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Communities, Conservation, and Tourism-based Development: Can community-based nature tourism live up to its promise?

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Abstract

This working paper draws from research on the Makuleke Region of Kruger Park, South Africa, to analyze the opportunities and tensions generated by efforts to use conservation-based tourism as a catalyst for community development. By attending to the political economies in which effort is embedded, I seek to enrich our theorizations of community-based natural resource management. This paper represents an initial step in that direction; the Makuleke case is used to identify and think through the implications of nature tourism for participating communities.

Like many other protected areas, the origins of the Makuleke Region lie in convergence of dispossession, forced removal, and conservation. The Makuleke, who consider the land their ancestral home, were forcibly removed in the late 1960s so that the land could be incorporated into Kruger National Park. They regained title in 1998, and have subsequently pursued economic development through conservation. While co-managing the Region with SANParks, the parastatal that manages all national protected areas, the Makuleke have sought to develop a tourism initiative that will produce economic self reliance and development. In adopting this strategy, the Makuleke are engaging with local, national, and international political economies over which community actors have limited room for maneuver.

This case brings three factors to light. First, the legacy of fortress conservation may make it more difficult for community actors to engage with their partners on an equal basis. Second, sectoral attributes of tourism pose special challenges to CBNRM initiatives; it is not clear that tourism projects will produce substantial benefits. Third, the coincidence of the shift to CBNRM with liberalization and democratization has altered the landscape on which all conservation efforts are situated. The confluence of these factors have created an environment in which state protected areas, community controlled conservation areas, and private game parks are competing for domestic and international tourist revenue.

Introduction

In this paper, I draw from exploratory research on the Makuleke Region of Kruger National Park, South Africa to analyze the opportunities and tensions generated by efforts to use conservation-based tourism as a catalyst for community development. By attending to the multiple political economies in which this effort is embedded, I seek to enrich our theorizations of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). This paper represents an initial step in that direction; the Makuleke case is used to identify and think through the implications of CBNRM nature tourism for participating communities. My discussion focuses on protected areas, those places in which the state or the owner has imposed restrictions on the use of land and other resources to advance conservation. Although many of the issues may translate, communities considering nature tourism outside of these areas may have a wider range of options. I begin with a discussion of community-based natural resource management.

Situating community-based natural resource management

Community-based natural resource management has gained support in conservation and development circles over the last two decades. CBNRM strategies have been implemented with increasing frequency. Hulme and Murphree (2001) argue that this approach became “almost a new orthodoxy” during the 1990s. So what is CBNRM? CBNRM refers to resource management practices in which people dependent on those resources or affected by management practices are involved in the management and exploitation of these resource. CBNRM usually focuses on people in close proximity to the resources of concern; these people constitute the “community” which is to be involved.¹ In typical CBNRM sites, the main actors are community representatives, conservation or development focused nongovernmental organizations, government agencies from environmental, parks, or land departments, and consultants. Although there are many routes to CBNRM (See Barrow & Murphree, 2001), many initiatives begin with a decision by the governmental or private actors controlling a protected area to involve affected communities. In these cases, the extent of community involvement is largely within the control of these actors. Consultation appears to be much more common than substantial involvement in decision-making. In those cases where communities do participate in decision-making, the agenda is often severely restricted. For example, proposals to use areas for agriculture or manufacturing instead of conservation may not be considered. In the Makuleke case, the Makuleke Communal Property Association (CPA) has title to the Makuleke Region, but continued conservation was a pre-condition for gaining title. Although the CPA enjoys exclusive rights to commercial development, it cannot use the land for agriculture, mining, or mass settlement (See Table 1). Conservation imperatives constrain the Makuleke’s commercial options. Communities are more likely to have substantial decision-making power in cases where they have secure title to the land.

Community-based natural resource management emerged from the confluence of several factors. For close to a century, conservation efforts followed a “fortress conservation” model in which human activity was viewed as intrinsically harmful to nature (Adams & Hulme, 2001; Moore, Kosek, & Pandian, 2003; Nash, 1973; Neumann, 1998; Peluso, 1993; M. Wells, Brandon, & Hannah, 1992). The model was deeply invested in a romantic European understanding of nature as fragile and pristine. Conservationists therefore sought to exclude people from nature by creating “protected areas,” reserves in which human residence and consumptive activity (hunting, agriculture) was strictly limited, but nature was subject to expert management. The term “fortress” reflects the fences, fines, and coercion employed to restrict local access to protected areas. Over time, the demonstrated failures of fortress conservation to produce desired conservation outcomes lessened support for this approach. Despite intense investment in policing protected areas against the threat posed by local people and “poachers,” who often were seen as interchangeable (Neumann 1997; Peluso 1993), ecological conditions declined and the number of threatened species continued to rise. Fortress conservation also came under increasing pressure from human rights and justice-oriented critiques, which questioned the moral basis for expropriation and exclusion in the name of biodiversity (e.g., Geisler & Letsoalo, 2000).

CBNRM thus arose as a response to two quite different critiques. Proponents argue that community-based management can provide just conservation. For conservationists, CBNRM promises better conservation outcomes; local involvement rather than removal will protect the environment. For those concerned with justice, it is argued that CBNRM is more democratic than centralized state control of natural resources. Community benefit is the linchpin on which this “win-win” approach depends. If communities are involved in conservation and if they benefit from it, it is argued, they will comply with restrictions on use and extraction. CBNRM is closely linked to development, narrowly understood in terms of improved material and economic well-being.ⁱⁱ Since it is assumed that these communities do not sufficiently value conservation in and for itself, substantial community participation without development might threaten conservation.

There are many angles from which these justifications for CBNRM could be and have been usefully critiqued—for example, it is far from clear that local predation provides an adequate explanation for species decline (Gibson, 1999). In this paper, however, I wish to focus on the interaction between conservation-based development and extra-local political economies.ⁱⁱⁱ As the Makuleke case illustrates, conservation-based development efforts bring the “communities” involved in CBNRM into complex interactions with multi-scalar political economies in which they often have extremely limited room for maneuver. My discussion of this case is based on interviews conducted with community members, national parks officials, and other involved individuals during 2002,^{iv} on archival research,^v and on the secondary literature.^{vi}

Examination of the Makuleke case brings three factors to light. First, the communities most likely to be targeted for CBNRM have been particularly disadvantaged by the prior processes of conservation through dispossession and the broader legacies of African colonialism and South African apartheid. These legacies may make it more difficult for community actors to engage with their partners on an equal basis. Second, conservation-based development strategies are heavily reliant on capitalist markets for success. In most cases, revenue generated through tourism or other leisure spending is expected to provide the resources for community benefit. Although employing a market-based strategy has some benefits, the sectoral attributes of tourism pose special challenges to CBNRM initiatives. It is not clear that CBNRM tourism projects will produce substantial benefits. Third, the coincidence of the shift to CBNRM with economic crisis, partial liberalization and democratization has altered the landscape on which all conservation efforts, private, state, and community-based are situated. These transformations within and beyond the state may increase market competition and reduce the alternatives for communities seeking development.

