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Waking up from the dream: The pitfalls of 'fast-track' development on the Wild Coast of South Africa

Themabela Kepe

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Waking up from the dream: The pitfalls of 'fast-track' development on the Wild Coast

Thembele Kepe



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Thembela Kepe
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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

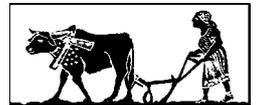
The main aim of this study was to explore the issues involved in reconciling the policy objectives of land reform, environmental conservation and the private sector profit-oriented rural development initiative in post-apartheid South Africa. Rather than examining the conceptual framework of the projects being implemented, the study attempts to reveal shortcomings in the processes of development. The research was conducted in close collaboration with relevant departments, agencies and individuals driving processes of change in the area under consideration, although the 'independent' nature of the work was not compromised.

The original objective was to analyse synergies and tensions between land tenure reform and the Wild Coast Spatial Development Initiative (SDI), as well as the impact of these two programmes on the environment of the Wild Coast area. However, due to the delays in the implementation of these two programmes, this was modified. The objective became to:

- explore the government's attempt to resolve land claims in the areas targeted for development
- analyse the process of SDI 'implementation' and land reform (for example, conflict resolution, consultation, inter-departmental co-ordination and so on)
- explore struggles around defining a 'community' of beneficiaries for the SDI and land reform in project areas
- analyse different views on how the Wild Coast environment can contribute to development
- explore the potential impact of the land reform programme and the Wild Coast SDI on rural livelihoods.

Research approach

This study was carried out over three-year period – from December 1997 to December 2000 – using a combination of both primary and secondary data collection and analysis in three case study sites: Magwa, Port St Johns and Mkambati, in the Eastern Cape Wild Coast region. Initially, a substantial review of available documentation on the Wild Coast and former Transkei area was conducted, examining work on issues such as past and present rural livelihoods; state involvement in rural economic development; and environmental policies and politics spanning most of the twentieth century. Research studies conducted during the 1990s in different parts of the Wild Coast were particularly valuable. An analysis of social and ecological dynamics of rural livelihoods in the Mkambati area conducted in 1996 and 1997 (Kepe 1997a) provided useful background material. Similar studies, conducted elsewhere on the coast, were also utilised (for example, Terblanche & Kraai



1996; Manona & Manona 1997; Palmer et al. 1997). Commissioned planning reports for the SDI project were also important. National and provincial policy documents on land and the environment, amongst other subjects, also provided useful insights.

Secondly, relevant workshops and group meetings were attended. These included meetings about land rights issues in areas targeted for economic development under the Wild Coast SDI, conflict mediation workshops, information sessions on the Wild Coast SDI, forestry *indabas* and different committee meetings in case study areas. The researcher was invited to attend most of these meetings by the organisers, presumably because of their knowledge about the ongoing research. In some cases the researcher was invited – in the capacity of resource person – to take part in the discussions, and share preliminary research findings. But in most cases a request to attend was made before the meeting. It is necessary to mention that on at least two occasions some of the participants did not welcome the researcher's presence. In both cases the other participants insisted that the researcher should stay. The researcher was able to learn much about conflicts within the SDI anchor project areas through such meetings (see Chapter 5 for more detail).

Thirdly, semi-structured interviews with key informants within local communities, community-based organisations (CBOs), non-government organisations (NGOs) and government departments were conducted. At local level such interviews were useful for exploring issues such as livelihood problems, perceptions about the SDI, and land reform. At the organisational and departmental levels, the interviews were used to gain information about the objectives of the organisation or department, including their role in improving the welfare of rural people.

Another component of the research approach was the observation of local livelihood activities, land reform and SDI processes. Lastly, informal discussions were held with other researchers who worked on similar issues on the Wild Coast

and elsewhere. On occasions collaborative research resulted in papers on common themes (for example, Manona & Kepe 1997a; Kepe et al. 1998; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; Wynberg & Kepe 1999).

Rationale for choice of case study areas

There are at least three reasons behind the choice of Magwa, Port St Johns and Mkambati as case study areas. Firstly, a case study area on the northern section of the Wild Coast was necessary as other projects were being undertaken on the southern section. In particular, a large team of researchers had descended upon Wavecrest to gather information that would either support or oppose dune mining by a private company. In Dwesa-Cwebe several studies had been going on from as early as 1995. Here the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER – based at Rhodes University), Village Planner (a consultancy company), as well as post-graduate students from Boston, Rhodes and Uppsala universities, conducted studies between 1995 and 2000. Some of this data informs sections of the study presented here. Between 1997 and 1999 detailed studies on the land issue within the SDI were conducted in the Coffee Bay/Tshezi area (see Ntsebeza 1999). It was therefore decided that, rather than duplicate work, the researcher's activity in these areas should be limited to accessing (wherever possible) the findings of existing studies.

Having settled on the northern section of the Wild Coast as the research focus, the next task was to decide on specific case study areas. The priority was to ensure that all case study areas had been identified as investment nodes within the Wild Coast SDI. Apart from being the only SDI anchor project areas other than Dwesa-Cwebe and Coffee Bay, the three chosen areas (Magwa, Port St Johns and Mkambati) each offered certain unique features to give some diversity.

In the case of Port St Johns, this is the only Wild Coast town with a municipality; it has long been a tourist destination;



several community development projects were initiated prior to the introduction of the SDI; and the area was home to state farms that had been targeted by the SDI. The Port St Johns SDI node also included Silaka Nature Reserve, where adjacent rural communities had a land claim and had continued hunting inside the reserve. Magwa had been chosen by the SDI team as a node for agriculture, and tea production was already in place. The SDI focus in Mkambati was on the Mkambati Nature Reserve, which is regarded as one of the most important protected areas in Southern Africa. For almost 80 years there had been tense conflict between local people and the managers of the reserve. In all three case study areas there were existing tensions over land rights.

Another, perhaps critical, factor in the choice of these three areas was the researcher's familiarity with them, having lived at Magwa Tea Estate for some time in 1996, and having spent almost a year in a village close to Mkambati Nature Reserve while conducting a study on livelihoods and environmental change.

Structure of the report

The report is divided into nine chapters. The background and policy context influencing the study is presented in Chapter 2. This contextual background focuses on policies that are relevant to the key ques-

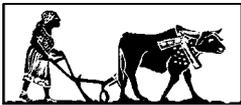
tions this study attempts to address, at national, provincial and local level. Issues addressed include policies on land, economic development, conservation and local government. Chapter 3 presents a discussion on the nature of rural livelihoods on the Wild Coast and uses the example of thatch material to illustrate the social and ecological dynamics of resource value to the livelihoods of different people. Environmental debates regarding land use and the contribution of the environment to economic development in the Wild Coast are discussed in Chapter 4. Specifically, the chapter explores propositions for reconciling sustainable environmental use, sustainable livelihoods and profit-making. The first part of Chapter 5 provides a brief background of the Wild Coast SDI and general debates that have emerged since its inception. A critique of the Wild Coast SDI implementation process, with particular focus on communication and conflict management strategies, is then provided. Chapters 6, 7 and 8, respectively, present detailed cases of land rights issues, livelihoods and perceptions of the impact of the SDI in Port St Johns, Magwa and Mkambati. These case studies form the core of the report from which the conclusions and summary (Chapter 9) are drawn, and an attempt made to outline implications for policy and research in South Africa.



Chapter Two: Environment, land and development: The policy context and background

Introduction

This chapter provides the background and context for the study. Broader policy issues which are key to rural livelihoods of people in the case study area are explored; a brief profile of the Eastern Cape province is provided in order to facilitate better understanding of livelihood dynamics in the case study areas; and the physical and socio-political background of the Wild Coast area is detailed.



Most of the information used in this chapter derives from secondary sources, including government policy documents, consultants' reports, academic research findings, media reports and promotional brochures. Personal observations made during the years of research in the case study area provide further insight.

Policy context

The four main policy thrusts of the post-apartheid government which have impacted on the dynamics of livelihoods in the Wild Coast area are economic development, land reform, environmental conservation and local government. In all these policy directions the overall objective has been to redress the race-based socio-economic injustices of the past.

Economic development

Elimination of rural poverty is arguably one of the most challenging tasks of the post-apartheid era. Just prior to the first all-race elections in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) released a policy framework document known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (ANC 1994). The RDP was seen as

a programme that addressed the needs of the poorest people of the country. Unfortunately, the RDP was a short-lived policy, its ideals conflicting with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) macro-economic strategy adopted in 1996. Gear emphasised private sector investment, with the state playing a 'facilitating' role. Among the many criticisms of Gear has been its concern to boost investor confidence, at the expense of integrating the main RDP objectives which included economic growth, employment and redistribution (Adelzadeh 1996). It is thus widely believed that Gear is unlikely to make inroads into solving rural poverty (Mather & Adelzadeh 1998; Blake 1998). Despite this critique – shared by the main labour unions – the government has persisted with the Gear strategy and related programmes.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) began promoting Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs), designed to target areas of the country which have both unrealised economic potential and great need for development (Jourdan 1998) in 1996 as an integral part of Gear. The Wild Coast SDI in the former Transkei, Eastern

Cape province, was officially launched by government which has widely publicised the interest that investors in ecotourism, forestry and agriculture are apparently showing in the SDI programme.¹ When the SDIs were first introduced it was envisaged that rural people from the disadvantaged areas would become the primary beneficiaries, through employment, partnerships with external investors, income from leasing their land and improvements in local and regional infrastructure. Thus far reviews of the SDI have been mixed and, to an extent, appear to reflect the political affiliation of those critiquing the programme.

Land reform

The main goal of land reform in South Africa is to redress the racially-based land dispossessions of the apartheid era and the resulting highly inequitable distribution of land ownership. More specifically it seeks to create security of land tenure for all and provide a basis for land-based economic development. The three main components of land reform are restitution, redistribution and tenure reform (Department of Land Affairs 1997).

Restitution policy aims to restore land or provide other forms of redress (alternative land or financial compensation) to those dispossessed of their rights to land through discriminatory legislation and practice since 1913, a primary objective being to promote both justice and reconciliation. The framework for the resolution of land claims is provided in the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 and subsequent amendments. Claims are investigated by the Commission for the Restitution of Land Rights, before they are submitted to the Land Claims Court for adjudication (Department of Land Affairs 1997). Amendments to the Act have made it possible to deal administratively with uncontested matters.

Through the redistribution programme the government aims to re-allocate land to the landless poor for residential and productive purposes. The government committed itself to provide settlement and land acquisition grants to eligible individuals

and groups in order to purchase land from willing sellers, including the state. Since mid-1999, when a new minister took over the land portfolio, there has been a policy rethink on redistribution; priority is now given to 'emerging' commercial farmers, arguably at the expense of the propertyless (Cliffe 2000). But it is hoped that the new focus will speed up the redistribution programme, which has not yet come close to achieving its original goals.

The tenure reform programme aims to address issues such as insecurity and overlapping and disputed land rights resulting from apartheid-era policies. Those most affected by these problems are in rural areas in the former bantustans, which under apartheid bore the brunt of land-related apartheid laws. In many of these areas the land is still nominally owned by the state and held in trust for the occupants. Most of the land is held 'communally', and is in many areas still under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities. A number of laws have been enacted to facilitate reform. Reforms relevant to former bantustans include the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act 31 of 1996 which protects people with insecure tenure from losing their rights and interests, pending future reforms, and the Communal Property Association Act 28 of 1996 which enables groups to acquire, hold and manage land through a group legal entity which operates under a written constitution.

The land reform programme has been an extremely challenging undertaking. In the almost five years since its inception it has achieved very few successes. Commentators have offered a range of differing explanations for the slow pace of land reform. Some argue that political will by government is lacking, translating into minimal resources being devoted to land reform (Cousins 2000; Hlatshwayo 2000). Others argue that there is a lack of strategic thinking on how land reform should relate to other reforms by government. More specifically it is unclear how land reform could improve the livelihoods of potential beneficiaries, especially those who live in rural areas (Du Toit 2000). But it is clear



that the potential for land reform to improve livelihoods does exist (Cousins 1999; Adams et al. 2000), and this should be a strong argument against delaying or slowing down the process. And, of course, land reform is enshrined in the country's Bill of Rights in the 1996 Constitution.

Biodiversity conservation

South Africa's Constitution not only provides for a right to land reform and equitable redress, but also to environmental protection. New policies and laws on environmental management, biodiversity, forestry and water also embrace the importance of environmental protection. Together they break radically with the past by bringing social justice, economic and development considerations into the environmental agenda. One of the most fundamental and problematic shifts in approach has undoubtedly been within the conservation sector. Traditionally the domain of natural scientists and wildlife enthusiasts, conservation has moved squarely into the socio-political arena concerned with human rights, access to natural resources, equity and environmental sustainability. Certainly this has not always been the case. Although South Africa has had impressive scientific achievements in conservation, these have been tied to the turbulent past. The vocabulary of the sustainable and equitable 'people and parks' relationship is now well established in South Africa, although it tends to focus more on income generation than it does on true co-management or resource tenure rights (Kepe et al. 2000a).

Rural local government

Rural local government has also been affected by the new policies of the post-apartheid government. The need for effective local government in these areas has been seen as key to the implementation of most programmes aimed at improving rural livelihoods. In 1995, a two-tier system of rural local government was established with district councils at regional level and transitional rural councils (TRCs) at local level. However, few policy makers thought that this development would cause as much controversy as it has.

With both democratic rule and traditional authorities in rural areas enshrined in the new Constitution, a fierce conflict has developed between the two. Traditional authorities are fiercely opposed to what they call 'erosion' of the powers they held under apartheid. These included being responsible for land allocation in communal areas and presiding over minor local conflicts. Income derived from the fines imposed in these cases, as well as other 'donations' from their subjects made the traditional authorities' position of power even more lucrative. Besides these responsibilities, they were the link between district magistrates and villagers.

This conflict between traditional authorities and elected representatives existed even before the new dispensation, when civic organisations such as Sanco (the South African National Civics Organisation) challenged the authority and legitimacy of chiefs and headmen during the late 1980s (Ntsebeza 1999). The period between 1995 and 2000 was characterised by confusion in rural areas, with both structures seeking to assert their authority and legitimacy. Proposals for the two institutions to work together in harmony have thus far not borne fruit. Ntsebeza (1999) argues that government failed to clarify the powers, functions and legitimacy of traditional authorities. This confusion and tension was again brought to life by government proposals to combine rural areas with nearby towns under single municipalities, a move, it was argued, intended to improve the process of service delivery to rural areas. However, the opposition, (that is, traditional authorities), received so much sympathy from government that they were able to endanger the second post-apartheid local government elections in December 2000 (*Daily Dispatch* 2000a). Government was forced to make concessions, which included increasing the traditional authorities' representation in local councils. Furthermore, it is rumoured that the government is considering changing the country's Constitution to enshrine an enduring role for traditional authorities. In view of the persisting fears around the role of traditional authorities,



population of more than six million, it covers an area of over 170 000km² and is the second largest province in the country. Nearly 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas and most of these live in the former Transkei and Ciskei. The province is divided into several district council jurisdictions, with the highest density of population generally falling within the Wild Coast and the former Transkei areas. The Eastern Cape is the poorest province in the country, and is home to most of the poorest districts in the country, the majority of these in the former Transkei. The provincial unemployment rate is close to 50 per cent (Ainslie et al. 1997).

Table 1: Ranking of household infrastructure

Province	Household infrastructure rank
Eastern Cape	9.0
Free State	4.5
Gauteng	1.5
KwaZulu-Natal	4.5
Mpumalanga	6.0
Northern Cape	3.0
Northern Cape	7.5
North West	7.5
Western Cape	1.5

Source: Statistics South Africa (2000)

The rural areas of the province are the worst hit by inadequate infrastructure. Roads, electricity, telecommunications and health are some of the key services where major work still needs to be done. According to Statistics South Africa (2000), the Eastern Cape is ranked as the province most in need of basic infrastructure and services (see Table 1).

Provincial Rural Development Framework

Until October 2000 the Eastern Cape government did not have a clearly defined rural development framework. Nor is there a published document outlining the national rural development framework.

However, a mere draft discussion document entitled *The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy* (ISRDS) exists, which builds on Cabinet Memorandum no. 18 of 2000 entitled *A strategic approach to rural development: An Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy* (ISRDS). This national strategy focuses on co-ordinating existing departmental initiatives and programmes to achieve greater impact in rural areas by the year 2010.

In early October, representatives of the Eastern Cape provincial government, labour, business and non-government organisations met at the University of Transkei in Umtata for a two-day Rural Development Summit. They jointly declared a commitment to co-operate in fast-tracking rural development in the province (*Daily Dispatch* 2000b). A background paper that was prepared for the summit served as a draft provincial Rural Development Framework (Ecsecc 2000). The country's Constitution, the RDP and Gear provide the broad parameters within which this framework was formulated. Section 27 of the Constitution – which guarantees all citizens the right to goods and services such as health care, water, food and social security – is regarded as one of the key principles for rural development. While the framework endorses the Gear strategy it, perhaps uncharacteristically for a government document, notes Gear's limited success in meeting its objectives of creating 'sufficient jobs for all work seekers' and in redistributing income and opportunities in favour of the poor (Ecsecc 2000:13). It also highlights the importance of the country's many other policy frameworks (for example, land reform) to rural development, but notes their shortcomings in the province.

