced removal from land to be incorporated into the national park and to which they were eventually reinstated. This is not the case in Mkambati, where the communities have always lived in the area surrounding the nature reserve. The common ground between the two is found in the fact that both groups are rural, facing a battle for survival aggravated by limited resources, and living on the periphery of a protected area. Both groups pin their hope for prosperity on gaining a share in the riches of

the adjacent nature reserves through participation in the management of the resources.

Community participation in natural resource management encompasses a variety of community approaches that range from passive submission to active participation (according to a typology by Pimbert & Pretty 1994, cited in IIED 1994:19). These approaches include Community Based Conservation, Integrated Development and Conservation Projects, Local Resource Management and Community Based Natural Resource Management initiatives. The purpose of the article is to focus on Community Based Natural Resource Management as a strategy towards sustainable community development.

2. Community based natural resource management

Community based natural resource management initiatives engender resource management that is local level, stakeholder community-based, decentralised, participatory and people-centred. The goal of sustainable community development achieved through active community participation in natural resource management (Griffin, 1999) is linked to the three overarching principles on which community based management initiatives are based, namely, democracy, sustainability and efficiency. The democracy principle requires that local communities, as key participants in natural resource management, should participate in all stages of the community based management process. The sustainability principle relates to the mobilisation of natural, financial, institutional and human resources towards the formulation and implementation of best use practices that ensure the endurance of social and economic systems and the natural resource base. The efficiency principle makes provision for the desired ends to be achieved without a waste of resources.

Although the concept of community based natural resource management is based on the noble, albeit debatable, principles of sustainability, democracy and efficiency, there also subsist certain ideological perceptions that militate against the promotion and success of community-led community based management initiatives. For instance, there is the assumption by some proponents of community based management that the local communities in the Lower Developed Countries characteristically tend to degrade natural resources and therefore certain ecosystems have to be protected from them (Chatterjee & Finger 1994). This assumption seems to have persisted despite evidence to the contrary.

Community based natural resource management is not a new phenomenon, as history shows that for millennia people have actively participated in shaping their livelihood strategies within a broad variety of ecological environments (O'Riordan 1998). What is perhaps novel about the current trend is that community based management has become institutionalised. Community based management reverses the top-down, centre-driven

conservation approach by focusing on the people who live with the resources and therefore bear the costs of resource management. Interest in community based management has grown remarkably in the aftermath of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, when world leaders ratified Agenda 21, thus confirming that sustainable development requires community participation in practice and in principle (Warburton 1998). With regard to protected area management, the more general need for public participation is narrowed to a focus on communities living within the vicinity of protected areas.

The difference in the degree of control over the basic factors of community based management programme formulation and implementation between the various institutional actors would seem to constitute one of the most critical performance factors of community based management initiatives. There is a need to assess the degree of community control over the natural resource base and the community based management programme processes. In this regard, an analysis of the roles, resources and relationships of the various institutions involved in resource management as well as the broader political and economic factors affecting community participation is indicated.

2.1 Community based natural resource management in the South African context

Current community based management initiatives take place within the context of various policy and political changes at both global and national level. At a global level, the emergence of the sustainable development doctrine has been accompanied by the ratification of various conventions by most member governments of the United Nations Organisation. South Africa, for instance, is a signatory of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development: Agenda 21 (South Africa 1997d). South Africa is also bound, through the government's ratification of the Convention of Biological Diversity in 1995, to conserve biological diversity, promote the sustainable use of natural resources and to facilitate the equitable sharing of

benefits deriving from natural resource use. South Africa is also a signatory to conventions such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR). These international undertakings have resulted in a constitutional reform process that acknowledges the importance of both natural resource conservation and local community participation in environmental governance and entry into the benefits stream deriving from natural resource management.

At the national level the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), provides the primary, overarching framework within which community based management must be contextualised. The post-apartheid policy shifts have led to a realignment of statutory and institutional frameworks as well as policy changes within conservation agencies.