Before examining the factors outlined above, a description of the physical terrain may be helpful. The Makuleke Region constitutes about 24,000 hectares bounded by the Luvuvhu, Limpopo, and Mutale rivers. It is situated in the northeastern corner of South Africa near the borders of Zimbabwe and Mozambique (See Figures 1-2). The Region is ecologically rich. It is home to a wide range of flora and fauna, including impala, kudu, leopards, buffalo, lions, deer, and many bird species and is located along a wildlife migration route. The land includes floodplains, pans, wetlands and riverine forest and bush. Many plants in the area, such as the lala palm, have multiple subsistence and commercial uses (Harries, 1987). The Thulamela ruins are of archeological, historical, and cultural interest. In 2002, there were a few paved roads, but one had to go off-road or use dirt roads to access most of the area. Monetary valuations for the land and existing infrastructure range from 20 to 70 million Rand (\$1.8 to \$6.3 million US^{vii}) in 2000 (Koch & de Beer, 2000).

Legacies of Dispossession

African conservation is deeply intertwined with land expropriation and exclusion. As scholars have begun to document, the creation of protected areas frequently has involved forced relocation of people long resident in those areas and the exclusion of nearby peoples from access to these areas (Carruthers, 1995; Neumann, 1998). These practices were widespread during the colonial and apartheid eras. Some

contend that greenlining—placing land under protected status, thereby restricting human residence and use—continues to result in dispossession and the criminalization of customary practices (Geisler, 2003; Neumann, 1997, 1998, 2002). The Makuleke Region is a product of this history.

Harries (1987) estimates that the Makuleke region was settled 150 to 200 years ago by the Makuleke clan, a branch of the Maluleke clan. Located along an established trade route known to Europeans and Africans, the area was outside the scope of European settlement and somewhat distant from indigenous state structures. By the 1890s, however, the Makuleke people and the territory had been incorporated into the white supremacist South African (Transvaal) Republic (See Figures 3-4).^{viii} Over the next eighty years, the Makuleke gradually lost effective access to and control over the region's resources as provincial and national governments claimed the territory, restricted the Makuleke to a small reserve (Figure 5), and established protected areas (Carruthers, 1995; Harries, 1987). This process culminated in the forced removal of the Makuleke in 1969.^{ix} The Makuleke were resettled in Ntlhaveni,^x a newly established reserve for Tsonga-speaking people located about 200 kilometers away (Figures 6). In 1971, almost all of the territory was incorporated into Kruger National Park, South Africa's premier national park (Figure 2).^{xi}

Forced removal to Ntlhaveni was accompanied by political and economic changes. First, political authority within the homelands was structured by "traditional" authorities as recognized by the Department of Bantu Affairs. At removal, the Makuleke chief was made a "headman," formally subordinate to Chief Mhinga, an individual complicit in the Makuleke's removal. Because recognized chiefs had considerable discretion over land and revenue allocation, the formal status of the Makuleke chief had material consequences. Secondly, removal brought a decisive shift in the relative importance of subsistence agriculture and wage labor. The Makuleke were concentrated on a relatively small parcel of land, comprising 5,000 hectares divided into three villages, and agricultural plots could no longer be scattered. Ntlhaveni lacked the rich game, wild fruits, lala palm, and fish of the Makuleke Region, so the Makuleke had to adapt their farming practices to the different agricultural conditions of the dry savannah. There were several crop failures during the first few years, and many men migrated so that they could earn wages to purchase food. Wage labor became essential to survival, but employment opportunities were limited to nearby farms, Kruger Park, and migrant labor because Ntlhaveni was fairly remote.

Apartheid's end provided an opportunity for the Makuleke to reclaim the Makuleke Region. The new Bill of Rights established the right to restitution for persons and communities who had lost their property as a consequence of racially discriminatory laws; groups could seek individual or collective restoration, alternative land, or compensation.^{xii} The Makuleke filed a collective restitution claim, and established the Makuleke Communal Property Association (CPA) as the legal vehicle to pursue the land claim and receive title. The CPA membership included all individuals who had lived in the Makuleke Region and their descendents, as well as individuals who have joined the Makuleke community.^{xiii} Representatives of the Makuleke then negotiated with the National Parks Board (now SANParks) and other government ministries. The Makuleke agreed to preserve the Makuleke Region's status as a conservation area early in the negotiation process,^{xiv} Three years after the claim was filed, the parties reached a settlement. (Table 1 describes the resultant property rights regime). In late 1998, Land Claims Court recognized the settlement and ordered the transfer of title to the Makuleke Region to the Makuleke CPA.^{xv} The court order marked the first successful settlement of a land restitution claim involving a South African national park.

Although SANParks resisted the Makuleke's land claim for most of the negotiation process, the final resolution was portrayed as a "win-win solution." The Makuleke gained the enormous symbolic victory of official recognition of injustice, formal title to the land, and commercial rights. For SANParks, the most important outcome may be the retention of the Makuleke Region within Kruger Park. In fact, Kruger Park grew slightly with the addition of the 3,000 hectares the Makuleke reclaimed from the Madimbo Corridor. SANParks also gained a formal commitment to continued conservation of the area, and the

ability to monitor and sometimes participate in Makuleke decision-making. Because visitors to the Makuleke Region enter from a gate outside of its boundaries, SANParks retains gate revenue as well.

Since the Makuleke CPA was formed, the Makuleke have been expressly committed to conservation-based development. The CPA constitution states that the Makuleke Region is to serve as a means towards achieving economic self reliance and development (MCPA Constitution Section 5.4); tourism—lodges, tours, and safari hunting—is the strategy most often mentioned. However, the changes wrought by dispossession have had lasting effects on the Makuleke that cannot be undone by transfer of title. Two legacies are directly relevant to conservation-based development. First, the Makuleke are relatively poor; most CPA members live in Ntlhaveni, which is one of the poorest regions in the poorest province in South Africa (Koch & de Beer, 2000). In 1997, approximately 78 percent of households earned less than R1500 (~\$135) per month, and a large number of households depended on low-wage employment in Kruger Park (Reid, 2001). On average, there were eight people per household. To pursue their goals, the Makuleke must partner with other actors who possess material resources and/or necessary expertise. To raise revenue from safari hunting, for example, the CPA partnered with a private firm that advertised, organized, and managed the hunt. The Makuleke have been quite effective at developing useful relationships. Since the mid-1990s, a steady stream of volunteers and NGOs have assisted community members with a variety of tasks. However, the risk of exploitation and unequal partnership is a continuing concern. The Makuleke CPA has had to rely on others for assistance in gathering information and determining the options available during several strategic decisions such as approaching the land claims negotiations, ascertaining development options, developing a conservation management plan, and issuing requests for development proposals. The Makuleke may not always be able to tell if they are receiving full, fair, and unbiased information.^{xvi} While the risk of exploitation has declined somewhat as the skills and experience of community members increases, early decisions may have lasting effects. Some participants in the German-funded Transform project assert that it initially hindered the Makuleke's land restitution claim (Steenkamp & Urh, 2000). For several years, the Makuleke CPA worked closely with several individuals perceived to have no conflicts of interest, who were collectively called the Friends of Makuleke. The Friends were most intensely involved with the Makuleke during the land claim negotiations; involvement has lessened with the Friends' perception that the Makuleke had developed some capacity and should become self-sufficient (interviews).