The framework document also makes a call for an integrated rural development strategy. In evaluating current policies and programmes intended to serve the needs of the rural poor, the Rural Development Framework document highlights the province's failure to properly co-ordinate rural development efforts. It argues that



current efforts 'remain fragmented and partial' (Ecsecc 2000:23). In its conclusion the document calls for a reorientation of policy and planning in favour of rural areas, while at the same time building institutional capacity of rural local government to facilitate delivery.

The next section focuses on the bio-physical and social aspects of the Wild Coast area. This includes brief descriptions of climate, vegetation, as well as the general land issues pertaining to the former Transkei and the Wild Coast.

Overview of the Wild Coast

The Wild Coast covers a coastline area of about 300km between the Great Kei River in the south and the Umtamvuna River in the north and was formerly part of the Transkei bantustan (since 1994 re-incorporated into the Eastern Cape). Ironically, given that the area is characterised by poorly developed infrastructure and acute poverty, the Wild Coast has been widely regarded as an area of great 'unspoilt' or 'undisturbed' natural beauty since the late 19th century (Schmidt & Doonan 1997). Features of attraction include its rare vegetation with many endemic species and its rugged, rocky shores with violent waves reaching to heights of up to ten metres.

Climate

In general, the Wild Coast has a warm, temperate and humid climate, with minimal temperature fluctuations. Compared to the rest of the province, this coastal area experiences a relatively high rainfall with an annual mean exceeding 1 000mm and reaching 1 200mm in places. A minimum of 50mm is expected every month of the year. More than 50 per cent of the rainfall occurs in spring and summer, between October and March, with the latter month experiencing the highest average. The low rainfall period is between July and August. Rain fronts which last for a number of days are characteristic of the Wild Coast (Nicolson 1993), and records from Mkambati Hospital/Nature Reserve show that a maximum of about 150 rainy days can be expected. Thunderstorms are common, especially in early spring.

Temperatures are moderate with both day-night and seasonal fluctuations being small. The mean annual temperature is about 20°C, with seasonal highest means of up to 23°C and lowest daily means of about 16°C close to the coast. Cool night temperatures are experienced at higher altitudes away from the coastline (Van Wyk 1994). The area is generally hail and frost-free.

To the south of Port St Johns the soils that are underlain by Beaufort and Ecca beds are generally weak and shallow. Those further east and closest to the coast, particularly in the Lusikisiki area, are underlain by Natal Group sandstone and are consequently sandy, highly leached and relatively shallow. In general these soils are not suitable for intensive agriculture (Nicolson et al. 1996a). Further from the coastline, patches of rich clay soils of Dwayka origin are common (Feely 1987).

Vegetation

Amongst other things, the Wild Coast is known for its unique floral endowments. This vegetation can be broadly divided into forest and open grassland, although many different types occur (Nicolson et al. 1996a). Cawe (1992) contends that about three-quarters of the indigenous forests of the former Transkei occur on the Wild Coast. According to Cooper and Swart (1992) the Indian Ocean Coastal Belt Forest which is characteristic of the Wild Coast can be sub-divided into six different types ie. (i) dune forest, (ii) swamp forest, (iii) Pondoland Coast forest, (iv) South Coast forest, (v) coast scarp forest and (vi) mangrove communities.

Most of the Pondoland Coast forest, especially that which is found between Port St Johns in the south and Mtamvuna River in the north, fall within the Pondoland centre of endemism (Van Wyk 1994). Patches of subtropical, evergreen forests in the major river gorges, including endemic plant species, dominate these. The South Coast forest, which occurs mainly between Umngazi River and the Kei Mouth, is not as rich in species diversity as the Pondoland Coastal forest. The largest sections of this type occur within the Dwesa Nature Reserve and in Manubi.



Dune forests are less common along the coast, but where there are suitable sand dunes, they form a narrow band adjacent to the coast. Similarly, swamp forest only occurs in small patches within Mkambati Nature Reserve and its vicinity to the south and it represents the southernmost occurrence of this type in Southern Africa. The coast scarp forest is a transitional type between coastal and afro-montane, while the mangrove communities on the Wild Coast represent the largest stands of this type found anywhere in Southern Africa.

The grasslands along the Wild Coast are largely influenced by edaphic factors, particularly where the shoreline is rocky (Nicolson et al. 1996a). To the north of Port St Johns these grasslands are extensive, sometimes covering as much as 80 per cent of the coastal vegetation and are particularly vigorous. In this part of the coast, these grasslands coincide with the Pondoland centre of endemism and are considered the densest in Southern Africa (Van Wyk 1994). In most of the communal areas of Eastern Pondoland, the unpalatable *Aristida junciformis* has become a dominant species. But these grasslands are still floristically rich, containing a number of endemic/near-endemic species, including those used for medical purposes and in craft-making (Cooper 1991; Van Wyk 1994).



Land issues³

Early twentieth century colonialists divided the Transkei administrative areas along the coast into 'tribal' (administrative) and resort areas.⁴ The former were set aside for rural African occupation under the indirect rule of traditional authorities, while the resort areas were reserved for white residents of the Transkei.

In terms of the law, land in the administrative areas of the Wild Coast is nominally owned by the state and administered by tribal authorities as agents of the state. The only exception is the town of Port St Johns, which grants freehold titles to those who buy land. In terms of the 1936 Native Land Act, occupation of land was based on a permission to occupy (PTO) system. While the PTO guaranteed permanent

occupation, the government could forcibly remove the holder, as it became the case during the implementation rehabilitation scheme (betterment planning) from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, or when projects such as nature reserves and tea plantations were introduced. Thus rural people who live in these communal areas currently have informal rights to the land. Since 1996 these people's informal rights have been protected on paper by the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act. According to this Act, occupants of the land cannot be removed from the land they occupy without their freely-given consent. In the meantime government plans to transfer this land to its rightful owners, while at the same time creating frameworks to make people's rights legally enforceable. This is the aim of the government's tenure reform programme as stated in the White Paper on South African Land Reform (Department of Land Affairs 1997).

Tenure reform has not yet been implemented in most of the former Transkei and this has resulted in many uncertainties and the unfair treatment of the rural poor. Traditional authorities are still charging villagers between R30 and R40 for new sites, although in some instances the rates are higher. Villagers needing extra land can 'buy' it by paying cash or in kind to the chief or headman of the area in question. When these transactions take place, there is never any written record retained by the buyer. Women remain the most discriminated-against group in terms of site allocation.

In addition, many wealthy individuals, mostly white, continued to build cottages illegally, even though a moratorium on this activity had been in place for some time. Corrupt chiefs and headmen accepted anything from a bottle of brandy to a few hundred rands each to allow a person to build a cottage by the coast. In the late 1990s the seaside cottages and hotels on the Wild Coast came under the scrutiny of the Heath special investigating unit.⁵ According to reports, the occupants of the illegal cottages found a series of legal loopholes which impacted adversely on

efforts to remove them (*Kokstad Advertiser* 2000). By the middle of 2000, the provincial Department of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism had taken over the fight. This resulted in conservation officials, backed by the army and police, arresting many of the illegal occupants (*Mercury* 2000). In a media statement, the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism revealed that, by 14 December 2000, legal action had been taken against 20 illegal cottage owners.⁶

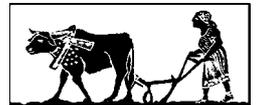
The delays in the implementation of tenure reform have also posed problems for investors in the area. Investments targeting land in communal areas are currently complicated by the tenure status of this land. Rural people are not in a position to negotiate with investors, as they do not legally own the land. In the meantime, it is proposed that the Minister of Land Affairs enter into negotiations with investors on behalf of the rural people. It is envisaged that once land is transferred to them, they will inherit whatever the Minister negotiated. With conflict over land characterising rural life in the Wild Coast area, it is unlikely that negotiations by a third party (government) will satisfy all the interested parties.

The delays in the implementation of tenure reform and the battle with illegal cottage owners are not the only land-related problems affecting development in the Wild Coast. Commissioned studies revealed that by the end of 1997 there were over 65 land claims in the Wild Coast area, which the Eastern Cape Land Claims Commission was struggling to deal with (Webb 1997). A significant number of these are in areas targeted for investment under the SDI programme. These are at different stages of resolution, with the Dwesa/Cwebe claim being the only one to date to have achieved some level of success. Others which have been treated with less urgency by the Land Claims Commission, Department of Land Affairs and the SDI include those by the Khanyayo for Mkambati Nature Reserve and Tracor⁷ land; Caguba for Mt Thesiger; Sicambeni village for sections of Silaka Nature Reserve, and Lambasi for sections of Magwa

Tea Estate. While it was clear from as early as 1996 that many claims exist in this area, the SDI went ahead with its implementation plans, thereby increasing tension between government, local people and potential investors. Because of the SDI's promises, or intimidation by factions, some individuals or groups never lodged claims for pieces of land they believed were rightfully theirs. This is significant in view of the slow progress of the Wild Coast SDI because many of these communities still maintain rights to the lands in question, but had agreed not to lodge claims because of promises made and the hope of alternative wealth through the SDI.

Land reform and rural development in communal areas of the Transkei, including the Wild Coast, also has to be understood in the context of betterment planning which took place in the area for almost three decades. Betterment planning was introduced in the bantustans during the 1950s, as a measure to control rangeland degradation in communal areas. It redefined land use patterns by dividing areas into residential, arable and grazing land (De Wet 1995). Rural people were negatively affected in many ways as they had to move to new residential sites and also received smaller fields, among other inconveniences. There was much resistance against betterment in the former Transkei and in some cases this even led to violence (see Harrison 1988; Mbeki 1984). In some of the areas that were affected by betterment planning, people are still sceptical of government interventions that have anything to do with land, especially in light of the fact that betterment was introduced as a development project that was meant to benefit people in future. The introduction of the SDI on the Wild Coast must thus be understood in that context.

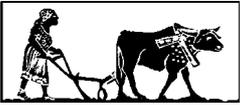
This chapter has focused on the relevant national policy frameworks, as well as an overview of issues pertaining to the Eastern Cape and the Wild Coast. These sections have highlighted the urgent need for development, as well as the resolution of land and local government issues. Yet neither of these issues can be fully appreciated without an understanding of rural



livelihoods on the Wild Coast, particularly the utilisation of natural resources. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 The Fish River SDI is also located in the Eastern Cape.
- 2 Most of the information used in this section is taken from Ecsecc (2000).
- 3 Parts of this section draw on work done with Lungisile Ntsebeza and Linda Pithers (Kepe et al. 2000b).
- 4 The only exception in this regard is Port St Johns which was established as a town with its own municipality.
- 5 A statutory commission established under the leadership of Judge Willem Heath to investigate corruption involving state assets and undertake civil legal action to recover lost assets. After a court ruled that a serving judge could not head such a unit, the law under which the unit was operating was changed to permit someone other than a judge to be the head, and Heath seemed to be on the way out.
- 6 <http://www.environment.gov.za/speeches/2000/14dec2000.htm>
- 7 Transkei Agricultural Corporation, a now-defunct agricultural parastatal.



Chapter Three: Rural livelihoods on the Wild Coast

Introduction

Chambers and Conway (1992) suggest that a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for means of living, and that rural people's livelihoods are diverse and complex. This diversity and complexity extends to the rights and claims to natural resources that people make use of in securing those livelihoods; resource tenure is thus also highly differentiated.

In the Wild Coast, as elsewhere, different households combine livelihood sources along distinct lines of social difference including wealth, age, health status, location and so forth. They generate their livelihoods through variable combinations of arable and livestock farming, the collection of a range of natural resources, and various off-farm sources, including remittances and pensions. These variables help to identify a variety of livelihood 'clusters'.

Kepe (1997a) identified several clusters of livelihood sources in the Mkambati area, grouped around activities which are supplementary to those considered as basic by the majority of local people. Most livelihood sources within these clusters are consistent with those observed elsewhere in the Wild Coast and other parts of the former Transkei (see IMDS 1986; Heron 1991; Hendricks 1991; Fen & Smart 1997; Palmer et al. 1997). Fuel wood collection, the use of water resources, the collection of thatch grass for domestic purposes and subsistence agriculture tend to be present in all clusters. Building outward from these basic activities, the inclination of most households is to seek various opportunities for cash income.

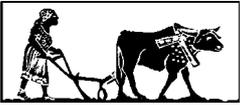
In the first cluster, the livelihoods of households are centred on migrant remittances, state welfare grants or pensions, and agriculture. Elderly people who receive old-age pensions or remittances from their children head most of these households. Cash received from these sources allows households the opportunity to practice a form of agriculture which is slightly above subsistence level. The last two decades has, however, seen a significant decline in the amount of cash reaching the villages from remittances. This can be attributed to a number of factors, such as massive losses of jobs due to economic sanctions against South Africa and politically-related strikes in the 1980s (Donaldson 1992), increasing urbanisation as a result of the abolition of influx control laws in the mid-1980s, and most recently losses of jobs due to the restructuring of parastatals and retrenchments in the mining industry.

In the second cluster, the main focus is on commuter employment combined with other activities, but time away from home limits crop and livestock production, unless there is a very strong kinship assistance network. Commuter employment is more important to people who live in the



vicinity of towns or government institutions (for example, conservation areas, hospitals and schools). A third important cluster is focused around skilled labour and self-employment. Most households associated with this cluster are headed by males who gained skills such as building while they were migrant workers. Ploughing other people's fields for cash is another major activity in this cluster. When jobs within the village are scarce, some of the people associated with this cluster may become involved in other income-generating activities such as fishing and hunting.

A fourth cluster that is fast gaining prominence, particularly for female-headed households, is beer brewing and small grocery sales. Beer brewing in particular has a long history in the area, as it is often associated with numerous ancient ritual activities. Many households, often the poorest, are found within a fifth cluster with piece jobs and kin dependency as the main livelihood sources. Most of the households in this cluster are headed by widowed or unmarried women, who do jobs like weeding, house cleaning, baby-sitting and so forth for cash or food, and also depend on support from kin.



A sixth livelihood cluster of increasing significance for the rural poor who live in high rainfall areas along the coast, particularly women, is centred on plant material trade including medicinal plants, thatch grass, fuel wood and baskets made from sedges. People in this cluster are generally involved in the trade of all products mentioned above. In certain localities, the sale of seaweed tends to be more popular than the sale of medicinal plants. Availability of the plant material, as well as the accessibility of markets, determines the intensity of the harvest. People living close to nature reserves, indigenous forests and the coastline tend to dominate this cluster.

The women found in livelihood cluster five and six share certain similarities: they are usually *de facto* heads of their households for various reasons, and tend to be stronger, more active and to have young children. What marks out the women in cluster six is the fact that they are willing or well positioned to travel to distant

markets. For most of these women, the heavy labour and time demands of their trade increase the burden imposed by their other domestic duties, which usually includes cultivation and collection of fuel wood and water.

It is clear that rural livelihoods are diverse and complex and that this applies to households of varying income levels. For wealthier households, diversity is key to remaining wealthy, although less wealthy households tend to diversify more. Time and energy invested in crop and livestock production is highly variable and is crucially influenced by the wealth status of the household, with the wealthier households cultivating larger fields than others. Commercial agriculture is, nevertheless, limited as a main source of livelihood.

Access to cash income from wage labour and pensions is also important, although most poor households do not have access to these sources of cash income. Wealthy households, on the other hand, usually have access to wage income and pensions or have had access to these in the past whilst they were building up their current asset base.

Understanding the nature of these rural livelihoods, particularly those based in local natural resources, is crucial for those seeking to improve the welfare of rural people in South Africa. Both policy makers and implementers often poorly understand the complexity and diversity of natural resource-based livelihoods. The next section presents the case of thatch material as one of the key livelihood sources in Mkambati area. The case attempts to show that in order to understand the value of a resource to people in an area, an understanding of the livelihood context, the ecological and social dynamics is crucial.

The case of thatch material

Introduction

Thatch material is an important resource for poorer people who live in rural areas of South Africa. Firstly, it is used extensively in building the dwelling huts (*izindlu zokuhlala*) used as kitchens and bedrooms. Secondly, thatched huts are also built to

keep livestock (sheep, goats and fowls) at night or during bad weather conditions. These livestock huts (*izindlu zemfuyo*) are built with the same material as that used for dwelling huts, but less care is taken in relation to certain features (for example, there are no proper windows). More often than not a livestock hut is a disused dwelling hut. Thirdly, the store-hut (*uvimba* or *inyango* or *ikoyi*) is used to store maize that has already been shelled. Like the livestock hut, *uvimba* often starts off as a dwelling hut. Even people who are not poor usually build at least one hut as they argue it connects them to their roots.