South Africa currently has no specific national policy on community-based management – the lack of such policy is in fact a general problem in Southern Africa. The importance of community based management has, however, been recognized by the South African Government, who is working towards introducing a formal policy before the September 2003 World Parks Congress, to be held in Durban.

Following the promulgation of the statutory instruments relating to land rights, there have been some complimentary shifts in the environmental management policy (South Africa, 1997); and the formulation of the South African National Parks Policy on Land Claims in National Parks (SANP 1998). These have provided for broader public participation in conservation and the integration of conservation and development objectives. They also provide for the formation of partnerships with local communities to facilitate an interactive process of capacity building (South Africa 1997; NPB 1996).

At this point in the history of post-apartheid South Africa, there is concern (both in official government circles and in academic discourses) about meaningfully restructuring the present polarisation of spatial development in order to achieve

development that is equitable and sustainable (IDRC 1995; South Africa 1997d). The post-apartheid policy reform process has focused on providing the impoverished and underdeveloped communities of the country access to bases of social power and the control of productive resources such as land and natural resources. There has been a particular emphasis on rural communities living in the neighbourhoods of protected areas (South Africa 1996a; 1997d). For these communities, community based management has been viewed as presenting a potentially effective means towards articulating the goal of equitable and sustainable development espoused in the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

The historical development of protected areas in South Africa has involved a process of forced removals of local communities to make way for the establishment of protected areas (Carruthers 1995). The exclusion of these communities from resource-related decision making, resource utilisation and the appropriation of benefits from tourism (Carruthers 1995) has left a legacy of impoverishment that represents a challenge for the present state. The land question particularly seems to occupy a central position in the community development dialogue. The prevailing mien of democratisation has unleashed the claim-making power of these communities that is manifest in the proliferation of land claims against protected area management agencies. Such claims can be viewed as an attempt by local communities to regain control over the natural resource base so that they can achieve both the tangible social and economic development objectives and the intangible goals such as affirmation of social and political power.

There is concern by the state, conservation authorities and private enterprise, however, over the effect of land claims on the ecological integrity and the revenue-generating capacity of protected areas (South Africa 1997a). There is also concern over the implications of such claims on the unfolding regional integration of natural resource management through trans-frontier parks and multiple use management areas (Pinnock 1996). Despite these concerns, some groundbreaking

progress has been made towards the devolution of responsibility for natural resource management to rural communities living in the neighbourhoods of protected areas (Koch 1994).

3. Data collection

Both studies, the Mkambati study by Queiros (2000) and the Makuleke study by Tapela (2001), were based on primary and secondary data. The primary data sources included personal observation by the researchers, semi-structured interviews with key participants from the study areas, in-depth interviews with members of the Mkambati and Makuleke communities, workshops and focus group discussions. Secondary data sources such as maps, community records, published texts, statistical survey reports, and documents compiled by government and non-governmental institutions, academics and other researchers were used.

The case study of the Makuleke people illustrates a community-based management in action; whilst the study at Mkambati reveals a situation where a community based management may be a possible solution to the challenges currently faced in and around the reserve.

4. The Mkambati situation

4.1 Background

Mkambati Nature Reserve is on the northeastern Pondoland coast of the Eastern Cape - the heart of what many regard as the real Wild Coast (Prinsloo, 1999a). Mkambati is the largest reserve in the then Transkei (7 720 ha) and contains (among other species) eland, blue wildebeest, kudu, red hartebeest, impala, springbuck, gemsbok, blesbok, southern reedbuck, Burchells and Hartmans zebra, baboon, and vervet (Prinsloo 1999b). Animals being considered for reintroduction are Cape buffalo, oribi, and klipspringer (Prinsloo 1999b). Being able to view wildlife against the backdrop of the ocean is just one of the aspects that makes Mkambati unique. The Msikaba estuary, which borders the reserve, is the deepest in South Africa. This one and possibly the other estuaries in the reserve contain the only endemic fish species in the Pondoland region. Adding to the beauty of this area are the numerous waterfalls within the reserve. One can view the Four Falls in the Mtentu River and its tributaries;

the Strandloper, Horseshoe, and Mkambati Falls on the Mkambati River; the Icicici Falls; and numerous other smaller cascades. The Mkambati Falls are the third unique waterfall on this stretch of coastline that falls directly into the sea.