The Restitution Agreement included the proviso that the Makuleke Region would be administered as a contractual national park for 20 to 50 years.^{xvii} Since the resolution of the land claim, the Region has been co-managed by the Makuleke CPA and SANParks, the parastatal that manages all national protected areas (See Figure 7). Because the CPA does not possess sufficient conservation expertise or manpower to manage the region without assistance, SANParks is responsible for day-to-day conservation management. For the first 5 years of co-management, SANParks was obligated to bear all operational costs. Subsequently, the Makuleke CPA will have to pay up to 50 percent of these costs (See Table 2).^{xviii}

The co-management arrangement requires CPA leaders to engage on an ongoing basis with the agency that benefited most directly from their dispossession. As discussed, the Makuleke Region is to remain a conservation area in perpetuity. Because of this proviso, all commercial ventures must be consistent with conservation. If the CPA wishes to build a lodge, to extend a road, or to create a helipad, it must be able to demonstrate these changes would not impede conservation. In practice, this means that the CPA must present all commercial plans to the Makuleke-SANParks Joint Management Board, compare proposals with the conservation management plan, and conduct environmental impact assessments for each proposal. The CPA must justify its decisions to SANParks, although SANParks' ability to block ventures is limited.^{xix} Technical expertise is an important resource in making these arguments about environmental impact, but it is not equally distributed. Much of the imbalance between SANParks and the CPA can be traced to past state policies and resource allocations. In this respect, the Makuleke are similar to many collectives targeted for participatory resource management. Ecologically significant areas are often remote, and the people living in them or dispossessed from them are often

politically and economically marginal.^{xx} Inequality is deeply sedimented in the terrain on which communities and partners seek to develop conservation projects.

Second, continuing pressures on the Makuleke threaten any notion of coherent community.^{xxi} Like other residents of the former homelands, the Makuleke face unresolved conflict over authority and land tenure (Classens, 2001; Ntsebeza, 1999; Turner & Ibsen, 2000). Although elected local governments have been installed, the role of “traditional authorities” (chiefs) postapartheid South Africa has not yet been resolved. It is not clear who owns which land in the homelands, nor who possesses the authority to allocate land. Conflict between Chief Mhinga, Chief Makuleke and their adherents has continued to the present. Additionally, questions of community membership and coherence remain salient. The Makuleke established formal membership criteria and a communal property association in response to the requirement of the land claim process. The presence of formal membership definitions should not be assumed to have created a unified collectivity. As Agrawal and Gibson (1999) contend, communities are rarely homogenous. Local decision-making processes reflect multiple actors, multiple, often conflicting, interests and local institutions. If participation in natural resource management and tourism initiatives produces disparities in perceived benefits, it may increase communal tensions and conflicts. Since the land claim process began, CPA executive members have been the locus of external efforts to assist the Makuleke. They have received training, subsidized travel, and other perks. These programs have helped Executive Committee members to develop the skills necessary to make good decisions, but they also place these individuals in a favored position to compete for employment. In contrast, the tangible benefits received by non-executive to CPA members as of 2002 were fairly small. After each safari hunt, animal meat has been shared among the community. Several dozen CPA members were hired to work in the Makuleke Region. The CPA receives all revenue from development initiatives,^{xxii} but the majority of funds remained unspent. Some money had been allocated for transport for the chief and community projects. Perceived disparities place severe pressures on the CPA Executive Committee and may lead to intense politicization of the election process. Research on other cases suggests that disparities in benefit are common (Kellert, Mehta, Ebbin, & Lichtenfeld, 2000).

Capitalism and Markets

The shift to community-based natural resource management has coincided with widespread adoption of sustainable development and market-based conservation strategies (Hulme & Murphree, 2001). Taken jointly, this perspective implies that the route to successful CBNRM goes through the market. This approach has some clear benefits. A capitalist logic makes it possible to assign values to conservation and to assess its costs and benefits. As discussed, conservation efforts have imposed severe social, material, and economic costs on communities subject to dislocation and use restrictions. There have been few efforts to properly estimate the financial costs of fortress conservation. Conservation efforts have benefited those who derive value from conservation, those who have had access to protected areas, and those able to mount related commercial enterprises. Economic logic suggests that if all parties were willing,^{xxiii} it would be possible for those who benefit from conservation to compensate negatively affected parties, thereby leaving both parties better off. This has not been the dominant strategy.

Instead, market-based approaches to CBNRM have focused on providing a stream of benefits to the participating community. Most benefits originate from two sources: government or private sector project funds and income from extractive or non-extractive use of protected areas. Organizational actors that support conservation often are willing to subsidize initial organizational and project costs for CBNRM. The Makuleke CPA has received grants from government agencies, NGOs, and foreign foundations, and community members have been hired to work on projects in Kruger Park. These external subsidies to the communities participating in conservation initiatives are usually viewed as short term.

In the long run, revenue from natural resources is meant to serve as the main source of community development. Communities are to achieve development by putting nature on the market. The most substantial sources of income from protected areas involve tourism. Tourists are accustomed to paying

for access to nature *in* nature, for related services such as transportation, lodging, and guidance, and purchasing goods linked to the experience such as postcards and local crafts. These goods and services are, in principle, compatible with conservation. There is an established and lucrative market for game hunting, but conservation constrains the potential for profit. The first elephant hunts in the Makuleke Region produced an outcry among conservationists. In 2000, the Makuleke were able to sell the rights to hunt two elephants and two buffalo. The hunt produced R520,000 (about \$47 thousand or \$3/beneficiary) and animal meat (Mahony & Van Zyl, 2001).

Superficial analysis suggests that tourism is a promising strategy. Many African protected areas contain stunning landscapes, large game, and exotic flora. Large numbers of people pay fees to enter existing protected areas; more than a million people visited South Africa's national parks in 1995 (M. P. Wells, 1996). Tourism directly accounts for 3.7 percent of global gross domestic product (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2003b).^{xxiv} In South Africa, tourism is the third largest industry and the fourth most important source of foreign exchange (Spenceley, 2003). Although few solid figures are available, it is clear that nature tourism generates substantial revenue (Emerton, 2001). Wells (1996) estimates that South African nature tourism accounted for R710-6,087 in 1993.^{xxv}

Although these figures are promising, closer examination of the economic logic regarding tourism, the sectoral attributes of tourism, generally, and nature-based tourism specifically, and the political economy within which CBNRM initiatives are situated raises several concerns. In the discussion that follows, I outline several key issues. First, community conservation tourism initiatives are relatively new entrants to a large and competitive field. In addition to the many state-owned protected areas, there is a large private nature tourism industry. Community initiatives will have to compete with public and private initiatives. Although some may be able to find a market niche by highlighting community control,^{xxvi} it is not self-evident that communities are well placed to compete successfully. Even success may prove fleeting, for the sites tourists select are influenced by international fashions and events beyond the tourist sites shape the level of spending. For example, the events of September 11, 2001 led many travelers to re-evaluate the safety of different destinations. Observers suggest that South Africa has benefited from this re-evaluation because the threat of terrorism is believed to be low, but worry that high crime rates will discourage foreign tourists from visiting (Spenceley, 2003; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2003a).