All the surveyed households in the Mkambati area had at least one thatched hut in their homestead, while almost half (49 per cent) of the households did not have any form of roofing other than thatch. The most popular thatch material used in the area are the two grasses *Cymbopogon validus* (*Umqungu*) and *Aristida junciformis* (*Inkonkoni*). Certain sedges are also used.

The best thatch grass, *C. validus*, is very scarce in the villages. It is mostly found inside the Mkambati Nature Reserve and Tracor state farm, or in protected patches in the villages. In general the grass is very patchily distributed, growing largely on heavier soils or in areas with previous disturbance (for example, settlement sites, termite mounds and old fields). *A. junciformis*, on the other hand, is abundant in the villages, the only problem being that livestock owners seek to destroy it, as it is unpalatable when mature.

Thatch material collectors are able-bodied women from the village, including those who collect for personal use; those who collect for sale; and those who collect for others (as hired labourers). Men become involved in grass collection and trade only when they have planted *C. validus* to sell to other people.

Resource tenure of thatch material⁸

Since thatch material grows in sites under three different land tenure regimes (private, common property, and state land), individuals use different strategies or arrangements to gain access to it. Thus

thatch material growing in people's gardens or protected by individuals is regarded as private. People can access these resources through buying, *ukucela* (to ask for) and receiving a donation from the owner as a result of being related to him or her (kin or friend). If one has to buy it, one *isithungu* (head load) of about 10kg costs R8.50.⁹ It is important to note that this price is much higher than the R1.10 (in 1998) quoted for Bushbuckridge area by Shackleton and Shackleton (2000). This difference in price may be an indication of the degree to which thatch has been commercialised, as well as the cost involved in collecting it in Mkambati area.

With regard to areas which are held as common property by all villagers, people from within Mkambati area do not have to ask for permission to collect thatch material. While uncommon, outsiders who want to collect from Mkambati can only do so if they have an arrangement with a local person. Unlike resources such as wild edible leaves (*imifino*), civic and traditional leaders become involved in matters involving thatch material, especially when outsiders are involved. Following the death of the local chief (Ngxolo Makita) in 1997, Chief Mlindazwe of the Bumbantaba kingdom presided over discussions about the mourning rituals for Bumbantaba chiefs. During the funeral attended by hundreds of villagers, he gave many instructions including an instruction that 'for the next year all resources such as thatch grass and trees should ideally not leave the village. If any of these resources have to be taken away, say to your relatives who live in other villages, they must come to the chief's place to apologise. This they must do by bringing along R2.'

In the areas controlled by the state, villagers have to follow regulations laid down by the governing agencies. Payment of cash to the reserve or state farm manager for unlimited head loads of grass is formally required. However, theft of grass from these areas has been common for many decades. Some of this theft is politically motivated, as the villagers claim that the land belongs to them. They call this *ukujola* (legitimate stealing). The theft is



also motivated by poverty. Those who do not have the money to pay simply collect without asking.

Labour-related institutions of thatch collection

In all the environments where thatch material is collected, various local institutions are important for mobilising labour for its collection or transportation to the site where it will be used. Women take the sole responsibility for cutting thatch grass in the village, Mkambati and Tracor, while men may be occasionally involved in planting and protection of grass patches in the villages. Other people within the village, who are not able to collect thatch grass themselves, due to various disabilities, are able to call on their kinship linkages for collection labour. Elderly women, for instance, can send their daughters (whether married or not) to do the cutting for them. Trading and hiring arrangements are among the range of institutions that mediate access to thatch grass for those who cannot collect.

However, villagers who are much closer to a source of thatch material (for example, within the village) make use of other local institutions. *Amalima* (work parties) are organised by the host household, where the participants cut and carry the thatch material to the homestead before enjoying the beer or food that is provided. The provision of beer or food requires that the hosts should have some resources to be able to provide these. Those who are not in a position to provide the beer or food but still need help to collect thatch material, call on another institution – mutual aid or *ukuncedisana*. With *ukuncedisana*, a group of friends or neighbours rotate cutting for one another as a group. This institution, therefore, is most relevant when there is more than one social actor interested in thatch material.

Dynamics and interpretations of value of thatch material

Box 1 presents cases of five households who use thatch material as a livelihood source. The first thing to note about these households is that three of them have protected grass patches, while two do not.

The household of informant number one (case 1) does not have a protected patch because the head of the household is heavily involved in plant material trade. With her children in school and herself spending most of her days collecting and selling other plant species (for example, medicinal plants), the thatch material would not receive the protection it requires. Similarly, in household of informant number five (case 5) there is no labour available to protect a thatch patch as all children attend school and the widowed household head is too old to run around watching for fires and livestock. Both households did indicate, through interviews, however, that they would have preferred to have planted or protected thatch material, especially *C. validus*.

The second thing to note is that all the case study households in Box 1 have built at least one thatched hut over the last four years. Usually, one hut is all a household can afford to build in one year, mainly because of the scarcity of appropriate thatch material. The only exception in this case is household number 1 (case 1) where three huts were built in one year. The reason was that the homestead was moved from a damp area to the present location. However, collecting thatch material for three huts was a very difficult task. The household head had to collect the grass over a period of one year. Many other tasks were postponed or less time was devoted to them. This alone is an indication of the centrality of thatch material to the livelihoods of the poor. This action by household number one also further confirms the relevance of Maslow's theory of needs and motivation (Maslow 1970), which puts shelter as one of the most basic needs which people would seek to satisfy before many other needs.¹⁰

Thirdly, the average number of 10kg thatch bundles needed to build one hut with a diameter of at least 4.6m is 150. Most huts in the village are that size. However, depending on the needs and capability of different households, there are huts which require about 250 bundles to build (for example, case 2, Box 1). The huts built by this household had diameters



Box 1: Case studies: Value of thatch material

Case 1: Household of informant 1 (Mavumba)

- Planted or protected thatch material patches = **None**
- Thatched huts built over the last four years = **3**
- Thatched huts repaired over the last four years = **0**
- Trade in thatch material = **Yes**
- Most recent one-year's gross value from selling or using thatch
150 bundles/hut x3 @ R8.50 = R3 825

Case 2: Household of informant 2 (Nkubele)

- Planted or protected thatch material patches = **Yes (1 hectare planted)**
- Thatched huts built over the last four years = **2**
- Thatched huts repaired over the last four years = **0**
- Trade in thatch material = **Yes**
- Most recent one-year's gross value from selling or using thatch
250 bundles/hut x1 @R8.50 + rope @ R50 = R2 175

Case 3: Household of informant 3 (Machenge)

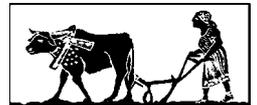
- Planted or protected thatch material patches = **Yes (protected)**
- Thatched huts built over the last four years = **2**
- Thatched huts repaired over the last four years = **0**
- Trade in thatch material = **No**
- Most recent one-year's gross value from selling or using thatch
150 bundles/hut x1 @8.50 = R1 275

Case 4: Household of informant 4 (Majola)

- Planted or protected thatch material patches = **Yes (protected)**
- Thatched huts built over the last four years = **1**
- Thatched huts repaired over the last four years = **1**
- Trade in thatch material = **No**
- Most recent one-year's gross value from selling or using thatch
150 bundles/hut x1 @R8.50 + 5 bundles/repair work x1 @R8.50 = R1 317.50

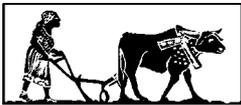
Case 5: Household of informant 5 (Kewu – Mathunzi)

- Planted or protected thatch material patches = **None**
- Thatched huts built over the last four years = **1**
- Thatched huts repaired over the last four years = **1**
- Trade in thatch material = **No**
- Most recent one-year's gross value from selling or using thatch
150 bundles/hut x1 @R8.50 + 10 bundles/repair work x1 @R8.50 = R1 360



of about 8m. This household built two of such huts, but at different times. Furthermore, this particular household could afford to build such big huts as they have a whole field planted to *C. validus*.

Fourthly, the price used to calculate gross income here is R8.50 per 10kg bundle. This is the price of *C. validus* when somebody buys it in the village. When bought in Mkambati Nature Reserve or Tracor, a bundle of *C. validus* costs R5. The discrepancy is due to the cost of transport. People who buy in Mkambati or Tracor have to organise their own transport to fetch the grass. When grass is bought in the village, the assumption is that the seller would have paid for transport to the village. If the grass was collected from the village, meaning there are no transport costs, the price remains R8.50, apparently as a charge for protecting the grass or forsaking growing other crops in the case of planted grass. A 7kg bundle of *Aristida junciformis* costs about R5 in the village. No extra charges for transport, labour or opportunity costs are added to the price, as *A. junciformis* is plentiful in the village and is never planted in gardens. If any thatch material is mixed with *C. validus*, which is a common practice, the maximum price is charged.



Lastly, some households widen the value they derive from thatch material as much as they can. For instance household number three (see case 2, Box 1) also makes and sells ropes made from *Digitaria eriantha*, used for tying the grass to the roofing poles. While many women know how to make these ropes, great skill is needed to ensure that they last as long as the thatch material put on the roof. The poorer the household, the more likely are they to develop more skills to utilise as much of the available resources as they can, compared to the relatively wealthier households.

In conclusion, thatch material is one of the few resources used by local people which spreads the benefit to a wide range of people. Collectors, owners of transport and skilled thatchers can benefit from the same batch of thatch material if the grass is collected from the state land. Even when the thatch material is collected from the

village area, people involved in work party arrangement benefit from the resource, even if it is through 'in kind' remuneration. A skilled thatcher charges R150 per average roof.

Lessons from the thatch material case study

This case study analysed data on the contribution of thatch material to the livelihoods of rural people living in Mkambati. Several plant species ranging from grasses to sedges and reeds were identified as being the most important thatch material and provided different benefits to different people. To some, they are important as a resource to build different structures, including dwelling huts, while to some, in addition to their importance in own thatching requirements, they also served as a source of cash income. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the future of thatch material in this area. But one thing is clear – unless there is a major shake-up in the country's economy and government policies on rural development, thatch material is likely to remain a key resource to the poorest of the poor for many years to come.

When this importance of thatch material is acknowledged by policy makers, the next step should be to ensure that resource (land and plants) tenure rights of the poor and the previously disadvantaged (for example, women) are secure.

Lastly, further research needs to consider all aspects of diversity of rural livelihoods. As this case study has shown, thatch material is not only limited to one or two popular grass species present in an area. A wide range of plant species does serve similar purposes. Too much focus on individual species could easily result in an inaccurate reflection of this diversity, in a way which could, in the long run, negatively affect rural livelihoods. Long-term interdisciplinary studies on rural livelihoods seem to be most important in this case.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that rural livelihoods in the Wild Coast area are complex

and diverse, and has presented an example of the use of thatch material to illustrate this diversity and complexity. Understanding the nature of rural livelihoods in the Wild Coast is necessary in order to analyse the impact of the SDI in the area. The question remains whether developments brought by the SDI will limit or enhance the scope of diversity in livelihood strategies.

This chapter has also highlighted the importance of certain vegetation to rural livelihoods, as well as how its use and perceptions of its value are socially differ-

entiated at local level. With the environment being widely declared as crucial for development on the Wild Coast, the next chapter will explore different notions about its potential contribution to economic development and rural livelihoods.

Notes

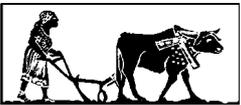
- 8 For references to Mkambati Nature Reserve and Tracor land see Chapter 8.
- 9 This price only applies to *Cymbopogon validus*.
- 10 With the exception of food.



Chapter Four: Debates on environment and land use on the Wild Coast

Introduction

In Chapter 2 the key policy thrusts of the post-apartheid government were discussed, revealing the government's aims of rectifying the damage caused by apartheid through the implementation of policies to improve the lives of previously disadvantaged people. These key policy aspects include economic development, land, environment and local governance. Chapter 2 also showed how rural people of the Eastern Cape are among the most disadvantaged in the country. The last chapter provided a detailed analysis of how people in rural areas make use of vegetation in their livelihood strategies, and illustrated that differing interpretations of the use-benefits of vegetation determine management practices. This chapter seeks to explore the range of (local and external) views on how the local environment should be used in order to contribute to livelihoods.



The Wild Coast is an area of deep contrasts. On the one hand it is characterised by extreme poverty with poor infrastructure, high levels of unemployment and very poor health care (see Anderson & Galt 1998; Donaldson 1992). At the same time, the area rates highly as an area of extremely rich biodiversity and has one of the most beautiful natural environments in Southern Africa (Briers et al. 1996). Some sectors within government have declared the environment of the Wild Coast as the region's most valuable economic resource (Nicolson et al. 1996a; CIMEC 1999). Both poverty and the natural environment in this area have become central to the development debates. Natural resources in particular are widely accepted as being a key contributor to the livelihoods of rural people. The natural environment is there-

fore a major tool in development efforts in the region; this is reflected in both current and proposed initiatives.

But views on how poverty and the environment interact on the Wild Coast differ widely. Some see the environment as the victim of extreme local poverty, while others see it as part of the solution to that poverty. Studies have also shown that views held by powerful people¹¹ about the condition and value of the environment are closely linked to the way in which those environments are managed (Leach & Mearns 1996; Hoben 1995). It is thus argued here that the projects being planned or implemented – involving direct or indirect utilisation of the environment – reflect the perspective of the powerful actors backing those processes. It is also important to note that in almost all projects

involving environmental management, irrespective of the view held by the different actors, people – including future generations – are regarded as potential beneficiaries in the long-term.

In practice, however, where the need to enhance livelihoods of previously disadvantaged rural people is urgent, differing views held by powerful people about the environment of the Wild Coast can easily translate into conflict between individuals, government departments or NGOs working in the area. Where these differences are irreconcilable, the end-result may be numerous unco-ordinated initiatives which may ultimately fail to achieve the objective of improving human welfare. The situation is exacerbated when conflicting views are either not acknowledged or are dismissed as unimportant: this often appears to be the situation in South Africa (see Kepe et al. 1998). The Wild Coast is a prime example of a situation where conflicting views about current and proposed management of the environment could have negative effects on development, especially in light of the prevailing lack of openness about the differences.

This chapter therefore seeks to examine an array of views held by different powerful people about the Wild Coast environment, and aims to consider the range of perceptions of value and propositions for suitable land use of the Wild Coast and the ultimate benefits accruing to the people of the region flowing from these various discourses. Current and proposed projects on ecotourism, agriculture, forestry and community-based wildlife management are examined in an effort to draw out both the positive and negative aspects of each of the dominant discourses, especially with regard to the livelihoods of rural people in the Wild Coast.

The chapter begins with a review of the debate on the origins, condition and value of the Wild Coast's grassland vegetation. Grasslands, which account for over 60 per cent of the Wild Coast vegetation (Cooper 1991), have been the subject of intense controversy over the last hundred years or so. Discussion around the history and significance of grasslands is followed by

an examination of current debates on the dominant views about the best land use for this environment. Lessons for policy are discussed under conclusions.

The Wild Coast grasslands debate

'Pure' or 'false' coastal grasslands?

Scientists have offered different explanations for the abundance of grassland vegetation in a coastal area where the climate favours extensive forest. Some commentators regard these grasslands to be secondary, with the forest patches being relics of a former extensive forest (Acocks 1953; Tainton 1981; White 1983). This view is largely based on the reigning successional model (Clements 1916) which views the climax (for example, a forest) as the highest expression of vegetation in a climatic region (Ellery & Mentis 1992). Thus, according to Acocks (1953) the Wild Coast climate with fairly warm winters would be dominated by forest, had the forest not been plundered by both African and European farmers over the last 600 years. There is, however, extensive archaeological evidence to show that the coastal grasslands have been in existence for at least 10 000 years (Feely 1987; McKenzie 1984; Ellery & Mentis 1992). This recent evidence further reveals that these grasslands are edaphic, possibly related to the well-developed and unbroken B-horizon (the layer immediately below the top soil) in most of the coastal belt (Feely 1987). In other words, contrary to Acock's view, these are not 'false' grasslands.

Other evidence contradicting the idea that these grasslands are of anthropogenic origin comes from early accounts of people who visited the area. For instance the description of the landscape given by Perestrello (1554), a shipwreck survivor who trekked across the area in that year, highlights the prominence of grassland vegetation rather than forest. This leaves an impression of a rather patchy distribution of woody vegetation. Much later, other travellers passing through the coast of eastern Pondoland commented on the grasslands and their use. For example,



Sampson wrote in 1882:

Before us, and as far as the eye could see, lay a vast panorama of undulating grassland, delicately wreathed with low lying mist and dotted irregularly with dark patches of forest. It was a fair scene, and made one dream of the day when it will be enhanced by the presence of many white, and many waving cornfields (Sampson 1882:105).