Mkambati falls under the Thaweni Tribal Authority of the Lusikisiki district. This Authority consists of six administrative areas, each of which is led by a headman, all of whom are responsible to Chief Mhlanga. Each administrative area is comprised of several villages, which are further divided into various izithebe or mat associations (Kepe, 2000a). For various historical, political, and economic reasons, the issue of local community benefit, participation and empowerment is a source of current tension. Community involvement in the area has been very complex and problematic, and has not been identified and managed correctly (Prinsloo 1999a). The issue of who the local community is and, more importantly who has rights to what land, and can benefit from developments, is highly contested.

All six of the administrative areas (some of which stretch as far as Holy Cross - 50 km from the reserve), consider themselves as the local community. All have therefore lain claim to land rights in Mkambati Nature Reserve and the surrounding area, and have some basis for their claim. The communities are also politically divided, with some supporting the African National Congress and others the United Democratic Movement. The complications have partly arisen due to the Wild Coast Spatial Development Initiative including all six administrative areas under Thaweni as a single 'local community'. Expectations were raised and 'locals' are now reluctant to exclude themselves from any possible restitution benefits (Kepe 2000a; Prinsloo 1999a). The situation is obviously complicating the identification of the legal landowners of the reserve, and also deters investors, thus posing a serious threat to future development at Mkambati.

Furthermore, these local communities view the reserve as one of the few economic opportunities available to them that can improve their quality of life (Prinsloo 1999a). Livelihood is currently gained through arable and livestock farming, and

the collection of a range of natural resources and external sources of income, including remittances and pensions (Kepe 2000a). The Eastern Cape is generally recognised as one of South Africa's poorest provinces, with a 1996 Human Development Index of 0,64 (South Africa's Human Development Index is 0,69), and a Gross Domestic Product of only 2,86 (South Africa's Gross Domestic Product is 5,92). In the Northern region the Human Development Index is even lower, varying between 0,25 in Soutpansberg and 0,40 in the Thohoyandou area. The Human Development Index takes into account life expectancy, literacy and income, when comparing quality of life (South Africa 2002).

4.2 Current development: conservation and tourism

Currently, the only direct economic benefit for local residents is to those employed by the reserve. There are 130 people on Mkambati's staff, but it was not possible to ascertain how many of them are from villages in the Thaweni Tribal Authority. Local people have seasonal access to the following natural resources of Mkambati, for which they pay a small fee (Prinsloo 1999b):

- Woodlot trees for construction and firewood
- Thatching grass, and
- Fishing.

Attempts are being made to create a strong 'sense of place' for the region, which is deeply rooted in the cultural-historical context of the Xhosa people. However, there is currently very limited information on, and use of the Xhosa people and their history and culture at Mkambati.

The reserve currently faces a variety of constraints, which impact on conservation and tourism:

- Appropriate local development institutions do not exist at community level. No community based management initiative is in place.
- Education, training, and awareness regarding tourism are lacking.
- Tourism standards and services are low with little incentive for improvement.
- Alien plant invasions are a problem.

- The management of cultural resources has received little attention.
- Too many institutions are involved resulting in confusion and lack of clear decision-making.
- It is not clear who comprises the local community.
- It is difficult to move locals beyond passive beneficitation to active involvement in the core activity as well as in related SMMEs.
- SMME development lacks support mechanisms and information.

4.3 Current development: institutional and organisational

Mkambati Nature Reserve is run by the state and therefore has to apply for funds through Eastern Cape Nature Conservation. The bureaucratic procedures involved often decrease the motivation of

personnel and make it difficult to manage tourism at the reserve. Under the Transkei Environmental Conservation Decree No. 9 of 1992, applying to Mkambati, the leasing of land to private investors is not expressly prohibited or allowed. It therefore appears that private investors would be allowed to develop tourism facilities and provide services (Prinsloo 1999a). This leaves Nature Conservation to focus on what they do best – conservation. Eastern Cape Nature Conservation has already asked the private sector to tender for the development and management of tourism at Mkambati. A previous winning bidder (which fell through due to, among other reasons, community-related problems) had proposed a stereotyped resort development, which was unsuitable to Mkambati and would not capitalise on its unique environment.