Second, profitable tourism often requires substantial investment. Although tourists are willing to pay access fees, the larger share of revenue is garnered through housing, transport, and tour management (Clancy, 1998). Lodging is perhaps the simplest of these components for communities to provide, and it may range from local homestays to luxury accommodation. If a community is located near the protected area, lodging within the community may be feasible. Because Ntlhaveni is about 200 kilometers away from the Makuleke Region, local lodging has less potential.^{xxvii} Conservation concerns are likely to limit construction within the protected area. When this is the case, low volume, high cost lodging may be more profitable. One study of the Makuleke Region estimated that 5-6 lodges could produce US\$360 to 540 thousand per year (Koch & de Beer, 2000).^{xxviii} But provision of independent accommodation is likely to require substantial financial investment; Oldham, Creemers, and Rebeck (2000) estimate that mid-market nature lodges KwaZulu/Natal invested R200 thousand per bed; the operating surplus was approximately R9 thousand per year. The communities engaged in CBNRM are unlikely to have sufficient funds to set up these ventures on their own, and existing state and nongovernmental partners often are unwilling or unable to provide funds for profit-oriented investment. To address this situation, the Makuleke CPA has issued calls for private sector bids to develop the region. Bid documents clearly state that the private partners will be responsible for financing any joint projects. Although partners are expected to have a reasonable rate of return, they are also required to implement their ventures in a manner that advances the community. The venture will include provisos for the eventual transfer of lodges built on Makuleke land to the CPA. Although this strategy seeks to protect the Makuleke's interests while advancing their tourism initiative, it may also render the region less attractive to investors. The Makuleke CPA reached an agreement with one partner, Matswani Safaris, to build one high end lodge, a tent camp, and a

museum (Spenceley, 2003). At 60 percent occupancy, the Makuleke CPA will receive annual lodge rent of about \$75,000. In July 2003, the CPA announced an R45 million concessionary agreement with Wilderness Safaris to build 3 luxury tented lodges.^{xxxix} It is not clear whether other CBNRM sites will be sufficiently attractive to garner this sort of investment.

Third, the structure of the tourism sector may make it difficult for communities to capture substantial benefits. Tourism is a complexly structured global industry. The hotel and transport sectors are highly concentrated, and the majority of benefits accrue to the larger players (Clancy, 1998). Nature tourism is less likely to be controlled by the largest transnational firms, but Emerton's (2001) research indicates that benefits often flow away from communities. The individuals or firms that manage tours—arranging transportation, accommodation, guides, and schedules—often capture much of the revenue. These agents are often situated closer to potential tourists and have easier access to them. (If Ntlhaveni is typical, most people living in or near in community nature tourist sites will lack disposable income.) Evidence also indicates that the most lucrative employment opportunities—for example as safari leaders or lodge managers—are often captured by outsiders, ostensibly on the basis of skills (Murombedzi, 2001; Sindiga, 2000). As with lodging, some communities may be able to build local employment requirements into their contracts with partners; the Makuleke CPA has adopted this approach. Matswani and Wilderness Safaris proposed to implement a vocational training program so that Makuleke could serve as tour guides, hospitality staff, and managers. Additionally, several Makuleke youth are participating in a training program sponsored by the Endangered Wildlife Foundation. Training has included, conservation management, tourism, business, safari guidance, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) wildlife monitoring. This program has been in progress for several years and is intended to lead to formal certification, but advancement has been slow and some students have dropped out.^{xxx}

There is reason to believe that tourist expectations may limit movement away from common employment patterns. Although the “nature” tourists experience reflects a complex interaction between biological and human labor (Moore et al., 2003), the experience is often marketed and understood as a journey into the authentic and pristine.^{xxxi} The development of nature tourism in southern Africa has been deeply racialized, and ventures into “wild” nature typically have been mediated by non-local, “skilled,” usually white, guides assisted by local, “unskilled” black laborers.^{xxxi} Disrupting these expectations may reduce commercial success among white tourists, who appear to constitute the majority at present (M. P. Wells, 1996).^{xxxiii}

For most communities, engaging in nature tourism will involve developing a new set of relationships with extra-local actors on an uneven terrain.^{xxxiv} Communities' ability to negotiate the terms of their engagement will depend crucially on their position with regard to the protected area and their relationships with other, better situated actors. When communities hold title to the land or have secure, state-recognized tenure,^{xxxv} they possess greater ability to determine how that area will be used. When another party holds formal rights, the community must rely on that actor to address its interests. Some of the largest southern African CBNRM initiatives, such as Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE program, have involved communal land. In many communal areas, effective control over use of this land resides in community actors but formal tenure is held by the state. While usually rooted in colonial disregard for African land tenure, postcolonial governments have not rectified the situation. This lack of property rights has made it more difficult for community residents to benefit from tourism initiatives on these lands (Murombedzi, 2001). The ability to make credible threats to comply with or sabotage arrangements also affects negotiating power; strategic poaching may be useful. Regardless of land tenure, close ties between members of the community and well-positioned actors may help to lessen the imbalance between the community and prospective private sector partners.

I have suggested that the Makuleke community is better situated than most communities engaged in CBNRM tourism initiatives. The primary reason for this claim is based in their strong formal relationship to the Makuleke Region, a site recognized to have ecological value and commercial potential. Because the Makuleke CPA has title to the region and court-recognized exclusive rights to commercial development,

any actor seeking to use the land must engage with them. Additionally, there is a formal co-management agreement between the Makuleke CPA and SANParks. Although the Restitution Agreement is subject to continual re-interpretation, it was carefully crafted through negotiation and establishes clear expectations and constraints for each partner (Reid, 2001). Many CBNRM initiatives would benefit from greater clarity regarding the expectations and responsibilities of each actor. Finally, the Makuleke have a strong network of supporters with media ties, technical expertise, and financial resources.

CBNRM in the context of transformation

The shift in conservation towards community based natural resource management cannot be understood in isolation. Core aspects of the CBNRM development model—such as reliance on the market—reflect a broader change in the political and economic landscape. The rise of CBNRM has coincided with the third wave of democratization and the adoption of neoliberal economic policies. Democratization has produced substantial, but uneven political transformations in many sub-Saharan African countries (See Bratton, 1998; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997; Fomunyoh, 2001; van de Walle, 2002).^{xxxvi} South Africa's democratization has involved the deracialization of the polity and the establishment of substantial constraints on government action, reflected in the Bill of Rights. Democratization has strengthened participation-based arguments for CBNRM while simultaneously undermined the rationale for directing resources towards conservation, an area perceived to benefit only a small minority. In South Africa, democratization has led to the deracialization of protected area policies and impelled efforts to transform SANParks internal management and relationship with communities; these efforts have met with mixed success (Cock & Fig, 1999; Turner & Meer, 2001). Postapartheid legislation also has enabled some of the individuals and communities displaced by conservation to seek redress.