Recent studies also suggest that the coastal forests have never been more substantial than they are at present (for example, Shackleton et al. 1991; Nicolson et al. 1996a; Kepe & Scoones 1999). Acock's views may, however, still influence policy-makers and scholars.

Condition of the coastal grasslands

According to Shackleton (1993) there is a persistent general perception that communal grasslands in the former bantustans of South Africa are overstocked and thus degraded beyond recovery. This view persists in spite of a scarcity of empirical data drawn from study of communal grasslands. Unsurprisingly, the grasslands of the Wild Coast are also perceived as degraded. Back in the early part of the 20th century, alarm bells were sounded on the imminent danger of overstocking in the former Transkei. This argument is well phrased by Fred Kockott in his proposal for combating soil erosion in the area:

We know that it is characteristic of the Natives that they are happy-go-lucky; an admirable trait if not overdone. But what of this trait when it prevents them from stirring themselves and facing a danger? It is not like a man to allow danger to come openly upon him while he sits still and fails to protect himself. Now the main idea of my motion is that the Natives of these Territories should be aroused and made to realise the very real danger which is coming upon them, not slowly any longer, but in leaps and bounds. The position today is already grave, next year it will be worse.... Did anyone ever farm on a desert?... and yet that is

what their country is being turned into (cited in Pim 1933:78–9).

As Kockott's warnings were for the Transkei in general, it presumably included areas that are situated well inland and which are drier due to less rainfall. He did, however, have a special warning for the Wild Coast communal areas:

Some Natives who live in coastal districts and particularly those in Pondoland will regard all this as an alarm where no danger is. If they feel so secure let them look at some districts which are already faced with the problem but in which not many years ago the residents were no less confident of their safety, and then decide whether they can ignore the warning (cited in Pim 1933:79).

The introduction of betterment planning, a measure to control rangeland degradation in the coastal areas during the 1950s, was another testimony to the perception and concern that the communal grasslands were declining in quality due to mismanagement.¹² More recently, Van Wyk (1994:230), commenting on the state of grasslands within the Pondoland centre of endemism, argues that 'management practices of the rural population have degraded most of these grasslands, leading to a loss of floristic diversity and an increase in the unpalatable grass *Aristida junciformis*'. While acknowledging the coastal grasslands' better condition compared with that of the rest of the former Transkei, Briers et al. (1996) also express concern about them, especially if they are not urgently protected from the impact caused by rural residents of the area. Conclusions that can be drawn from these outside professional perceptions are that the poor state of these grasslands is having a negative impact on rural people living in communal areas due to depletion of a valuable grazing resource.

Outside professionals are not, however, alone in their view that coastal grasslands are degraded. Sections of the rural population, particularly livestock keepers, have expressed concern that unpalatable species are increasing in the communal areas. In eastern Pondoland, *Aristida junciformis*



and *Sporobolus africanus* are seen by many as the two most undesirable species. But the perceptions a range of other grassland users are also important. Users with interests other than grazing often have alternative views on the state of the grasslands. Those who collect thatch grass for trading purposes, for example, have no problem with the increase of *Aristida junciformis* in communal areas. Hence individuals or groups of people are purposefully engaged in the transformation of grasslands to sometimes opposing desired states (Kepe & Scoones 1999).

Views on the 'best' land use for the Wild Coast environment

Having argued that environmental management is primarily influenced by the views on its condition and value held by powerful social actors, the following section examines those views relating to the Wild Coast environment. Based on a review of policy documents, other secondary literature and personal interaction with people within and outside the Wild Coast, there appear to be four dominant views on how the coastal environment should be managed to the benefit of people. These are the 'conservation', 'profit-making', 'alternative', and 'local' views.¹³

The conservation view

The perceived threat to global biodiversity is largely responsible for the widespread view that nature conservation should be a key land use strategy in South Africa and beyond, if sustainable livelihoods are a goal. The main objective of this strategy is to conserve and protect the country's natural sites and other wildlife. The physical rural environment is protected in order to restore elements of it, as close as possible, to a previous preferred state or to prevent damage of unaltered portions in order to derive future benefits. There are two main approaches to conserving nature. The first is the 'hands off' approach (Ruijgrok et al. 1999), where it is argued that the best way to conserve nature is not to touch it; the natural restoration capacity of the ecosystems should prevail. The second approach is the American National

Park model, also known as the 'fences-and-fines' (Songorwa 1999) or the 'classical' approach. In this approach human intervention is considered necessary to protect the environment against threats from society (for example, through fencing, policing, pruning or culling). Protected area management using these two approaches can be found in many countries, including South Africa.

Following the Earth Summit in Brazil, and the ratification of the Biodiversity Convention, many less-industrialised countries are seeking to transform as much land as possible into strictly protected areas. South Africa is no exception, with almost a thousand protected areas in state and private land, covering over 6 per cent of the total land area. The first formal conservation areas were forest reserves, demarcated in terms of the Cape Forest Act of 1888 (Government of South Africa 1997). Since then a host of other environments and individual species have been afforded high conservation status.

In the former Transkei (formerly 'Transkeian Territories') the colonial government took the view that the indigenous forests 'suffered grievous injury at the hands of natives' and that 'extensive damage was also being caused by sawyers', and introduced tough conservation regulations (King 1938:7). Thus, following the passing of the Cape Forest Act 28 of 1888, a large number of indigenous forests were demarcated. Beside the almost 100 000ha of indigenous forests currently under protection in the former Transkei, almost 30 000ha of less important forests are designated as 'headmen's forests', where traditional local authorities in the villages have *de jure* control over them (Cooper & Swart 1992). In order to 'wean the natives from the (indigenous) forests', Conservator of Forests in the Transkeian Territories Caesar Henkel and his successor A Heywood introduced wattle plantations to meet rural wood requirements (King 1938:7).

Nature conservation in the Transkeian Territories was not, however, limited to forest protection only. Early demarcation of important forests included sections of



the communal grassland to provide grazing for government cattle used for working in the forest. The inclusion of communal grasslands in the demarcated forest areas was also to ensure land for future afforestation (King 1941). Later, wide grassland strips were demarcated along the perimeters of the forests to serve as buffer zones between rural people and the protected forests.

At present an array of plant and animal species (both terrestrial and aquatic) are afforded protection in nature and marine reserves along the Wild Coast. Of the former Transkei's 10 nature reserves, six are situated on the Wild Coast. These are Dwesa, Cwebe, Hluleka, Silaka, Mkambati and Mtamvuna nature reserves (Butchart 1989). In spite of there being so many nature reserves in a coastal stretch of only 300km, conservationists were not satisfied

with the extent of protection on the Wild Coast (see Box 2).

In spite of the existence of alternative proposals on land use in the Wild Coast (for example, the planting of exotic trees), conservation areas do not seem to be adversely affected. Instead they seem, ironically, to be enjoying continued protection under what appear to be inconsistencies in government policies and implementation. One such situation is the government's land reform programme, particularly the restitution component. Among the 65 land claims along the Wild Coast noted in 1997 (Webb 1997), three fall within important Wild Coast nature reserves (Dwesa-Cwebe, Mkambati and Silaka).¹⁴ But environmental protection, as well as land restitution, is enshrined in the country's Bill of Rights (Sections 24 and 25 respectively). Consequently land claims in

Box 2: Planning of a conservation area on the Wild Coast

A 1996 report written by some well-known proponents of nature conservation in the former Transkei (Briers et al. 1996) is probably the best representative of conservation narratives currently prevailing on the Wild Coast. The study on which the report was based was mainly to evaluate the conservation potential of the area and to select priority conservation areas. The area studied stretched from Umtamvuna River to just south of Umngazi River, approximately 18km south of Port St Johns on the Wild Coast. From the reasons and conclusions given for the selection of this area for the study, the concern of the Eastern Cape Nature Conservation and other proponents of conservation becomes clear. Some of their reasons and conclusions are listed below:

- The Wild Coast is poorly conserved.
- It includes a large portion of the Pondoland centre of endemism, which has an exceptionally high conservation value.
- The Pondoland coastal area has been negatively affected by subsistence grazing, sugar cane and exotic tree plantations and squatter settlements close to the Wild Coast Sun.
- A number of development agencies working in the area plan to change the land use of the area to satisfy short-term interests and that these initiatives are carried out without an integrated strategic plan.
- The area is the least densely populated of the former Transkei (thus there is potential to expand the land area under nature conservation).

The consequence of the study is a proposal for a continuous 60 000ha protected area, covering more than a third of the Wild Coast between Umngazi Estuary and Umtamvuna River. The size of the proposed park would represent a significant addition to the area currently under conservation.

Source: Briers et al. 1996



protected areas have presented the state with a dilemma. A recent study found that conservation officials were against any change in land use following a successful land claim (see Wynberg & Kepe 1999). Mkambati, Silaka and Dwesa/Cwebe nature reserves have all maintained their conservation status, following initial attempts by different social groupings to allow the incorporation of alternative land uses.

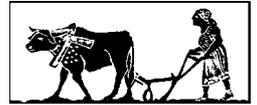
But how are conservation views sustained and supported over time on the Wild Coast? Firstly, the government, through its different state agencies and the individuals working within them, it puts its weight behind conservation through the development of relevant policies and legislation. The White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biological Diversity (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 1997) provides one example of the government's commitment to conservation. In addition to general policy issues discussed in the White Paper, an array of Acts regarding the management of protected areas were passed before and after the 1994 democratic elections.

Secondly, the influence on nature conservation efforts in any locality stretches far beyond its boundaries. A host of national and international NGOs provide both moral and material support to various conservation causes, including through research on and protection of certain species or landscapes. Within South Africa, the Wildlife and Environment Society (Formerly Wildlife Society of South Africa) is probably the best-known organisation. With membership drawn from both academic and non-academic fields, this organisation has for many years been a powerful voice for conservation through its many publications and other publicity channels. Internationally, organisations like the IUCN (the World Conservation Union), the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) are amongst the better-known conservation bodies. The IUCN's six protected area categories, which serve as a guideline in

many countries, are an illustration of the impact the international NGOs are having on particular local areas. In addition to these, there are a number of environmental campaigning organisations such as the Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, whose radical lobbying ranges from campaigning for the survival of certain species to opposing nuclear weapons testing. At a broader level, environmental conventions between countries under the auspices of organisations like the United Nations (UN) provide the most powerful ammunition to proponents of nature conservation.

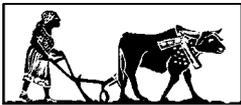
Thirdly, formal education contributes to individual awareness about nature conservation issues. From primary school to university, textbooks are laced with conservation narratives and are a reliable method of reproducing (often unchallenged) ideas about conservation. Fourthly, and probably the most important factor in support of the conservation discourse in South Africa, was the politics of race in South Africa (and other former colonies throughout the continent). Both colonial and apartheid policies with little regard for the welfare of African people, provided a vociferous protection of nature by forcibly removing many people from their ancestral lands (Carruthers 1993; Kepe 1999; Fabricius & De Wet 1999). On the Wild Coast, many rural residents were repeatedly fined for 'trespassing' in forest reserves throughout the 20th century. Most notable though was the violent crushing of revolts against betterment planning in Pondoland in 1960, all in the name of conserving the land. In north-eastern Pondoland, many were shot dead by government forces, while others were sentenced to death (Mbeki 1984). More recently, observers such as Wells (1996), have argued that most protected areas in South Africa are firmly associated with the former apartheid regime.

However, during the early 1990s after the unbanning of the liberation movements, conservation in South Africa became more vulnerable than ever before. The media and various pressure groups, such as the Group for Environmental



Monitoring (GEM), began to criticise and question the conservation approach that had existed for many decades. As a result of this pressure, conservation in South Africa is currently going through fundamental change, with a view to 'addressing the inequalities of the past'. It has become necessary for the conservation agencies to spell out precisely how the protected areas will benefit people, particularly those neighbouring the reserves. On the Wild Coast, like in the rest of the world where protected areas exist, there are many claims about how biodiversity contributes to human welfare in general, hence the need to protect it. These range from the maintenance of the hydrological cycle to the maintenance of genetic material from which crops, domestic animals, medicines and industrial products are developed, as well as acting as an important buffer against poverty (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 1997).

But since many of these benefits are not immediately and clearly visible to the majority of the rural poor, local support for conservation on the Wild Coast remains minimal. Illegal use of protected plant and animal species was commonplace throughout the twentieth century, and seemed to intensify during the 1990s (Kepe 1997a). Following a worldwide trend, protected area management on the Wild Coast is currently adopting an approach commonly known as community-based wildlife management (CWM). The argument behind this approach is that rural people have for too long been alienated from resources which they should rightfully have been controlling, managing and benefiting from (Songorwa 1999). The CWM approach therefore aims to reverse this pervasive alienation and to maximise benefits for local people from the sustainable utilisation of wildlife. The underlying assumption (and perhaps hope) is that people's attitudes towards biodiversity conservation will change. Whether this approach is succeeding in its goals is still an open question. Detailed critiques of this approach have been made and backed up with extensive research in many parts of Africa (for example, see Barret & Arcese



1995; Songorwa 1999). Experience has also shown that there are differing 'versions' of CWM, with protected area managers and at times policy-makers deciding which will prevail in a particular area. Such decisions are often based on the political situation at local, regional and national level. Hence some CWM programmes are limited to allowing villagers to harvest certain animal and plant species under management control (even though this can hardly be termed a community-controlled initiative). Some CWM programmes are more ambitious, with local people managing the resource area with the aim of deriving a livelihood.

On the Wild Coast, however, the view that the Wild Coast environment should be protected, primarily against abuse from local people, persists and shows no signs of imminent revision. The view is based on the perception – held by powerful people – that the environment is under threat and if it is not protected it will completely disappear. Biodiversity protection therefore – applied with different intensities which include fenced nature reserves, demarcated forest areas and locally-controlled use of vegetation (for example, non-harvesting of green wood) – is seen as the most appropriate land use for the Wild Coast's 'unique' vegetation. Counter views are systematically dismissed by both the state and a range of supporting institutions (for example, universities, NGOs and others). But these counter views are also persistent, mainly due to their wide-ranging cross-sector support. The next section of this chapter is therefore going to look at how the environment of the Wild Coast – whether protected or not – is increasingly seen as a potential profit-making venture.

The profit-making view

Some have seen the Wild Coast's environment as a tool for gain, not only for the rural poor who live in the area, but also for the country as a whole. This emanates from the neo-liberal view that nature has to be viewed in economic terms (Nygren 1998; Harvey 1996). The main objective in this view is to maximise direct and indirect benefits derived from the environ-

ment. Several methods are of utilising the environment for profit are currently being promoted, including ecotourism, forest extraction, mining, agriculture and so forth. Of these, however, ecotourism¹⁵ is internationally recognised as the single most important venture for making the country's biodiversity an economically profitable commodity (Nygren 1998; Ceballos-Lascurain 1996; Goodwin et al. 1998). Nature-based tourism in less industrialised countries is regarded as one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy, generating 10 per cent of the world income and employing 10 per cent of the world's workforce (Ashley & Roe 1998). While not exclusively so, most ecotourism ventures are within protected environments such as nature reserves, national parks, demarcated forests and so forth. Yet, it is only recently that some studies have begun to look at the impact of tourism on the (protected) environment (for example see Boo 1990; Ceballos-Lascurain 1996; Price 1996; Roe et al. 1997).

The perceived importance of protected areas in ecotourism has over the last few decades been coupled with resistance to a 'fences-and-fines' conservation approach by local residents in favour of community-based wildlife management. From the conservation point of view, CWM ensures protection of the environment by local people, while from the economic point of view it justifies profit-making ventures by external investors in the name of uplifting local people. While ecotourism is certainly a popular choice for making CWM economically viable, it is not the only one. There are now programmes in other parts of Africa which see trophy-hunting by the rich, for example, as a means of making the environment profitable. Established Southern African programmes that come to mind are the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (Admade) in Zambia; the Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (Campfire) in Zimbabwe and Tchuma Tchato ('our wealth') in Mozambique.

Not surprisingly, therefore, a major government-driven project in the form of

Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) seeks to take advantage of the favourable environment in the Wild Coast by introducing ecotourism to the region. The six nature reserves and a range of natural sites (including demarcated forests) along the Wild Coast are a focal point for national and international investment in ecotourism. It is the view of the relevant provincial and national departments responsible for economic development and investment that profiting from the environment through ecotourism offers the best solution to the area's poverty. While it is still too early to judge the success of this venture, it has been observed that the private sector is not rushing to invest in the Wild Coast as the programme had hoped. This is probably due to the expectation that investors must not merely profit from their investment, but must also ensure that their efforts result in direct benefits to local populations. Other areas of probable concern to potential investors include unresolved land issues, (at times violent) community conflict and unco-ordinated efforts on the part of government (Kepe 1999).