Besides being responsible for the running of the reserve, Mkambati personnel are also responsible for

patrolling the coastal region up to Port St Johns. A boat or additional vehicle is essential for this, but the reserve has been unable to obtain either. The bad roads leading to Mkambati and the poor condition of the reserve's internal roads deter tourists from visiting Mkambati, and is a further factor which discourages private sector investors from investing in the area.

4.4 The future: potential and major challenges

Part of the mission of Mkambati Nature Reserve is to utilise the resource base in a sustainable way through ecotourism. However, the Management Planning Framework for Mkambati Nature Reserve (Prinsloo 1999b) was written from a conservation perspective, with little focus on community participation. Being a protected area does not necessarily make the reserve an ecotourism venture, and the successful implementation of ecotourism will require specific actions – one of them being the involvement and beneficitation of the local community.

It appears that Mkambati will again attempt to outsource the tourism related activities and facilities to a private concession, leaving Nature Conservation to focus on conservation alone. There is a clear current trend towards outsourcing in other parks. In August 2000, South African National Parks announced that 12 lodge sites in the Kruger, Addo Elephant, and Kalahari Gemsbok Parks have been identified for outsourcing to the private sector as part of their 'Commercialisation as Conservation' strategy. They believe that it will improve efficiency and customer service, and enable them to focus on conservation (Hattingh 2000). However, Derwent (1998) expresses concern that locals do not have the skills needed to fill any of the positions that may be offered by developers. Without additional funds for training, unemployment and the related social and economic problems will continue to prevail. Investors will have to be committed to the development of local communities.

Common vision shared by all stakeholders is another aspect that needs attention. At Mkambati, the relationship between management and the local community is a tense and complex one, and is certainly not at the point where all agree on

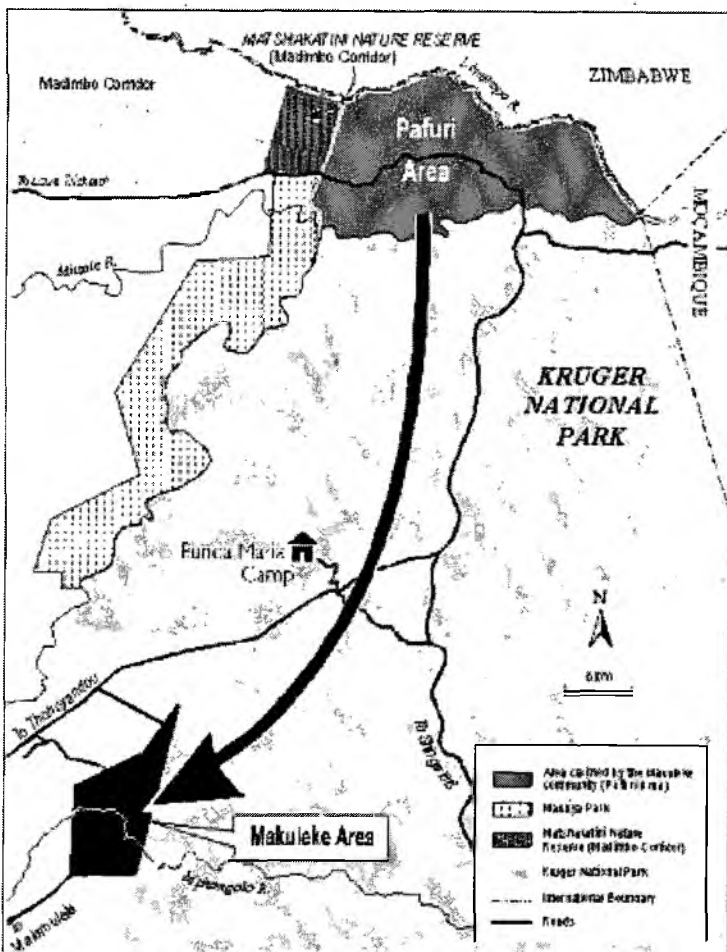


Figure 2: Makuleke area: situation

the future direction of the reserve. There should also be common vision between Eastern Cape Nature Conservation and the private sector body that will manage the tourism at the reserve.