Promoted by international financial institutions and largely adopted in the context of economic crisis, African governments have adopted and partially implemented a set of policies intended to stabilize and liberalize the economy (Mkandawire, 2001; van de Walle, 2001).^{xxxvii} These policies have included measures to cut government expenditures, privatize parastatal organizations, and reduce state intervention in markets. Because the operational costs of conservation areas typically have been subsidized by government, liberalization has affected state protected areas most directly, but it also has implications for community-owned areas.^{xxxviii} Firstly, African governments are less willing to fund conservation efforts of any sort. Revenue constraints make it less likely that government-funded protected areas will devote substantial resources to CBNRM or other community engagement efforts, which may be seen as a distraction from conservation. Secondly, governments have begun to formally introduce market incentives into state protected areas. Marketization of these protected areas has included the privatization of some operations—such as food concessions and lodge management—as well as increased efforts to raise revenue. While tourism generates substantial revenue and foreign exchange, much of the revenue generated by nature tourism in protected areas has gone into private hands, benefiting the state indirectly. As protected areas have been asked to cover their own costs, state protected areas have become much more active participants in the market for nature tourism. Many of these areas are well-known, partially subsidized, and extremely attractive to private interests. The coincidence of liberalization and CBNRM may put the interests of CBNRM initiatives and state protected areas into conflict. Tourism is a growing sector, but demand for nature tourism still is limited. It may be difficult for CBNRM efforts to win this competition for tourists and investors. When given the option of investing in a state protected area or a CBNRM, many investors are likely to choose the state area. The Makuleke experience demonstrates that these concerns are warranted. Shortly after the Makuleke CPA issued its call for private sector development proposals, SANParks announced that several sites in Kruger National Park were available to commercial tender (Mahony & Van Zyl, 2001; Spenceley, 2003). Several of the parties that had expressed interest in the Makuleke Region then withdrew their bids. Although the Makuleke still received a few proposals, and was able to reach an agreement with Matswani Safaris, the

competition with SANParks clearly reduced the Makuleke CPA's choice of partners and negotiating leverage. It is unclear whether SANParks' timing was deliberate—officials are informed of Makuleke plans through the Joint Management Board—or inadvertent, but it is likely that similar situations will arise in other CBNRM tourism initiatives.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to historicize community based natural resource management and to place its tourism-based development promises in a broader political economic context. Analysis of the Makuleke case suggests that relying on conservation-based tourism for development is a risky strategy. While tourism has substantial promise, community-based initiatives may not be well-positioned to compete against state-supported protected areas and private ventures. In closing, I want to suggest two considerations in moving forward. First, communities participating in CBNRM frequently face an extremely restricted set of options. Despite its limitations, nature tourism may be one of the better options for communities that *cannot* remove use restrictions. The effects of economic liberalization are not limited to protected areas. Governments also have sought to reduce their payrolls and restrict spending on social programs and development. In many countries, including South Africa, unemployment has risen and the formal labor market has shrunk. These effects have been most concentrated among unskilled or low skilled workers, the majority of the Makuleke (Tapela & Omara-Ojunga, 1999). These changes make it less likely that labor migrancy will prove sufficient to maintain or improve conditions in Ntlaveni. In this context, securing guaranteed employment from tourism venture partners may provide substantial benefits. For those communities that can alter land status, careful consideration of the opportunity costs imposed by conservation and the prospects for beneficial partnership is warranted (Emerton, 2001). In all cases, actors should explicitly consider the challenges and opportunities generated by nature tourism.

Second, we should reconsider the rationale for CBNRM. Proponents have argued that CBNRM can provide both democracy and material benefit. In many cases, attention to material development has outweighed focus on democracy. But CBNRM emerges from a conservation history deeply intertwined with injustice, exclusion, and dislocation, and it is far from clear that a materialist strategy can respond adequately to this legacy. Although the Makuleke people I interviewed hope that the Makuleke Region will improve economic conditions, that is not the only basis on which they judge success. All indicated that regaining title to their ancestral home was an immense symbolic achievement independent of subsequent commercial success or failure. It was equally evident that the conditions of engagement with SANParks mattered immensely. The Makuleke CPA was explicitly empowered to make commercial decisions; the scope of SANParks authority was limited. This CBNRM initiative is based in explicit recognition of past injustice and the partners meet on somewhat equal ground. Ultimately, participation, rather than development, may prove the determinant of CBNRM "success."

Notes

ⁱ Problems associated with the conceptualization of community embedded in CBNRM have been amply discussed by other scholars (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Brosius, Tsing, & Zerner, 1998; Kepe, Cousins, & Turner, 2001).

ⁱⁱ This is the dominant sense in which the term development is used in CBNRM discourse. Most individuals involved in the Makuleke region used the term in this way.

ⁱⁱⁱ Human geographers have demonstrated that the "local" is a product of interactions at multiple scales. I use extra-local here to refer to actors and dynamics beyond the formal territorial boundaries of the "community" involved in CBNRM.

^{iv} To protect informants' confidentiality, I do not identify the individuals interviewed by name.