It must be said that tourists are not rushing into the area in large numbers. While wealthy overseas tourists are the main targets of the Wild Coast ecotourism venture, domestic tourists (who make up the bulk of current visitors to the area) are not particularly excited about the new plans. This conclusion is drawn from responses to a questionnaire about tourism in Mkambati Nature Reserve (Kepe 2000a). From these responses it is clear that, unlike their overseas counterparts, local tourists do not generally care to include visits to neighbouring villages in their itinerary. Local tourists are also concerned about the impact that ecotourism will have on the environment; in the attempt to lure overseas tourists, they fear that the secluded and peaceful spots along the coast will be destroyed by modern conveniences (including large buildings, paved roads and waste material from the facilities).

But what do local communities say about ecotourism? In view of the dearth of



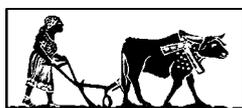
information available to local people about government programmes, it is argued that it is extremely difficult for them to make any informed decision about ecotourism. This said, the people of the Wild Coast lean towards welcoming projects perceived as potentially providing secure livelihoods. Research experience in this area shows that most ventures that can supply long-term jobs to the masses of unemployed villagers are likely to be viewed favourably. However, although ecotourism on the Wild Coast is closely linked to protected area management, it should not be assumed that local villagers make this link in their acceptance of ecotourism. Songorwa (1999) has warned that it would be a mistake to think that all local communities are interested in CWM. Research on the Wild Coast is showing that there are broadly two types of local communities involved in CWM (Kepe 1997a). Firstly, there are those who are, or may be, fortunate enough to benefit directly from ecotourism, either through employment or some other service that they offer for a fee. Secondly, there are those who know that they do not stand good chances of benefiting from ecotourism and thus continue to maintain the same relationship with protected areas as before (for example, by using protected resources illegally). It is almost impossible to convince this latter group that they should restrict their natural resource usage in the interests of ecotourism. Even in cases where the majority of community members are accommodated in ecotourism benefits, experience has shown that those benefits are more often than not very small compared with those of the ecotourism operators (Pleumaron 1994).

Two other profitable land uses being promoted as suitable for the Wild Coast environment are forestry and agriculture. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAFF) estimates that there are at least 120 000ha of land that can be afforested in the Eastern Cape Province, mostly in the communal areas of the Wild Coast. Private companies are being encouraged to enter into agreements with 'communities' in these areas, with government acting as

facilitators of the process. This declaration of forestry as a key land use in the Wild Coast is based on evidence that environmental factors such as water and soil are favourable for growing commercial forests. In a recent study conducted to examine stakeholder perceptions about forestry as a key land use in the Eastern Cape (Evans & Shackleton 1998), it was found that government and private companies strongly favoured commercial forestry as an important livelihood strategy. While partly agreeing with this, NGOs and academics argued that alternative forms of land use were not being given adequate consideration at either local or regional levels. Yet, in the Wild Coast SDI plans, forestry is being promoted as one of the few viable options that can bring economic development to the area. Furthermore, an array of concerns associated with commercial forestry as a key land use (for example, land tenure and environmental impact) are not being addressed adequately.

Similarly, government and partners regard environmental factors on the Wild Coast as suitable for agriculture as a primary land use. It is envisaged that agriculture can be profitable in at least two ways. Firstly, through growing new crops (for example, hemp) on state, private and communal land, the government hopes to encourage a new breed of farmers, mostly from rural areas, to enter agriculture and improve their livelihoods (*Daily Dispatch* 2000c). Secondly, it is intended to revive crops such as tea that have good potential for profit-making, but for various reasons are not realising that potential. Prime land for these agricultural projects lies between Port St Johns and the Umtamvuna River. The Department of Land Affairs has a new policy focus which favours 'emerging' commercial farmers (Mertens 2000). This is seen by key external role players as important for these agricultural initiatives on the Wild Coast.

In conclusion, this section has argued that the 'profit-making' approach is closely linked to a form of industrialisation of nature. Whether this is done by planting new crops (including exotic forests), hunting or ecotourism, concerns are being



raised about the impact of these projects on the livelihoods of the local rural populations. These plans to industrialise the environment on the Wild Coast do not, however, go unchallenged, as the next section illustrates.

Alternative environmental views

'Alternative' views here are those which advocate neither a hands-off approach nor a high intensity exploitation of natural resources. The main thrust of 'alternative' views is to restore, as far as possible, the 'harmonious' relationship between local people and their environment (Nygren 1998). Some alternative views have strong links with the conservation approach, because they also seek to maintain a certain status quo in nature, but they also go much further. Elements which could be considered characteristic of alternative viewpoints (and are particularly relevant to the Wild Coast) include:

- Modern environmental problems and, to a certain extent poverty, are viewed as originating from the Western division between nature and culture. This division allows for environmentally aggressive human action (Nygren 1998).
- Nature is seen as having an inherent value equal to that of humans (Ruijgrok et al. 1999).

- Natural resource extraction by industry is seen as destructive (Blignaut & Heyman 1998; *Daily Dispatch* 1998; Nygren 1998).
- The view that certain areas are 'undisturbed', 'untouched', 'pristine', 'wild', and so forth.
- University academics and an array of NGOs are the most visible supporters of these views.

In areas like the Wild Coast where the main concern is rural poverty, alternative views, it is argued, have an inferior position in development debates. Ideas around harmonious relationships between people and the environment find their currency in the midst of potentially destructive development initiatives. Under calls for sustainable use of the Wild Coast environment, radical alternative views are creeping in. A good example in the Wild Coast is the rallying of support against dune mining in Wavecrest area in Centani by a group comprising people from the NGO, academic, government and independent sectors (see Box 3).

As this example of lobbying in Wavecrest shows, it is easy for governments to dismiss alternative views and go ahead with projects as planned. But the strength of the opposition lies in



Box 3: Mining in Wavecrest

Iscor Heavy Minerals has had a long-term mining interest in the Wavecrest area, Centane district, Wild Coast. It has been known for many years that heavy mineral deposits existed in the sand dunes of this area. In 1997 Iscor was granted the prospecting permit by the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs. Earlier plans by Rombos, a prospecting company that bought the lease during apartheid years, were rejected on the grounds that the area has a sensitive ecosystem. The Wildlife Society of South Africa played a big role in opposing prospecting in this area. Following the granting of the prospecting permit, the Wildlife and Environment Society and many other people formed a lobby group called Friends of Wavecrest. This group opposed mining in the area, arguing that the environment and local people will be worse off. The provincial government commissioned a scientific study to identify the land use most suitable to the area. Coastal & Environmental Services, a consulting company based in Grahamstown, completed the study in July 2000. The final recommendations included that mining would be a more viable option than ecotourism and agriculture alone, as was being proposed by the lobby groups and some locals. Friends of Wavecrest have not given up hope despite this setback. They have already distributed several responses to the study through the Internet. *Sources: Macleod 2000; Coastal and Environmental Services 2000*

persistence and the rallying of wider support. For instance, the resistance to mining enjoys the support of local communities who express concern over potential disruption of their 'historical relationship with the environment'. Somewhat romantic terminology – for example, 'untouched' and 'unspoilt' – is drawn upon, but is couched within the current calls for a sustainable form of development. Ironically, the movement against mining in this area has brought together people who would not otherwise see eye to eye on suitable forms of sustainable environmental use for the Wild Coast area (including conservationists, agriculturists, ecotourism operators and academics).

North of Wavecrest, alternative views have been less influential. Even where forest plantations were planned on areas of extreme biodiversity (for example, the Natal sandstone region near Mkambati Nature Reserve), the main call against the move came from the conservation sector. It is therefore concluded that alternative views about suitable land use enjoy currency only in isolated areas about which there is significant public awareness (for example, Wavecrest) and where there are sound plans for sustainable livelihoods. This next section looks at how rural people on the Wild Coast view their environment and the land uses these views give rise to.

Local views

Having presented views of different (mostly external) people on the environment of the Wild Coast and, in particular, how it may best benefit rural people's livelihoods, this section explores the views at local level. Several questions need to be asked: How do different people at local level perceive the state of their local environment? What the local views are on suitable land uses of the Wild Coast environment, both in specific localities and further afield? Are these views dynamic or static and what, if anything, influences them to change? As a starting point it is necessary to acknowledge the important role played by social difference in determining local perceptions about the environment.

Local views often differ widely depending on several lines of social difference (for example, wealth status, sex, health and age). These differing views were illustrated in the consideration of the grasslands around Mkambati (Kepe & Scoones 1999) where the landscape was shown to have been shaped by a range of social institutions and associated actors with different goals and visions of what the environment should look like.

But it would be misleading to suggest that social differences such as wealth and gender are the only influences on the way people view their environment. In fact, a combination of both ecological and social dynamics affects views on the condition and importance of the environment, and these two streams of influence relate closely to livelihood practices.

People view different parts of the environment differently, depending on what livelihood sources are important to them (see, for example, the conflicting views held by grazing and thatching interests on the changing condition of grasslands in Chapter 3). Local views of the environment can also differ geographically or from site to site: for instance the way people view trees in the forest area further away from the village could differ from the way they view trees in the residential areas. Similarly, views on the grazing area close to the homesteads could differ from those about stock posts (*amathanga*) which are often further away from established residential areas. Thirdly, people's views about the environment are determined by specific time-related practices such as weeding, harvesting, mussel collection and so forth. For instance, certain leaves may need to be destroyed during weeding, while at other times they could be seen as a source of food (for example, wild edible leaves). Fourthly, the way local people think about conservation tends to be different to the views prevalent amongst external people. Local people seek to protect their livelihoods, not merely the environment. If local people are convinced that the protection of their livelihood means protecting the environment, then they see conservation of the



selected ecological sites as important. But this does require no longer using the ecological site in the pursuit of their livelihoods.

We have therefore seen that livelihood practice, social and ecological factors play an important role in determining local views of the environment. On the Wild Coast, like in most places around the world, perceptions of local people about the environment determine how that environment will be used. However, Matose and Mukamuri (1994) correctly argue that decision making about environmental use is strongly affected by power relations. Local level views of powerful people often prevail in the end. People for instance draw from politics, wealth status, culture, religion and so forth to ensure that their views dominate and men are more often than not the beneficiaries of the resulting power imbalances. On the Wild Coast, for example, Kepe (1997a) discusses how hunters see the grass within Mkambati Nature Reserve as a bait for wild animals after it has been burnt and starts to regrow, while women from the same area see mature grass as beneficial for thatching. In this resource use conflict men are the victors, as the grass continues to be burnt for hunting purposes.

It has been alluded to in earlier sections that views on the environment are dynamic, not only over space, but also over time. Both social and ecological dynamics may result in changes in views held by people about the environment. A change in the wealth status of a social actor from rich to poor, for instance, may result in a completely different outlook on the state and value of the environment with more thought being given to how the local environment can contribute to their livelihoods. Yet previously their environment may have been nothing more than a place to live. Similarly, someone who developed the means to make use of a particular environment (through the purchase of tools, for example) will attach more value to that environment than was the case previously. In other words, the view that person has of the environment would have changed. An environment that has deteriorated

(due to, for example, abuse or natural disasters) or has improved significantly could also have similar effect on people's perceptions. So may political changes that affect access to and control over certain environments. Taking the protected environments as an example, legislation may have prevented people from making use of natural resources within these areas, resulting in certain views about that environment. But political changes and new legislation allowing people to utilise the environment could change the way they think about environmental management.

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been argued that the views held by different interest groups about the environment will help to determine land use, and that the Wild Coast environment is at the mercy of the most dominant views or discourses. Because views on the environment range from seeing it as a victim of human actions to a solution for rural poverty, the environment represents in itself a powerful discourse within debates about development (Nygren 1998). At the same time, it is noted that all people justify their views by arguing that their proposals are for the ultimate benefit of human populations.

Over the last century or so, the conservation view has been the most dominant on the Wild Coast. For the large part of that period protection of nature was obsessive and involved the use of harsh policies and methods of enforcement that demonstrated a blatant disregard for human rights. Government policies concerning protected forests and the rehabilitation of communal landscapes (betterment planning) even led to violent revolts against the state. While there is now a new 'democratic' political dispensation in the country, there are still no guarantees that nature conservation programmes will be any less hostile towards local people. Instead there has been a mounting case for more land to be put under protection (Briers et al. 1996). National and international conservation NGOs have also provided the government with a range of support mechanisms, including funding of research and some



programmes, publicity and lobbying. The argument for a review of the way conservation programmes are implemented is given little consideration. It is therefore possible to conclude that future generations – for which the environment is being conserved – are currently regarded as more important than present ones.

It has also been shown in this chapter that people who argue for the use of nature for profit can be divided into two groups. There are those who strongly favour the conservation of nature, but also argue (with varying degrees of sincerity) that people can also benefit through controlled harvesting of resources (including commercial hunting) or through ecotourism (initiatives often grouped under the term 'community-based wildlife management' or CWM). The second group comprises people who make no claim to campaigning for conservation of nature. Their view is purely that nature is an economic resource that should be exploited to maximise profit. However, since they are aware of the powerful conservation narrative, they often make allowances for external monitoring of their activities (for example, through environmental impact assessment). Mining and forestry companies interested in the Wild Coast are, for instance, highlighting the sustainable nature of their enterprises more than their potentially destructive aspects.

The third 'alternative' view advocates the 'harmonious' relationship between local people and their environment (Nygren 1998), but rarely produces a solid land use proposal. The view does, however, give rise to aggressive campaigning against what are seen as atrocities against the environment (disrupting to nature's harmony with human beings) in what may be considered a welcome strategy in light of industrialisation of the environment.

The last view on the environment of the Wild Coast discussed in this chapter is that of local people. In a nutshell it has been argued that local views of the environment are closely linked to people's livelihoods. Livelihoods in turn are dependent on social and ecological dynamics. Factors of social difference such as wealth status or

gender enhance or restrict access to and control over resources, to determine the range of livelihood sources a particular social actor will be drawing from. Similarly, environmental dynamics affect the livelihood possibilities over time and space. Thus at any one time different local people see different parts of the environment differently and their goals also differ depending on what livelihood sources are important to them. In general, local people welcome externally-introduced land uses which will contribute to their livelihoods, yet a dilemma arises in the face of a flood of proposed land uses reflecting widely differing ideologies on nature and development.

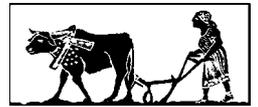
Aside from being an issue for local people, the situation represents a fundamental impasse in the country's policy development. Ruijgrok et al. (1999) argue that popular views about the environment can directly explain trends in environmental policy-making. But when these views conflict – although conflict is not necessarily negative – policy implementation in the form of projects can be confusing and, at times, disastrous. It is easy to conclude that most views about the environment on the Wild Coast can co-exist. It is, however, the implementation of land use options as guided by perceptions of powerful people – by different government departments and other related organisations – that is of concern. Experience in South Africa has shown that the departmentalisation of policy implementation processes results in unco-ordinated efforts, although success might have been achieved had there been honesty and openness between the key people (Wynberg & Kepe 1999).

It is important to remember that discourses on the environment and development are ultimately about people who, for the most part, are living in poverty. Those involved in the debates need to appreciate the realities on the ground and focus on how injustices to rural people can be minimised. Discourses favoured by the powerful should never give reason to further reduce the power of the already weakened rural poor.



Notes

- 11 These range from international or national NGOs and national governments to individual household members at village level.
- 12 Cape Town archives, 1/LSK 142.
- 13 With the exception of the 'local view', this typology has adapted and expanded earlier propositions by Ruijgrok et al. 1999 and Nygren 1998.
- 14 Silaka Nature Reserve is near Port St Johns.
- 15 'Alternative tourism', 'sustainable tourism' and 'green tourism' are alternative terms for ecotourism. (Roe et al. 1997).



Chapter Five: Debating the Wild Coast SDI

Introduction

Previous chapters made only brief reference to the Wild Coast SDI. The primary aim of this report is to analyse the dynamics of the Wild Coast SDI, mainly through the case studies (Chapters 6–8), and this chapter is devoted to providing more detailed background on the initiative. This is accomplished by focusing on the brief history and geographical location of the SDI projects in the former Transkei, the debates that have emerged since their introduction, and analysis of the implementation process. The chapter concludes by drawing lessons and implications for policy, and emphasises the central role of social processes in development.

Background



The Wild Coast Spatial Development Initiative

The two contrasting features (extreme poverty and natural beauty) of the Wild Coast area have combined to result in this area being declared a focal point for economic development, due to its potential and need for development (see Chapter 4). It is assumed that the area's natural beauty presents a window of opportunity to encourage ecotourism-related investment, which will in turn result in improvements to infrastructure and services as well as the quality of life in general. The current Wild Coast SDI was initiated by the Department of Trade and Industry in 1996, and was based on similar plans which were initiated by the former Transkeian government but never implemented (Government of Transkei 1982; Nicolson 1993). A document outlining a similar initiative was produced by the Eastern Cape Ministry of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism as recently as 1995, with the intention of gaining financial backing from the national government, parastatals and the

private sector (Government of the Eastern Cape 1995). For the current SDI initiative, three baseline reports were commissioned to focus attention on the environmental (Nicolson et al. 1996a), tourism (Nicolson et al. 1996b) and land issues (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre 1996).