It is clear that community development and conservation have not been pursued simultaneously. However, Eastern Cape Nature is aware of the challenges in this area, with some employees working actively towards a solution. Outside parties have also severely impinged on the ability of Eastern Cape Nature Conservation to have a positive relationship with the local community. The unrealistic expectations raised among communities by the spatial development initiative are one example of this – and one, which has resulted in too large a region being identified as the local community. Furthermore, land tenure and restitution are unclear, and there are too many institutions involved in the communities.

Local communities currently receive very little benefit from the reserve. Again, cognisance is given to the current complex and volatile situation, but more benefits will have to accrue to the local people, which links directly with another problem, namely the low-level involvement of local people. Identifying the 'locals' is the first step in this direction. After this, in order for community involvement in natural resource management to work optimally, skills training and education are vital. Encouraging initiatives, such as SMMEs, as well as a degree of control and ownership through ventures such as a cultural village are essential to reap community support.

5. The Makuleke situation

5.1 Background

The Makuleke community lives within the Nthlaveni 2 MU Communal Area along the western boundary of the Kruger National Park in the Northern Province of South Africa (Figure 1). The specific area occupied by the Makuleke people is referred to as the 'Makuleke Area' and it extends from three to sixteen kilometres to the south west of the KNPs Punda Maria gate. The Makuleke Area covers approximately 5 000 hectares (Carruthers 1995).

In addition to the Makuleke Area, the community owns land in the Pafuri

area, historically known as the 'Crooks' Corner' (Harries 1984). The Pafuri land is situated at the confluence of the Limpopo and the Luvuvhu Rivers along the northern boundary of the Kruger National Park. This is the point where the boundaries of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique intersect (Figure 1). This Pafuri land, which covers 2 1887 hectares (South Africa 1998), is not currently occupied by the community but has been set aside as a resource that will be used to offset community development.

The Makuleke community of approximately 8 560 people is distributed between three villages, Makuleke, Mabiligwe and Makahlule. Makuleke village is the largest, with a population of 3 945, followed by Mabiligwe with 2 473, while Makahlule with 2 142 is the smallest (South Africa 1998c). Together with North West Province and the Eastern Cape, the Northern Province is one of South Africa's poorest provinces. The 1996 Human Development Index was 0,63 (South Africa's Human Development Index is 0,69), and the Gross Domestic Product a mere 2,02 (South Africa's Gross Domestic Product is 5,92) (South Africa 2002).

In 1969 the Makuleke community was forcibly removed from the Pafuri land to make way for the northward extension of the Kruger National Park (Figure 2). Historical accounts by Harries (1984) and Carruthers (1995) show that, prior to their forced removal, the Makuleke people had a considerable degree of access to resources within the Pafuri area. From the proclamation of the Pafuri Game Reserve in 1933 to their forced removal in 1969, the Makuleke people were progressively dispossessed of their control over the land and the natural resource base for their social and political economy. With the advent of the post-apartheid state and the attendant land reform process, the community lodged a land claim against the South African National Parks Board and other state institutions in December 1995. The lodging of the land claim was a watershed event that marked the shift toward active community participation in natural resource management.

An important factor leading to the lodging of the land claim was the loss of tenure rights and security

without adequate compensation (Harries 1984). Whereas the Makuleke who had resided in the Makuleke Reserve had had crown tenancy rights, in the state controlled Nthlaveni communal area the community had no title and therefore no security of tenure. Instead of the promised 20 000 hectares of land, the Makuleke retained a mere 5 000 hectares (Harries 1984; Carruthers 1995). This effectively curtailed the Makuleke resource base and increased the human demand-resource ratio.