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- ^v Archives consulted include those of the Makuleke Communal Property Association, the Department of Land Affairs/ Land Claims Commission, the South African National Parks archive and the Kruger National Park
- ^{vi} Principle sources were Carruthers (1995), de Villiers (1999), Harries (1987), Mahony and Van Zyl (2001), Reid (2001), Steenkamp and Urh (2000), Tapela and Omara-Ojungu (1999), and Turner and Meer (2001). My discussion of Makuleke history draws primarily from Harries (1987) and that of Kruger Park draws from Carruthers (1995).
- ^{vii} As of December 12, 2001, 1 US dollar = 11.0849 South African Rand.
- ^{viii} The modern South African state was created in 1910 through the union of 4 colonies, including the Transvaal.
- ^{ix} Many Makuleke left the Triangle between 1931, when the Park first sought to move the community, and 1969, when forced removal occurred (Harries, 1987).
- ^x Ntlhaveni later became part of the Gazankulu “self-governing” Bantustan.
- ^{xi} Before the removal, the Makuleke Region was formally controlled by the Department of Bantu Affairs. Parliament approved a 20,000 land exchange between Bantu Affairs and the National Parks Board (now SANParks) in 1971. The remaining land was incorporated into the Madimbo Corridor, a military *cordon sanitaire* (Steenkamp, 2001).
- ^{xii} Restitution clauses were included in each of the postapartheid constitutions—the 1993 Interim Constitution and the 1996 final Constitution. The 1996 Constitution states, “A person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress” (section 25(7)). The Constitutions, and the laws providing for realization of these rights, did not require claimants to have had formal title to their land before dispossession.
- ^{xiii} Former residents of the Makuleke Region and their descendents were entitled to membership. People who joined the Makuleke community after removal could apply for membership. In 2001, no applicant had been rejected and there were about 15,000 members (Reid, 2001).
- ^{xiv} It is difficult to determine whether Makuleke commitment to conservation was truly voluntary or a pragmatic decision seeking to strengthen their claim given the political environment; court documents suggest that restoration without conservation was unlikely. The Court Judgment states, “The restrictive conditions of title which the parties have agreed should be imposed were material in convincing the Court that it was appropriate to order restoration in this matter” (Section 17).
- ^{xv} The terms of the settlement are established in the “The Main Agreement Relating to the Makuleke Land Claim (as amended 11-13 December 1998)”, which was incorporated into the Order of the Land Claims Court.
- ^{xvi} Kruger Parks officials, who cannot be considered neutral, frequently asserted that the Makuleke were being used.
- ^{xvii} Contractual parks are part of the national parks system, but they remain under private ownership. A contract between the state and the owner sets the terms of park access and control. The Restitution Agreement allows either party to request the exclusion of the Makuleke Region from Kruger Park after 20 years on 5 years written notice. Throughout the essay, this agreement is referred to as the “Restitution Agreement.”
- ^{xviii} The CPA’s financial obligation may not exceed 50 percent of net profits from the region.
- ^{xix} The only grounds on which SANParks can challenge commercial decisions are environmental. The Restitution Agreement grants SANParks residual power to ensure that the Makuleke Region remains a conservation site, and it is authorized to intervene if the Makuleke CPA fails to obey conservation rules.
- ^{xx} Much of the research on African politics has found that political power and collective struggle are concentrated in urban areas.
- ^{xxi} Agrawal and Gibson (1999) warn against assuming that “communities” are spatially concentrated, internally homogenous, and share common norms that include conservation. Instead, they argue, we should examine the multiple actors and interests within the community, local-level decision-making processes, and communal institutional arrangements. From this vantage point, the deployment of community within a given site at a point in time is part of its political economy.
- ^{xxii} In 2002, the CPA was in the process of establishing a trust to receive and manage funds. This trust would include CPA executive members as well as external individuals (such as an accountant) to ensure fiduciary responsibility.
- ^{xxiii} This approach seems most likely to meet with success in cases where the affected party has not been subject to coercion. For many groups subject to forced removal, financial compensation without restoration may be unacceptable.

^{xxiv} When indirect impacts are included, the “tourist economy” comprises 10.7 of global GDP (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2003b). Developing country tourism comprises roughly 30 percent of the international market. Tourism comprises the main source of foreign currency for at least 38 percent of countries (Roe & Urquhart, 2001).

^{xxv} The wide range reflects different assumptions about the relative importance of wildlife tourism.

^{xxvi} Some places have found a niche in ecotourism, in which tourism is designed to minimize negative environmental impacts (Honey, 1999). Some definitions of ecotourism include local benefit.

^{xxvii} Although this distance makes it unlikely that tourists headed to the Makuleke Region will stay in Ntlhaveni, there is some potential to provide lodging to tourists headed to other parts of Kruger Park.

^{xxviii} These estimates are based on total lodge capacity of 200 guests, paying high prices, an 8% levy on turnover, and 50% occupancy. Each lodge would employ 30 full-time workers. Compare to Oldham, Creemers, and Rebeck (2000).

^{xxix} Press releases and news coverage provide too few details for a thorough assessment of this agreement. However, the Wilderness Safaris managing directed stated that the Makuleke would receive a percentage of turnover, rather than a flat rental fee, community members would receive training and employment (up to 200 jobs), and some scholarships would be provided.

(http://www.aboutravel.co.za/FRONTEND/A_SCRIPTS/article.asp?pkArticleID=2592&pkIssueID=322)

^{xxx} EWF is based in Johannesburg and provided resources for this program after an earlier funder, the German Agency for Technical Co-Operation dropped out. The program relies heavily on distance learning, with short intensive training sessions conducted in Makuleke or Kruger Park by EWF staff.

^{xxxi} Many scholars have examined the production of authenticity and nature in tourist destination points.

^{xxxii} The racial categories deployed above are also the product of social and historical processes; race does important work employed here are also social products. The interplay between race and nature in tourist sites deserves closer attention. (For some points of departure, see Moore, Kosek, and Pandian 2003)

^{xxxiii} Wells (1996) estimates that whites constituted 69 percent of domestic tourists in South Africa in 1992. The proportion of non-white South African tourists is expected to rise substantially. The majority of extra-regional tourists to Africa are from Europe. Regional tourism comprises a plurality of non-domestic tourists, but there are few good statistics on the characteristics of those tourists.

^{xxxiv} Most communities involved in CBNRM are deeply embedded in extra-local relationships of many sorts. However, institutional ties with the private, for profit actors that dominate tourism are likely to be weak because CBNRM initiatives have been heavily shaped by states and nongovernmental organizations.

^{xxxv} Property rights may be allocated in many different ways (Bruce, 1998; Fortmann & Bruce, 1988). Wildlife usually are viewed as a fugitive resource not subject to ownership, thus it is one’s formal relationship to the land over which animals travel that becomes consequential.

^{xxxvi} Countries with large nature tourism sectors—such as South Africa, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe—have a mixed record on democratization.

^{xxxvii} South Africa adopted neoliberal economic policies in 1996 with the adoption of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (See Fairfield, 2002; Habib & Padayachee, 2000).

^{xxxviii} In South Africa, most state and provincial parks have not been financially self supporting. The profits from Kruger helped to subsidize other parks, as did state funds. Throughout Africa, state subsidies for protected areas often have been severely inadequate.

TABLES

Table 1: The Distribution of Property Rights to the Pafuri Triangle

Right	Possessor	Restrictions
Alienation	Makuleke CPA can sell, alienate, or encumber the land.	SANP has pre-emptive rights; must be notified of intent to sell & has first right of refusal
Access	The Makuleke CPA and community members are entitled to access	Subject to JMB policy
Residence	-	Not allowed, unless consistent with conservation
Agriculture	-	Not allowed
Land use	Makuleke CPA	Solely for conservation and associated commercial activities
Use of Natural Resources	Makuleke CPA may use sand, stone, etc. for building and other approved activities	JMB to set policy
Building Rights	Makuleke CPA can create commercial facilities (e.g. lodges); research facility; museum; royal kraal	Must be consistent with conservation
Infrastructure	Makuleke CPA	SANP can use as necessary to continue conservation management
Subsurface Rights	State retains mineral resources; mining and prospecting is forbidden.	If state policy changes, State must offer rights to the CPA at a fair and reasonable price

JMB: Joint Management Board

Makuleke CPA: Makuleke Community Property Association

SANP: South African National Parks

Table 2: Revenue and Cost-Sharing Arrangement

Source	Actor
Gate Fees	SANParks receives; arrangement may be reconsidered
Direct Operational Management costs for Pafuri Region	SANParks will bear for 5 years; Makuleke CPA may contribute. CPA will pay up to 50% of costs subsequently, but required contribution may not exceed 50% of net profit, CPA may contribute additional funds
Commercial Revenue	Makuleke CPA receives income
Commercial Development Costs	Not specified in Agreement. The Makuleke CPA has secured funding from following sources: Department of Public Works; the Department of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology; Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism; Department of Labor; Maputo Corridor Company; CPPP?, GTZ Foundation; and the Ford Foundation, inter alia