Several development nodes have been identified by the Wild Coast SDI, including Dwesa/Cwebe/Nqabara, Coffee Bay/Hole in the Wall, Port St Johns Projects, Magwa and Mkambati areas (see Figure 2). The aim is to attract ecotourism ventures in these 'anchor' project areas, with the hope that the improvement in infrastructure and other investments will encourage a range of economic initiatives in the surrounding areas. It is hoped that the five nature reserves (Dwesa, Cwebe, Hluleka, Silaka and Mkambati), together with areas such as Hole-in-the-Wall, will attract both national and international tourists to the Wild Coast.

While the main focus of the Wild Coast SDI is tourism, agriculture and forestry have been identified as enterprises with a potential to contribute to development. In 1997, for instance, the Department of

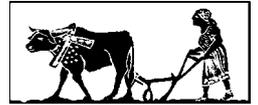
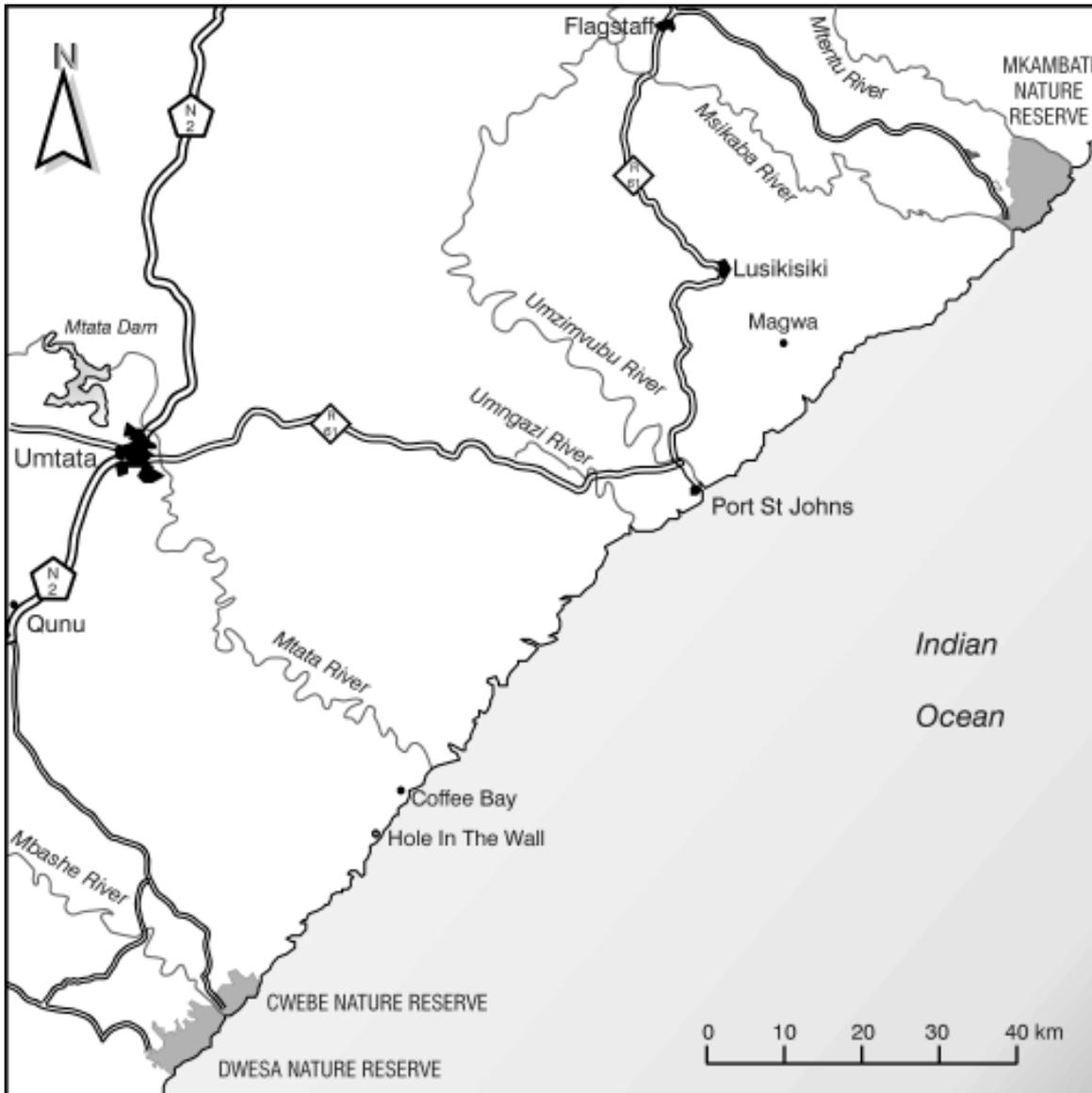


Figure 2: Map of the Wild Coast from Dwesa to Mkambati

Water Affairs and Forestry began a drive to encourage forestry in the Eastern Cape. This department estimated that there are at least 120 000ha of land that can be afforested, mostly in the communal areas of the Wild Coast. Private companies are encouraged to enter into partnerships with communities in these areas, with the government acting as facilitator of the process. These plans have been discussed and publicised at several consultative meetings for forestry development and investor conferences which focused on the Wild Coast SDI. These consultative meetings and conferences attracted media attention, which added to the ongoing debate on some of the challenges faced by the Wild Coast SDI.

Debates on the Wild Coast SDI

Like many other development projects all over the world, the Wild Coast SDI has attracted both optimistic and sceptical reactions from different sectors in South Africa. The supporters, mainly politicians of the ruling African National Congress government at both provincial and national levels, clearly put their weight behind the project, seeing it as part of the answer to the economic woes of one of the poorest regions of the country. This positive outlook has largely been based on the perceived successes of similar endeavours in countries like Kenya, India, Dominica and others (Koch et al. 1998a). The various departments and agencies tasked with planning and implementing the project (for

example, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Development Bank of Southern Africa) shared their optimism enthusiastically with the public through the media, public gatherings and other promotional activities. Interestingly, this optimism (genuine or otherwise) is shared by people in or close to the immediate anchor project areas (for example, local government officials and potential beneficiaries).

On the other hand, sceptics raise doubts about the SDI concept, with both opposition politicians and independent economists such as Marais (1998) arguing that very few people will actually benefit from the Wild Coast SDI. Bantu Holomisa, a leading opposition politician, even labelled the concept 'neo-colonialism of a special kind' (Bishop 1997a). Some are more concerned about the negative environmental impact which the proposed large-scale investments will have on the Wild Coast (Webb 1997; Schmidt & Doonan 1997; Bishop 1997b). However, most of these concerns are raised by or through the media, largely by journalists who spend little time and effort in gathering sufficient details about the real issues and consequently focus merely on the basic concept of SDIs, with little attention to the process of implementation.

It is possible, however, that the emergence of a new programme, the Community Public Private Partnerships (CPPP), launched by the Department of Trade and Industry late in 1999, was a response to criticism levelled at the SDIs nationally. According to Streek (2000) the Department of Trade and Industry 'discovered during the spatial development initiative that private-sector involvement alone was not sufficient to promote economic development in rural areas'. However, government and SDI co-ordinators have always emphatically denied that private sector, to the exclusion of poor communities, had a special place in the SDI programme (see Mahlati 1998). Yet the CPPP is now heralded as a strategy designed to achieve the very goals that the SDIs should have realised. For instance according to Umnoto (2000) the CPPP 'is committed to unlocking the economic value of state or commu-

nity-owned land and, in so doing, revitalising rural economies, reducing poverty, increasing community empowerment and promoting sustainable resource use in some of the country's poorest regions'. It is possible to discern clear overlap in both the language and vision of the two programmes, yet those behind the initiatives have thus far been unable to clarify the relationship between them.

Nevertheless, since the SDIs arise from and are embedded within a macro-economic policy that is fully supported by government, and that resources have already been invested in planning and marketing the idea, criticism of the SDI (or CPPP) concept is unlikely to yield any positive results. The alternative view is that efforts should rather be directed at making positive contributions to the processes of implementation in the targeted areas. Thus, current challenges in the Wild Coast SDI in relation to the interest of the potential rural beneficiaries are more about practical details which are related to local social dynamics and how outside development agents respond to them. These challenges are evident throughout the coast, but not all of them are fully acknowledged by those attempting to implement the SDI.

In elaborating on these process-related challenges, the next section draws on findings from the three case study areas which are all anchor projects of the Wild Coast SDI (Port St Johns, Magwa and Mkambati – see Chapters 6–8). This section aims to complement earlier arguments for a process approach to development projects by exploring the unfolding of the processes and the impact of the social dynamics, such as communication and conflict management strategies employed by the SDI to relate to potential beneficiaries. The focus is on dynamics at the local level, but analysis also draws on processes at regional, provincial and national levels. This discussion is not an attempt to evaluate the merits of the SDI as a strategy to improve the welfare of poor rural people. Rather, it seeks to make a positive contribution by highlighting areas which are often under-emphasised during project implementation, but which are



crucial in both the foundational and subsequent stages of the development process. The discussion begins with a brief review of literature regarding process approaches to development. This is followed by an analysis of process-related activities of the Wild Coast SDI.

Analysing 'process' on the Wild Coast SDI

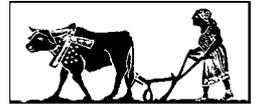
When the SDIs were first introduced in 1996, formerly disadvantaged rural people were the main targets in terms of benefits. For this reason, concepts such as 'community-based development', 'empowerment', 'participation' and so forth became familiar rhetoric within the SDI (for example see Mahlati 1999; Anderson & Galt 1998; Koch et al. 1998a). However, since development is about people, concepts have to be translated into practice in ways which will eventually benefit people. It is argued therefore that viewing development as a process should be a key requirement for all projects.

Development as a process

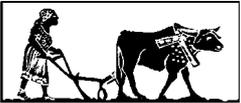
Process approaches to development gained prominence as a response to the ineffectiveness of development projects which took a blueprint or top-down approach to development (Bond & Hulme 1999). Over the last two decades, a rich body of literature has been devoted to process approaches in development (for example, Korten 1980; Hulme 1989; Chambers 1997; Mosse 1998; Bond & Hulme 1999). According to Bond and Hulme (1999) there are two main schools of thought in which the proponents of process approaches fall. The 'purists', on the one hand, argue for the abandonment of the concept of 'project' and see process as synonymous with local institutional development in which the role of the external agent and resources are kept to a minimum. The 'managerialists' conversely see the role of external agents as key, but argue that projects, managers and management systems must be more flexible and adaptive. Some writers have played it safe by making arguments that fuse both schools of thought. Mosse (1998), for

instance, argues that viewing development as a process means being conscious that all projects have permeable boundaries and are influenced by a wider social and institutional environment. This could then lead to the treatment of development projects as flexible systems with dynamic procedures and processes. Mosse further argues that this conception of development as a process marks an important shift away from the focus on project inputs and outputs and the assumed mechanical link between them, and instead provides a device for thinking and talking about complex social realities in new ways. This line of thought met with popular interest and it has come to be acknowledged that a more plausible approach for analysing development projects at micro-level is to view them as a dynamic concept of interaction between strategic groups, (Bierschenk 1988). Thus, project implementation becomes less of a planned programme, and more a constant process of negotiation between people who have their own respective 'projects'. A similar view is offered by Crehan and Von Oppen (1988) who argue that development projects should not be seen only in terms of their goals and their achievement or non-achievement, but rather as a social event and an arena of struggle between different groups with diverse interests. While the role of the outsider (development agent) may be influential, it is not the only role.

Arguments for a process approach are based on the premise that what matters isn't *what* is done, but *how* it is done. Bond and Hulme (1999) extend this by arguing that it is not only the way you do it, it is whom you do it with. Thus process approach to intervention does not merely incorporate participation of beneficiaries; it entails re-arrangement of the involvement of stakeholders in objective-setting, design, implementation and monitoring of the programme. This should entail a redistribution of power and influence over decision-making. Therefore a strategic involvement of external agents becomes a necessity if social dynamics that could make or break a project are to be taken seriously.



In spite of increased efforts to encourage process-oriented approaches to development over the last few decades, many projects in South Africa are characterised by a lack of understanding of key social processes and their vital role in development. Instead, social dynamics are often under-recognised, treated lightly or viewed as sources of problems which delay or disrupt project implementation (Mosse 1998; Kepe 1999). This is not to say that project planners and implementers are not concerned about the people for whom development projects are initiated. The fact remains that project deadlines and technical notions of successful implementation are often held by external agents at the expense of attention to social dynamics in development projects. Contributing social factors such as the poor social training background of project planners and implementers, lack or improper use of relevant social research findings, political pressure and lack of co-ordination of activities by the agencies involved in the project are understated. It cannot be overemphasised that the agencies that initiate development projects should stress an interest in people's participation in them. Apparently, an array of attitudinal factors at external and local levels can directly or indirectly affect the quality of people's participation in projects. It is therefore obvious that with good and honest intentions on the part of development agents, people's participation is not a factor to be treated lightly. Financial and human capital investments, even those with frustratingly minimal returns, should not lose sight of the many challenges involved in encouraging fair participation of people in projects. The adoption of the process approach is equivalent to clearing the ground for effective development. This clearing of the ground throughout the life of the project should therefore be seen as a way of enhancing the chances of success.



Cases of Wild Coast SDI 'processes'

Two issues can be singled out as having resulted in intense debate about the SDI process on the Wild Coast. The first one concerns land rights of local people in the

targeted project areas. In addition to numerous land claims that existed in targeted areas along the coast, the delays in the implementation of the government's tenure reform programme have resulted in many uncertainties in relation to who holds what kind of land rights, and whether these rights are secure or not. This uncertainty has made difficult the establishment of deals between communities and investors. However, the issue that has mostly affected the implementation of the projects and which is closely tied with land reform in these areas is the definition of beneficiary 'communities' (Kepe 1999). In their statements, the SDI emphasises that primary benefits would go to communities who are the rightful owners of the land that are affected by the projects. Consequently, conflicts have arisen among potential beneficiaries in certain localities, deeply affecting the implementation of the SDI. This is not to say that all conflicts in these areas are related to land issues. A host of other issues including political affiliations are responsible for SDI-related conflicts. What has become clear is that conflict management within the SDI is crucial if any success is to be achieved.

The second issue that has been debated intensely, albeit at a very general level, is the question of the communication strategy employed by the SDI to make people aware of the planned development. Newspaper reports have insinuated that people are not well informed about the SDI (Webb 1997; Schmidt & Doonan 1997). These reports have been fiercely denied by SDI personnel and have been labelled as uninformed and irresponsible (see Mahlati 1998). As mentioned earlier in this report, the limited time spent by journalists in any particular area may lend itself to unfair presentation of the realities. Hence a closer look at the dynamics in the selected case study areas through social research could shed some light. It is only on the basis of such (research) efforts that one can make well-informed statements about realities on the ground. Thus the next section will explore local experiences of the communication strategy of the SDI which affected the consultation process, as well as how conflicts are dealt with.

Communication in the Wild Coast SDI

That information constitutes one of the most important links in the development chain is an understatement. If it is agreed that knowledge is power (Davies 1994), then adequate information must be both given and received in the development arena if empowerment and participation is to take place. In the context of development projects such as SDIs, planners and implementers need physical and social information about the geographical area of the planned intervention. People in that particular locality also need as much information as possible about the project, both before and during implementation. Information for local people is even more crucial in cases where, as with the SDIs, the project did not originate from a locality-specific needs assessment, but from a national strategy that makes assumptions about the needs of people in general.¹⁶ Gow and Vansant (1983) correctly point out that information is a necessary ingredient in encouraging local people to participate in and embrace a development project. One may ask: 'How will local people benefit if they do not participate actively in the project?' If inadequate information is considered as only one of the barriers to active participation, how can they participate if they do not have adequate knowledge about the project? How will they gain adequate knowledge about the project if they have not been adequately informed? This list could be expanded, but the main focus of this section is to establish whether or not local people were adequately informed about the SDI and what the consequences were.

While the Wild Coast SDI was conceived by the cabinet in 1995 (Jourdan 1998) and groundwork in the form of background studies began seriously in 1996, it can be argued that the potential beneficiaries in the rural areas did not hear about it until 1997. Like any other process within the development arena, the initial communication strategy of the Wild Coast SDI was faced with numerous constraints. Even in a case where simply informing people about the already planned intervention in the Wild Coast was the main objec-

tive, two categories of constraints were evident, namely, the message and the channels of communication.