The inability of the resource base in the Nthlaveni area to sustain livelihoods resulted in the migration of many Makuleke men and women of the productive age group to seek alternative livelihoods elsewhere. This was largely through employment within the neighbouring Kruger National Park and migrant labour in the more distant industrial locations (Harries 1984; Tapela & Omara-Ojungu 1999). The anticipated restitution of land rights was therefore viewed, particularly by the elderly members of the community, as a means of extending the resource base. Another major factor that led to the lodging of the land claim appears to have been the Makuleke's loss of political power. Prior to their forced removal they had been an independent chiefdom. Through the removal they were brought under the control of Chief Mhinga, a paramount Tsonga chief (Harries 1984).

Although the Makuleke were dispossessed of rights over their resource base at Pafuri, and although they suffered physical and psychological trauma as a result of their forced removal, they seem to have retained an intimate cultural and emotional attachment to the Pafuri area. This is demonstrated by their continued ceremonial trips to their ancestral grave sites, among other things (Tapela & Omara-Ojungu 1999). This connection was probably one of the critical factors that precipitated the lodging of the land claim.

In 1995, the Makuleke were restituted portions of land within the KNP and two smaller neighbouring protected areas. The restituted land is strategically located at the intersection of the boundaries of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa and therefore provides an important linkage for South Africa's

involvement in the proposed Great Limpopo Trans-frontier Park, which straddles the three countries. Having waged a prolonged struggle for the restitution of their land rights, a key question facing the Makuleke is how to translate this gain into tangible community development benefits without compromising the sustainability of the natural resource base. Towards this end the Makuleke have initiated a community based management programme, muted as the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme.

5.2 Current development: conservation and tourism

The Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme was formally initiated in January 1997 in anticipation of the negotiated settlement between the Makuleke community and the South African National Parks. The Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme was a pre-emptive attempt to develop the resource management capacity of the Makuleke so that the community could fully participate in the conservation and development of resources both within the Makuleke Area and in the Pafuri area. Given the relatively low level of socio-economic development, the high rates of unemployment, the low levels of income and the shortage of agricultural land in the Makuleke Area, the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme aimed to achieve community development objectives in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner.

The underlying philosophy of the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme was that there should ultimately be active community participation in the community based management initiative. The Programme was therefore based on two key principles, namely, that the community should maintain control over the development process through the reduction of dependence on external structures, and that there should be transparency and accountability to the Makuleke Communal Property Association as appropriate authority.

5.3 Current development: institutional and organisational

Current legislation provides for the restitution of land lost as a result of racial discrimination by previous governments and for security of tenure for persons whose tenure of land is legally insecure as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices. With regard to the strengthening of community governance structures, the Constitution establishes local government as the third tier of government. This implies that the Makuleke community governance structures are legal government entities.

In order to realise the objectives of the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme, a two-tier organisational structure has been devised, providing for the planning process and the project implementation level. The planning process level related to political decision-making, responsibility for programme policy formulation and facilitation of the whole programme process. This level was almost exclusively the domain of the Makuleke Community Property Association Executive Committee, with assistance from the Friends of Makuleke trust organisation. Accountability was ensured through the Executive Committee's reporting to the community at annual general meetings of the Makuleke Community Property Association and at other meetings deemed necessary.

At the time of the study, there were a number of projects being implemented within the programme. These involved both the community and the outsider institutional role-players. The projects involving the community mainly focused on capacity building, technology development and the provision of community services, infrastructure and commercial development. Projects involving outsider institutional role-players were mostly research-orientated. The facilitators and funding agencies in almost all the funded projects were drawn from outside the community.