FIGURES

Figure 1: Protected areas in contemporary South Africa

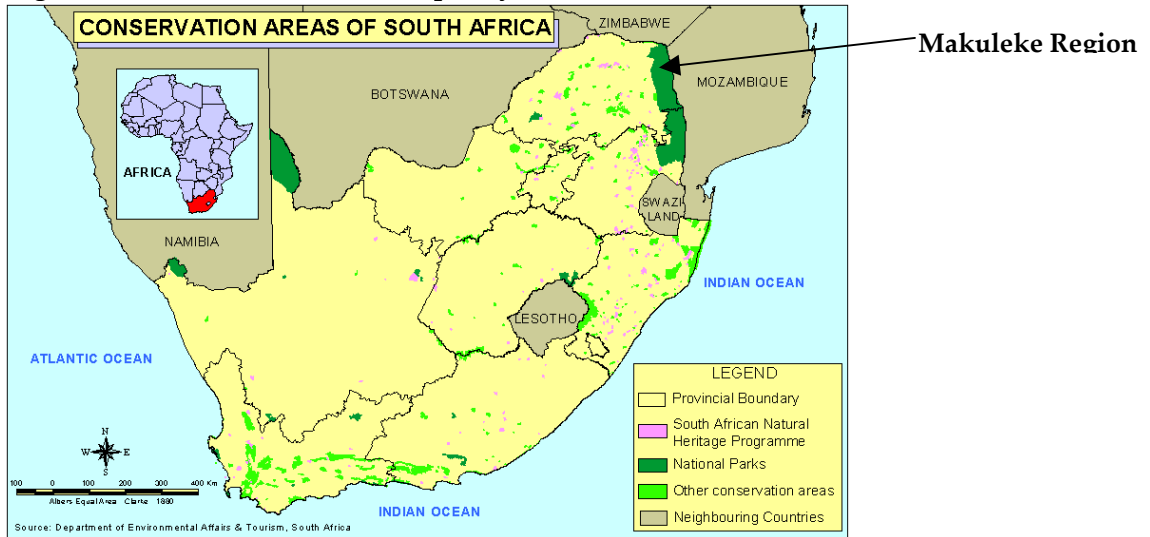
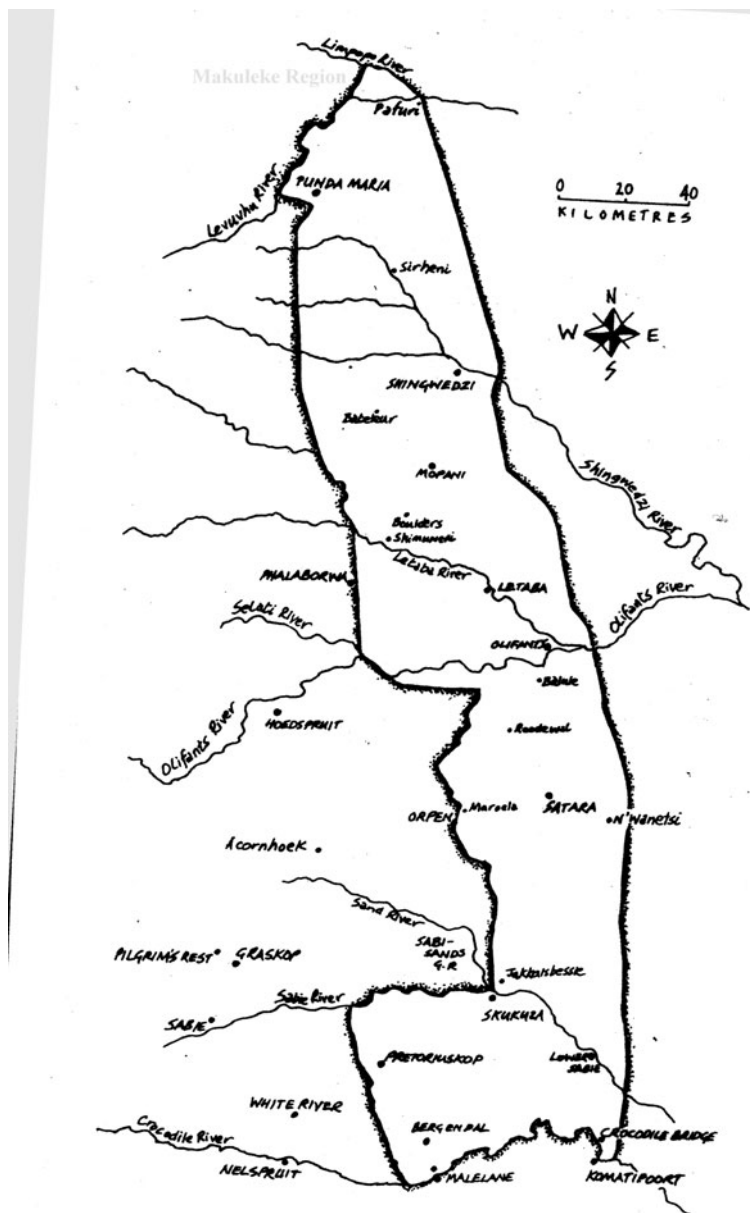


Figure 2: Makuleke Region in Kruger Park



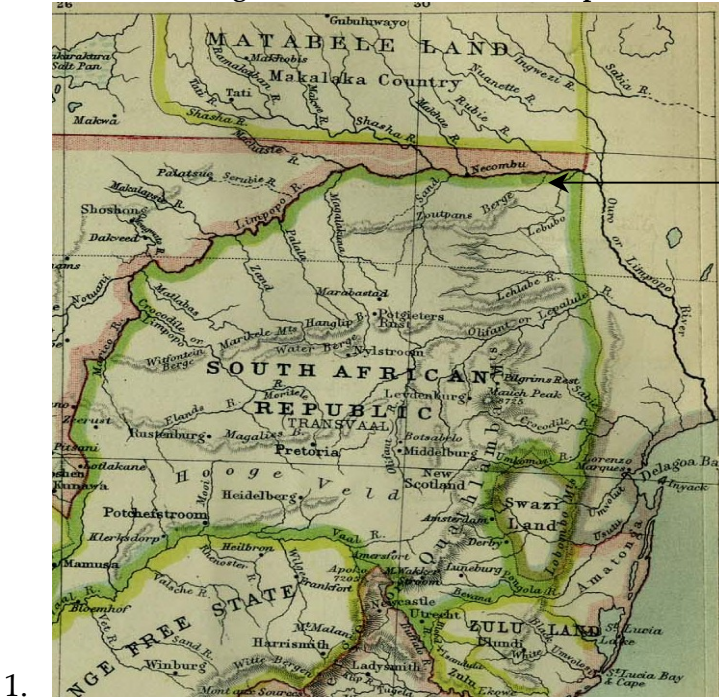
Kruger National Park, 1995

Source: Carruthers (1995:102)

Figure 3: Southern Africa in 1885



Figure 4: Makuleke Region in the South African Republic, 1885



Makuleke Region

Figure 5: The Makuleke Region (Pafuri Triangle)

Letters A-G indicate the circumference of land claim. All of this area was once occupied by the Makuleke, but Makuleke residence was gradually limited to the small location indicated on the map.