The message

Apart from senior government officials, relevant project personnel and consultants, very few people knew about the origins and detailed plans of the SDI at first. The baseline reports on land, environment and tourism which were produced in 1996 were too technical, lacked basic information on the SDI and were never widely available to the public. Even civil servants within the government sectors affected by the Wild Coast SDI (for example, conservation officials) have confessed their limited knowledge of the project plans. The two investor conferences in November 1997 and April 1998 and several consultation meetings organised by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry provided packages of information which were mainly targeted to potential investors. These meetings served to introduce opportunities that existed for investment on the Wild Coast, and provide information on how investors might be involved. Other than this, and until a website for the Wild Coast SDI was introduced in May 1998 and a special issue on the SDIs in general was published by the journal *Development Southern Africa* in December 1998, the public knew very little about the Wild Coast SDI. While brief reports of statements made by government officials on the project were reported in the *Daily Dispatch* regional newspaper, the Wild Coast SDI process of implementation was already at an advanced stage.

It was therefore not surprising that even those who were tasked with informing or consulting with the people in the anchor project areas did not have much information about what the SDI on the Wild Coast meant for the people. In July 1997 for example, a facilitator who was supposed to inform people living in the vicinity of an anchor project area confessed: 'I have not heard from the people who sent me for about a month now and I have no clue about what to say to people about this SDI'. When specific plans about particular projects were eventually communicated to



some people in the affected localities, news of further developments in these projects did not always reach the same people. A good example of this is the plan to build a toll road between Port St Johns and Port Edward which was shelved in late 1997. By June 1999 there were still villagers in the affected areas who were not aware of the change of plans.

At times the content of an SDI message to affected communities would be detailed, but transmission was rushed, ill-placed in terms of process, and with minimal follow-up. A good example of this is the presentation of models for promoting local empowerment in tourism-led SDI projects. These were detailed models which included several options for local people to choose from (for examples see Koch et al. 1998b) in the form of Power Point presentations. Slide shows, primarily in English with limited translation into local languages, were given by SDI consultants. In most cases, only a morning or an afternoon would be devoted to the presentations, resulting in people having to make hasty choices. In some areas (for example, Mkambati) the presentation of these empowerment models represented the first opportunity people had of hearing about the Wild Coast SDI. Nevertheless these sessions presumed that people had prior detailed knowledge about the concept and nature of SDIs.

Consequently, these detailed information sessions fell short of achieving their objectives as people were left confused or had to rush their decisions. In other words, on the rare occasions when information was detailed, it failed to serve the desired purpose because of questionable planning of the process, and the inappropriateness of the channels through which information was provided.

Channels of communication

The channel through which any information is shared is crucial to the effectiveness of any communication strategy. It should be borne in mind, however, that the choice of the communication channel often depends on who is communicating what message to whom (Bembridge 1991). In the case of the Wild Coast SDI, community

facilitators seconded from the Independent Development Trust (IDT) and the provincial Department of Local Government and Housing were seen as key to the communication strategy for this development project. Consultants were hired to manage the facilitators and the entire community consultation process. These facilitators were to introduce the Wild Coast SDI to local people and assist in the establishment of local committees to deal with subsequent SDI-related issues.

Direct contact between the beneficiary communities and the facilitators was to be the main channel of communication. A study by Anderson and Galt (1998), however, showed that reliance on radio (37 per cent) took precedence over direct channel of communication (17 per cent) as means of engagement among the actors. The functional ability of these facilitators to effectively engage the communities was inhibited by two main factors:

1. A lack of understanding of the prevailing local social dynamics by virtue of being 'outsiders'.
2. An apparent lack of knowledge about SDIs in general, and the SDI process in the Wild Coast in particular.

In Port St Johns and Mkambati, tensions existed between the local government officials and the traditional leaders. Supporters of traditional authorities, therefore, viewed these facilitators with great suspicion. The situation worsened as the facilitators reneged on their duties, blaming the hostility of local people and the lack of transport on the fact that they live in widely-dispersed settlements.

Secondly, in cases where no apparent hostility existed between local people and the facilitators, there were problems related to the organisation of meetings. Scheduled meetings were not well advertised, notices were often within a day or two of the scheduled meeting and in most cases, meetings would be cancelled on short notice. Poorly planned (and advertised) meetings (Terblanche 1997) reduced the effectiveness of the entire consultation strategy.

In a few cases where a fair amount of advertising did take place well ahead of a



facilitator's meeting, encouraging people to attend was a challenge where people didn't have a vested interest in the issues at stake. This situation became worse during the growing season, when people often pass comments such as '*abantwana bam' abatyi zintlanganiso, baty' umbona*' (my children don't eat meetings, they eat maize).

Political affiliations also tended to affect participation in the Wild Coast SDI meetings. In cases where political parties were used to organise a meeting, people belonging to opposing parties would either not be informed or feel not welcome at the meeting. This has been a big problem in certain areas where local people were divided between the African National Congress and the United Democratic Movement (UDM), as is the case in Port St Johns and Mkambati. For fear of intimidation and in some cases as a means of safeguarding themselves, facilitators would identify with the dominant party. In the run-up to the second democratic elections of 1999, it was rumoured that some community facilitation meetings were used for campaigning by certain organisations rather than consulting on the Wild Coast SDI.

It is thus not surprising that only 23 per cent of households on the Wild Coast, most of whom are in the anchor project areas had ever heard of the SDI (Anderson & Galt 1998). Most important of all, Andersen and Galt concluded, 'access to information about the SDI is dangerously low' (Ecsecc 1998:4).

The effects of this sloppy communication strategy on the Wild Coast SDI are likely to be felt for a long time to come. Improved information exchange would have positive effects at any stage of the process, but this would require better planning and proper utilisation of available information on local dynamics. Dealing with these constraints requires a unified effort from both local and external people.

Even though the importance of information and knowledge has been emphasised as being crucial for encouraging active local participation in the Wild Coast SDI, it should be emphasised that there are numerous other development processes in

need of similar attention. Managing conflicts related to projects is another area of concern. The next section reviews experiences of the Wild Coast SDI in this regard.

Conflict management in the Wild Coast SDI

Conflict within development contexts has become a force to contend with, because it is complex, dynamic, widespread and often destructive (Swift 1996). As the three case studies show (see Chapters 6–8), conflict has been part of life within the Wild Coast rural areas for many decades. However, developments such as land reform and the SDI have resulted in new dynamics. Conflicts which the Wild Coast SDI has been confronted with include those between the people (i) who claim rights to the same piece of land; (ii) who redefine, for reasons of benefit, the boundaries of the 'local community'; (iii) who have unequal representation in structures, which is perceived to directly benefit the individuals concerned; and (iv) who have different political affiliations. All these conflicts have made it impossible for the SDI to continue smoothly on the Wild Coast. Individuals working within the Wild Coast SDI have thus developed strategies for dealing with these conflicts. Some of these strategies have worked, others have not. In cases where conflict management strategies used by the SDI team have not achieved much success, the intervention and expertise of other actors, including government departments and consultancies, have been solicited. A number of conflict management strategies have been employed.

Denial

When the SDI was first introduced to the villagers of the Wild Coast, it appeared that the project planners and implementers were not prepared for potential conflicts. It was only after studies were commissioned by the provincial Department of Land Affairs to look at the land situation in the anchor project areas (for example, Ntsebeza 1997; Kepe 1997b; Manona & Manona 1997), that the conflict situation was brought to the attention of the SDI team. Their initial response to the evidence of conflict in these areas was to deny its



existence. This suited very well the 'fast-track' approach that had been adopted by the SDI. Denying that real conflict existed in these areas would allow plans to be implemented without complication.

As Howard and Baker (1984) argue, denying the existence of conflict does not make it go away, but they also argue that when the issue in conflict is not a crucial one, denial may be the appropriate choice. Assuming that the SDI team was fully informed on when and why conflict issues could be denied, it could be concluded that land issues were not seen initially as being a serious source of conflict on the Wild Coast.

Unfortunately, the strategy of denying the existence of conflict from land-based issues on the Wild Coast proved to be unsuccessful, as the conflict escalated instead of abating. Other strategies were therefore needed.

Playing down the conflict

Following the failure of the denial strategy, the SDI team adopted an approach to 'play down' the conflict. For instance, some community facilitators and officials from the Department of Land Affairs working in conflict areas were so anxious to see progress in their work that they went on to make passionate pleas to conflicting groups to put differences aside and work together so that they could all benefit from this development. These pleas, however, were not accompanied by any serious effort to address the causes of the conflict. Howard and Baker (1984) argue that where people who are involved are not in a position to handle the conflict positively (as was the case with the facilitators), this strategy may be the best choice. However, on the Wild Coast this approach did not work either.

Mediation

In areas where the conflict did not diminish, such as in Mkambati where different groups were contesting the same land for restitution, the SDI resorted to independent mediation. In Mkambati, under the auspices of an independent mediator, the conflicting groups reached certain agreements intended to allow for unity of pur-

pose and togetherness. However, the SDI team and facilitators failed to enforce the implementation of the agreed resolutions, with the result that no meaningful inroads were made towards resolving the conflicts. In some cases, however, the SDI team encouraged other departments, which have responsibility for issues directly related to the causes of the conflict, to get involved. In all the three case study areas, government departments such as the Department of Land Affairs and the Eastern Cape Department of Local Government and Housing were brought in to deal with specific conflicts. This seemed to work very well.

Use of power

Power, whether political or economic, was sometimes used to 'manage' conflicts which appeared complicated. While the SDI team cannot be directly implicated, they have on many occasions continued to work in situations where they were aware that political power was being used to either intimidate or marginalise certain groupings. This was the case in Port St Johns and in Mkambati. In both cases, groups or individuals opposed to certain actions related to the implementation of the SDI were labelled by their opponents as having 'political motives' or being 'anti-development'. During the run-up to the elections, conflicting factions invited leaders from different political parties to speak as a way of strengthening their own positions. Unfortunately, this seemed convenient to several SDI personnel who capitalised on the labelling, perhaps seeing it as an opportunity to get rid of voices that challenged the SDI process. This seemed to work for a while as some opposing factions simply withdrew from participating in the SDI-related activities in their areas. The question that remains is why sustainable strategies for conflict resolution were never employed.

Most recently, some SDI and Department of Land Affairs personnel were alleged to have told conflicting factions that if they would not stop the in-fighting, they would lose out on development. It is also alleged that villagers were told that



investors would look for alternative sites where people were not fighting over control of resources (for example, land) or who should represent them. In this way conflicting groups were forced to work together without resolving the conflicts.

There is no doubt that, in all these examples, the main goal of the SDI and partners has remained that of speeding up the delivery of benefits to residents of one of the poorest areas in South Africa. Unfortunately, this honest intention was not coupled with problem-free processes. Commitment of financial and human resources, patience, and willingness to learn from existing information on local dynamics could contribute positively to the processes of dealing with conflict. In this situation of groups who do not always see eye to eye, Bierschenk (1988) argues that projects represent arenas of negotiation for strategic groups, who act according to their own interests, using different frames of reference for social interaction. He therefore argues that projects are never complete failures nor complete successes. Appreciation of this fact by project planners and implementers could lead to more positive ways of dealing with conflict.

Conclusion

In this chapter the government's efforts to redress past inequalities by implementing economic development programmes to improve the welfare of the poor is acknowledged. However, it is evident that greater commitment is needed if people's participation in projects like the Wild Coast SDI is to be more than a 'trendy slogan' (Cernea 1985). This can be achieved through seeing development as a process, where the social relationship dimensions of a project are not always treated as having a secondary importance, or viewed as a source of problems. The planners of national strategies like the SDI in which initial planning is done based on general perceptions of need rather than site-specific needs should realise the shortcomings

of their approach. They need to invest more effort in facilitating the processes that will better impact on national development as well as stimulate local interest in sustainable projects.

In this case, investing in intensive local consultation or information dissemination about the project and how people can get involved, as well as a serious commitment to managing conflicts which may arise, is seen as a worthwhile endeavour. These two aspects of the development process crucial if the ground is to be cleared for people to participate fully in the project.

While the hasty pace at which the Wild Coast SDI seems to have been implemented could be justified in many ways, there are no real excuses for overlooking crucial issues in the development process. While poor infrastructure in the area has contributed to poor communication, better planning and co-ordination of resources (including those made available by other government departments) could (and still can) improve information flows about the Wild Coast SDI. Similarly, as Mahlati (1999) puts it, conflict arising from the communities should be seen as part both of the solution and of the problem. This can change the over-negative attitude about conflict in the development process. Needless to say, it should be realised that not all conflicts can be resolved, but they can be managed in such a way that progress can be ensured without alienating any social actor from the development process.



Notes

- 16 In fairness, it needs to be acknowledged that the origins of the SDI are based on a well-documented history of the marginalisation of black rural people in South Africa. That the rural poor are impoverished and the situation needs to be rectified is generally acknowledged. However, the specific needs of each locality are unique.

Chapter Six:

Port St Johns area: Land, politics and unheard voices

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the politics of economic development and land reform in the Port St Johns area. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first focuses on the general background of Port St Johns as one of the anchor projects for the Wild Coast SDI. The second part considers the political dynamics of the SDI in Mtumbane, the township of Port St Johns, and the final section focuses on Sicambeni village, a coastal communal area next to the town of Port St Johns. Issues of economic development and land conflict with regard to Sicambeni village are explored in some detail. The case study concludes by identifying challenges and opportunities for policy and implementation processes in both land reform and economic development.



The information presented in this chapter was collected using various sources. Firstly, secondary sources such as the Wild Coast SDI planning documents, consultant reports, newspaper reports and other historical material were consulted. Secondly, regular visits over a two-year period were made to Port St Johns, Mtumbane and Sicambeni. During these visits key people were interviewed where possible. In Sicambeni, village focus group meetings, attendance of *imbizo* at the headman's place and household interviews formed the main research strategies. The household interviews were conducted as part of a University of the Western Cape student's anthropology honours project (see Nqeketo 2000). The student spent about ten days in Sicambeni.

Part One: Port St Johns and the SDI

Overview

Port St Johns is located approximately 100km from Umtata, almost at the centre of the Wild Coast area. Administratively it falls within the Umzimvubu Magisterial District. It is thought to derive its name from the Sao Joao, a ship that sank on this coastline in 1552 (Wild Coast SDI 1998). Established in the late 19th century as a natural sea port of the Transkeian Territories (Henkel 1903), Port St Johns is the only town in the Wild Coast area with its own municipality. After being reserved as a white enclave by the apartheid government the town was handed over to the 'independent' Transkei in 1978 (Ntsebeza

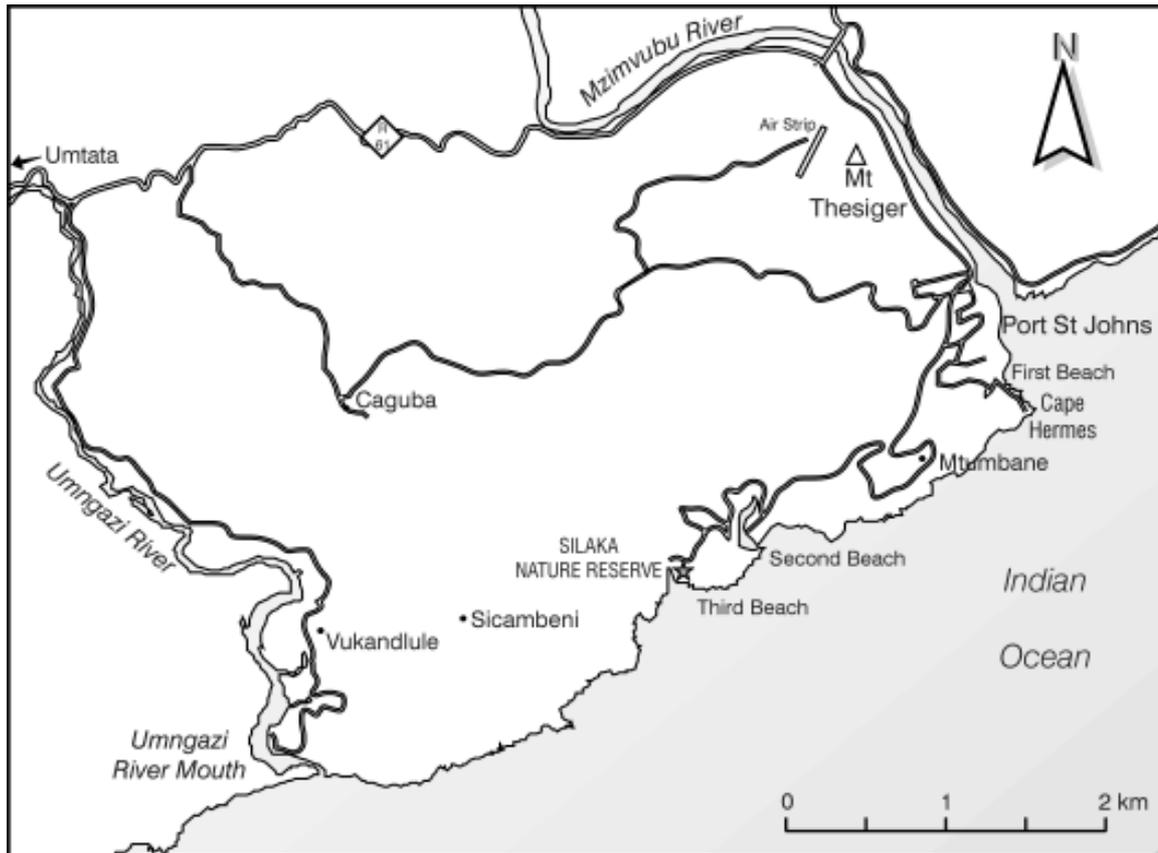


Figure 3: Map of the Port St Johns area

1997). There are an estimated 7 000 people living in Port St Johns town (*Daily Dispatch* 2000c).