5.4 The future: potential and major challenges

The current community viewpoint is that the Makuleke are going to use their reclaimed land for tourism projects that are expected to generate revenue that will be used to uplift their standards of living, mainly through the construction of public infrastructure. They have formed the Makuleke Community Property Association Executive Committee who are currently developing luxury lodge development projects in the 25 000 square-kilometre Pafuri area. Six lodges will be built; one has already been constructed. Furthermore, a cultural village to accommodate 12 people has already been built. Private companies will be contracted to run and market the lodge and the cultural village. In terms of both contracts, the tourism companies are obliged to employ local people. Eighteen young men and women from the community are already undergoing training in different disciplines related to tourism, business management and park management.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme lies in the ability of the programme to achieve fundamental reductions in poverty and economic insecurity. The community based management initiative has provided a greater potential for the realisation of aspirations by the Makuleke people than the top-down conservation approach did. However, it is possible that no amount of participation will convince the Makuleke people to continue investing in conservation activities when they remain faced with financial problems. It is imperative, therefore, that the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme should generate and devolve benefits to the community within a tolerable time span. This requirement appears to have been recognised within the Makuleke Conservation and Tourism Programme framework, and the Makuleke Community Property Association Executive Committee has indeed successfully generated income from limited harvesting of elephant resources.

5.5 The road ahead

There is a perception in South Africa that late entrants into tourism tend to have problems in breaking into the mainstream industry that is dominated by established tourism agencies (Ngobese 1994). Thus the resource-based companies operated by local communities such as the Makuleke may find themselves relegated to the fringe, where benefits tend to be trickle-down in character. Tourism ventures by rural communities are often dependent on external input and technical assistance (Ngobese 1994), since such communities often lack adequate reserves of appropriate resources. The dependence may result in leakage of generated income (Koch 1994) and may undermine community control in the community based management initiative.

The reliance by local communities on conservation-based commercial activities such as tourism, could impact negatively on the community's prosperity and security, as the tourism ventures increasingly become externally orientated at the expense of local needs (Ngobese 1994).

Bromley (1994) states that the economic dimension of community based management initiatives centres around the search for new institutional arrangements that will align the interests of local people with the interests of non-local and often distant individuals and groups seeking the sustainable management of particular ecosystems. Bromley further asserts that proponents of community-based management initially tend to adopt facilitative policies to nurture community participation. However, when the interests of local communities are not consistent with enhanced conservation of resources, the institutions resort to actions that appear more regulatory in nature. It follows that the securing of community rights to natural resources through legislative reform and the constitution of the Makuleke Community Property Association as a representative and legally accountable entity seem to be mechanisms for controlling local communities.

6. Conclusion

The notion that community based natural resource management initiatives may hold all solutions to the development problems faced by rural communities could be overly simplistic. Indeed, evidence from community based management approaches elsewhere in the world reveals that progress in the breaking of the vicious cycle of poverty, insecurity and environmental degradation has been disappointingly slow (Walker 2000), and that conditions enunciated by Agenda 21 have largely remained unchanged (Darkoh 1996). In both Mkambati and Makuleke the community based development initiatives have not been implemented long enough to have an impact on the communities' welfare. A follow-up study in five or even ten years' time will, hopefully, find substantial evidence of such positive influence.

From the discussion of the situations in Mkambati and of the Makuleke people, a number of challenges have emerged that face rural communities who wish to participate in the management of natural resources. These challenges are as follows:

- Both situations indicated the need for government leadership and guidance in terms of community based management. Once the National community based management policy is announced at the World Parks Congress in 2003, this policy should be implemented without delay.
- Communities should be wary of placing too high expectations on natural resources - tourism should not be seen as the magic wand that will solve all their problems and ensure prosperity for everyone.
- It is vital to establish guidelines to define "local community", or it could become contentious, as in the case of Mkambati.
- Communities should first establish land tenure. It is a slow process, but vital to establish the rights of the community.
- The role of local communities in the management of natural resources should facilitate and not inhibit trans-frontier and regional integration of conservation areas.
- Projects should be managed effectively to ensure their sustainability.
- Effective outsourcing of activities and the establishing of a workable partnership with the private sector are crucial to the success of the process.
- Sound organisational structures should be established to be able to sustain community participation.

It proved a useful exercise to compare the two case studies as examples of different levels of community involvement in tourism and conservation development. The Makuleke community has travelled quite a distance on this road. Other communities, such as those bordering Mkambati, who wish to improve their quality of life by sharing in the management of natural resources, would be well advised to establish a community based natural resource management initiative. Although this kind of initiative is not flawless, it proved to be a useful strategy.

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