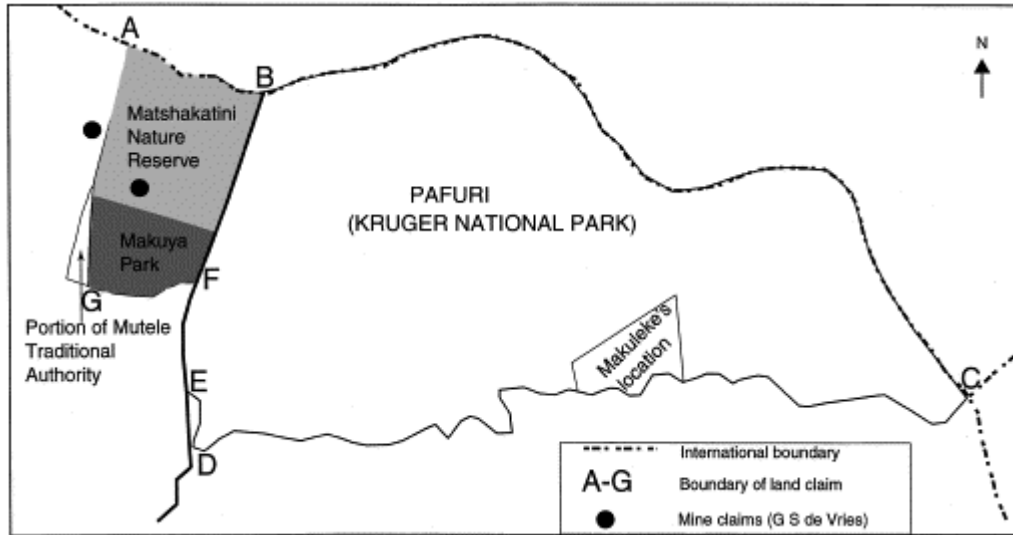


Figure 6: Ntlaveni

The Makuleke were removed to to the small location indicated on the map.

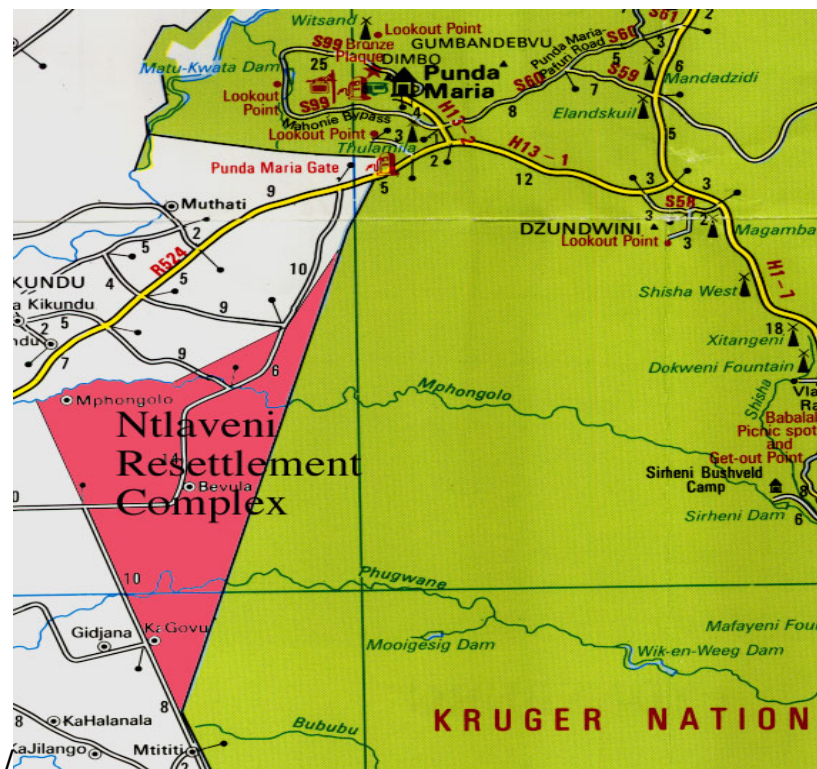
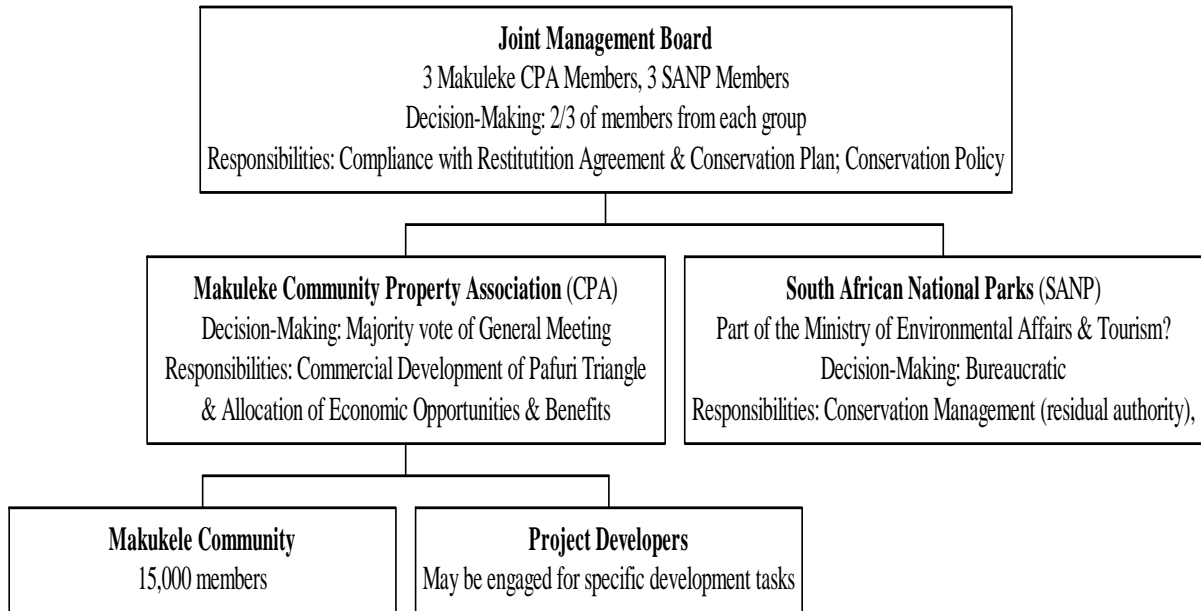


Figure 7: Co-Management Arrangement established in Land Restitution Agreement

Pafuri Triangle Co-Management Arrangement



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