The Port St Johns area receives more than 1 200mm of rainfall per annum, mostly in spring and summer. It is an area of exceptional plant diversity, with some 80 patches of state forests, some as large as 934ha each and numerous patches of headmen's forests (Cawe & Ntloko 1997). The richness of the vegetation, together with the shore and estuaries that are endowed with a range of marine resources enhances the attractiveness of Port St Johns as a tourist destination (Stavrou et al. 1996).

In 1996 Port St Johns, together with four other sites along the coast, was identified as a primary node for tourism development within the Wild Coast SDI. The development of Port St Johns as a prime tourist destination had been mooted over several decades. The former Transkei government commissioned several studies that looked at how Port St Johns and other coastal areas could be revitalised and

developed (Vandeverre et al. 1989; Government of Transkei 1982; Nicolson 1993). Then, after 1994, the government of the new Eastern Cape province conducted another study for coastal development in which Port St Johns was again proposed as a key tourist attraction in need of development (Government of the Eastern Cape 1995).

Other than these homeland and provincial plans, Port St Johns has managed to attract other forms of attention relating to its economic development potential. Firstly, in 1995 there was an attempt by former Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Bantu Holomisa to get funding to convert the disused Mt Thesiger army base into an environmental education centre. Secondly, in 1996 a World Wide Fund-South Africa (WWF-SA) participatory planning workshop resulted in proposition and endorsement of over 22 socio-economic development projects by local people (Environment and Development Report 1998).¹⁷ According to Hugh Tyrell, one of the co-ordinators of these



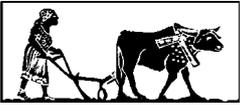
initiatives, some of these projects have been implemented in one form or another. Thirdly, Port St Johns was chosen as one of five pilot towns in the former Transkei region as a Presidential Lead Project. A Presidential Project Task Team was set up to focus on local government capacity building and other forms of economic development.

The Wild Coast SDI had the following objectives in Port St Johns:

- promotion of investment
- promotion of small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) around Port St Johns to facilitate local economic growth
- empowerment of the Port St Johns community and surrounding areas through involvement in decision making, job opportunities, providing skills and involvement in business operations
- facilitation of infrastructure development in the town and its surrounding villages.

There are several key SDI projects in Port St Johns and its surroundings. There is a project that focuses on upgrading and beautifying the entrance to the town.¹⁸

This includes the upgrading of ablution facilities, the taxi rank, hawker stalls and the establishment of a tourism office. This work was underway at the time of writing. The second major proposal is the upgrading of First Beach, including the campsite, golf course and bowling green. Here the town's municipality owns the campsite and the golf course, while the existing Cape Hermes hotel is privately owned. Failure to reach agreement between the owner of the hotel and the SDI contributed to delays in the progress of this project. The third major proposal is to encourage investment and revitalisation on over 70 commercial farms surrounding Port St Johns. The farms, totalling almost 4 000ha, are state-owned and are currently on five-year leases. Fourthly, there are plans to have tourist facilities improved and operated by private investors. According to SDI publicity, there are already three investors showing great interest in the area. In addition to other minor projects, there is a plan to improve overall infrastructure in the town and its surrounding areas.



Key challenges of the Port St Johns SDI

Land ownership is one of the key challenges facing the SDI in Port St Johns. Firstly, with the exception of the commercial state farms, most of the land outside the town of Port St Johns which is targeted by the SDI is not controlled by the town's Transitional Local Council, but by the Umzimvubu Transitional Council (Ntsebeza 1997). Secondly, as the SDI was getting ready to implement some of its projects, it learnt that land claims for Silaka Nature Reserve and Mt Thesiger had been lodged by Caguba Administrative Area with the Eastern Cape Regional Land Claims Commission. Even though these claims were prioritised, the SDI still put pressure on both the Department of Land Affairs and the Commission to resolve the land claims as soon as possible. Thus in 1998 the claims were 'fast-tracked' by the Commission, in collaboration with senior DLA officials from Pretoria as 'tenure reform' cases (Wild Coast SDI 1999). As the case study of Sicambeni (below) shows, this move did not please some of the land rights holders. The other key challenge for the Port St Johns SDI is the political divisions with potential beneficiaries at the local level as the case study of Mtumbane shows (below).

Part Two: Mtumbane township

Background

Mtumbane township is located about 3km outside the town of Port St Johns (see Figure 3). There are 425 residential sites, divided into seven sections. There is one primary school and no high school. It is the only formal township of Port St Johns.¹⁹ According to local oral history²⁰ this township, like many others around the country, has its origins in apartheid's segregation policies. It is said that, during the early half of the 20th century, many women from the neighbouring villages came to look for work as domestics in the town's white households. Many of them came with families who needed a place to stay. In accordance with the segregation policies of the time, the municipality

allocated a piece of land for these families outside the town. This was to become Mtumbane township. Many other villagers also came looking for jobs. The influx control laws were the only thing preventing even larger numbers of people from coming to settle in Mtumbane.

Unlike many other townships around the country, Mtumbane has always had a headman. In that sense, and in many other ways, it has operated as a rural settlement. Following the 'independence' of Transkei, one property owner from Mtumbane was allowed to represent Mtumbane people in the town's municipality. (Currently there are two representatives on the town council.) This did not help much, as living conditions continued to be of very low standard. It was only after Major-General Bantu Holomisa took over as the leader of Transkei that things started improving. According to informants, some of the notable improvements included allotment of erf numbers to each home, creation of streets, erection of water taps and the building of a community hall.

After the advent of democracy in 1994, the situation continued to improve in Mtumbane. Residents were able to now elect people to represent Mtumbane onto the town council. Several new development projects were initiated, including electrification, improved pit toilets, water taps inside people's properties and a low-cost 'RDP' housing programme.

Mtumbane and the Wild Coast SDI

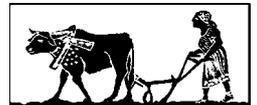
As in most of the rural communities falling within the Wild Coast SDI area, the information about the Wild Coast SDI project was slow in coming and minimal. According to local informants, the first community meeting where information about the SDI was provided took place on 15 July 1997 in the community hall. It is said that this was the very first time that the community had ever heard about the Wild Coast SDI. Residents were told about the proposed development and then asked to suggest projects they would be interested in. Apparently, they told the facilitator that as coastal people they were interested in improving the way in which they benefited from the coast. They suggested projects

such as a fish processing plant, a seaweed factory and tourism so that people could get jobs.

One of the informants argued that even after the initial explanation of what the SDI was all about, the majority of the people in the meeting still did not understand how it was supposed to affect their lives. It was only when there was talk of a coastal road from Port St Johns that people began to understand the implication of the SDI. They were looking forward to the opportunities they were told would be brought by the road, but were later that year disappointed to read in the newspapers that plans for the road had been shelved.

The second meeting, to which a selected number of Mtumbane residents were invited, was on 5 August 1997 in the Port St Johns Town Hall. The co-ordinator of the SDI's Community Participation Co-ordinating Committee (CPCC) and the facilitator of this meeting again introduced the Wild Coast SDI and highlighted some of the challenges. Key among these were the land claims for Silaka and Mt Thesiger. The facilitator is said to have told the meeting that these land claims were 'disturbing' the SDI plans in the area and that something had to be done to resolve them. The second major challenge mentioned was the ongoing investigation by the Heath Commission into parcels of land which had allegedly been irregularly obtained. Some of the parcels of land under investigation were those targeted for the Wild Coast SDI. It was suggested that Judge Heath should be invited to future meetings to help to explain the investigation.

Following this meeting things became tense in Mtumbane. For more than two years no SDI meetings were held at Mtumbane's community hall. For the whole of 1998 people who were interviewed argued that there was no information available to most residents about the SDI. It has been confirmed by various studies (Anderson & Galt 1998; Kepe 2000b), that the lack of information to potential beneficiaries about the progress of the SDI was one of the most serious shortcomings of the project. The less information people had about the project,



the more conflict arose, and the easier it became for those who had access to information to exploit opportunities meant for all the people.

Towards the end of 1998 and throughout the first half of 1999, another tense issue for Mtumbane emerged. The political tension between the African National Congress and the United Democratic Movement affected the way in which SDI was being viewed and implemented. There was a growing perception among some residents that decisions about the SDI were being made in town by ANC followers. Informants said they would hear that a beneficiaries' meeting had taken place in town and decisions had been made, but they never got any feedback. One informant commented: 'If you are not an ANC member you must just forget about this SDI. Even the facilitators are ANC activists'. Another added:

The sad thing is that not all people who are not ANC members are UDM. There are many people here in Mtumbane who don't care about politics. They are neither ANC nor UDM, but they are made to suffer because of this political tension. So we have now almost given up hope that we can ever benefit from the SDI.



Even the (ANC) council representatives of Mtumbane township claim to feel like 'puppets of the elite' (see Box 4).

When the European Union project in support of the Wild Coast SDI was introduced during 2000, things did not change much. A young man who is affiliated to the UDM told the story of how people working under this new programme came to the community hall once, after claiming to have announced the meeting beforehand. On attending the meeting, he noticed that those present were the same few ANC people who were always involved in the Wild Coast SDI meetings. He said he objected to the meeting going ahead without the residents of Mtumbane. After a long debate, the meeting was postponed and was re-announced to people of all political persuasions. The young man continued to complain that despite a list that was drawn up of all the people who are available for new job opportunities, it still appeared that ANC members are the main beneficiaries of short-term employment supposedly coming to Port St Johns.

The other issue that has caused dissatisfaction among residents of Mtumbane was the representation in the Port St Johns SDI committee. A local businessman who was also a member of the ANC at the time, was elected onto the SDI committee to repre-

Box 4: No SDI progress in Mtumbane

Verbatim comments about the SDI's progress from a Mtumbane council representative²¹

Things are really confusing about this SDI. Residents do not know much because there are no general meetings. Meetings are held at the municipality hall. During the last meeting we raised the question that there was much talk and less action in the Wild Coast SDI. As councillors from Mtumbane we know that water, electricity, the streets and the houses did not come with the SDI. All these were in process before we heard about the SDI. So we have nothing new to tell people. In these meetings they ask us to take down people's names for jobs, but nothing happens after that. People are getting upset giving names and nothing happens after that. This puts us leaders on the spot. We are also surprised that the same businesspeople who were opposing the SDI as they felt it threatened their businesses are now running ahead of everybody. The problem here is that people are not honest and politics are worshipped more than the development of poor people.

sent the Mtumbane community. Residents of Mtumbane say they were puzzled as to how a person who lived in town could claim to represent people he did not even know. They added that it was ironic that the same businessman who was once feeling threatened by the Wild Coast SDI was now playing a leading role in it.

In conclusion, political differences seemed to have succeeded in alienating a large section of potential beneficiaries in Mtumbane. This resulted in many people disowning the SDI and simply waiting and hoping that they might benefit somehow in the future. Clearly, combining fairly wealthy residents of an urban area (Port St Johns town) and the largely poor residents of a peri-urban area (Mtumbane) into one 'community' of beneficiaries is problematic. In spite of the SDI's claim that SMMEs (small, medium and micro-enterprises) are to be encouraged among all beneficiaries, it soon became clear that in Port St Johns and Mtumbane the wealthy saw business opportunities for themselves, while the poor were left hoping for jobs. The concept of a 'community of beneficiaries' continues to pose problems for most large-scale development projects in socially heterogeneous areas (Kepe 1999). This issue is explored further in the case that follows of land claims and the SDI in Sicambeni.

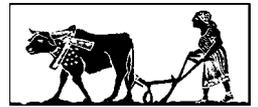
Part Three: Sicambeni Village and the 'Caguba land claim'

Background

Sicambeni is one of several villages falling under the Caguba Administrative Area. It is situated about 15km from the town of Port St Johns by road and about 2km from the coastline. By July 2000 there were 250 households, divided into six sub-villages or mat associations (*izithebe*). Each *isithebe* has a leader (*unondlu* or *unozithetyana*) who reports to the village's sub-headman, Sobantu Kalimashe. Kalimashe in turn reports to the headman of Caguba Administrative Area. Unemployment is very high, with only a few jobs in Port St Johns, Silaka Nature Reserve and the nearby Mgazi Resort camp.

A combination of crop and livestock farming, the collection of natural resources, as well as off-farm sources of income such as remittances and state pensions form the livelihood complex. Close proximity to the coast makes collection of marine resources (for example, finfish and shellfish) one of the most popular activities in as far as natural resource utilisation is concerned, and a growing number of women make grass and sedge hand work to sell to tourists in Port St Johns (see Cawe & Ntloko 1997).

While women do most of the natural resource collection, men's interest in this is also high. The importance of certain resources transcends gender lines, and occupies an important place in village politics. These resources include crop and grazing land, as well as highly commercialised resources. One such resource is alluvial sand used for building purposes. So important is this sand to local livelihoods that villagers are prepared to take up arms to defend the resource. For example, over the last two years there has been a conflict over this sand between Sicambeni and the neighbouring village, Vukandlule. So high profile was the conflict, that it received extensive coverage in the media (for example, in the *Daily Dispatch* and *Voice of the Coast*). It is said that the conflict began when people of Vukandlule (also a village of Caguba Administrative Area), as an economic development project, fenced off the area from which sand was previously used by both villages as a common property resource. Each truck load cost the buyer R40. When people of Sicambeni objected to the sand being fenced and sold to benefit only one village, trouble began. The conflict needed the intervention of the Caguba headman and one of his councillors. In this context, it was important for the Wild Coast SDI to first attempt to understand the social dynamics of livelihoods in the area. In particular it was important to understand the importance of local natural resources. The next section looks at the interaction (or non-interaction) between the Wild Coast SDI and the people of Sicambeni. Central to this discussion is the land issue.



The Wild Coast SDI and the land claim

By June 1999 the residents of Sicambeni, including the headman, had yet to be officially informed about the Wild Coast SDI. It was only in March 1999 that one villager from Sicambeni was recruited to represent the villagers in SDI meetings in Port St Johns. During a meeting held on 15 June 1999 at the sub-headman's residence, the villagers displayed their anger at being treated disrespectfully by the organisers of the SDI. They argued that they ought to have been informed about plans to encourage investment in Silaka Nature Reserve, as the land belonged to them. They recalled how in 1981 the new nature reserve's fence cut into their fields and grazing land without any discussion with them. According to one of the men at the meeting, this event marked the beginning of an era of disrespect and exploitation, which continues to this day.

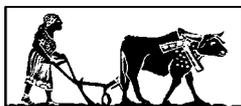
The land claim in this area is very complicated. The claim currently being investigated by the Regional Land Claims Commission indicates that the claim for the Mt. Thesiger Forest Reserve (erf 646) is for the entire Caguba 'community'. While the residents of Sicambeni had earlier initiated a land claim for Silaka Nature Reserve, this had apparently not been recorded properly by the Commission. Consequently, Sicambeni villagers do not have a claim of their own, but are part of the Caguba claim for Mt Thesiger. They are indeed part of the larger Caguba Administrative Area and, of the 53 descendent households who qualify for compensation in that area, 44 are associated with Silaka Nature Reserve and Sicambeni. The non-recording of the claim for Silaka Nature Reserve, which had apparently come to the Commission's notice, has prejudiced local people's claim to their land rights. While the people of Sicambeni are fully integrated into Caguba Administrative Area, they maintain that they were the ones who lost grazing land when Silaka Nature Reserve was established.

The people of Sicambeni said they were disturbed by reports attributed to nature conservation officials, DLA, SDI and the

Regional Land Claims Commission that the land was given willingly when none of the villagers were part of the discussions. They argued that while the headman and chiefs might have given the land willingly, they were not the ones suffering at the moment. One man commented: 'The land that was taken does not belong to Caguba or chiefs, it belongs to the people of Sicambeni'. Another recalled how the Caguba headman had come to them and said he had given the land to nature conservation and would give them new fields in Mampumbe, near Ndwalana Forest:

We refused to go to Mampumbe for two reasons. One, the place was too far from Sicambeni. We would have spent the entire day just walking to the fields and have no time left to plough or weed them. Secondly, there were already people using the land. We did not feel it was right to cause problems there.

It appears the problems around land between the Caguba Administrative Area and Sicambeni village were not confined to the handing over of the land in 1981. When the people of Sicambeni decided to lodge a claim for their land rights, it was the headman of Caguba and his councillors who again took control of the process. With the exception of the conservation officials in Silaka Nature Reserve, most other key agencies including DLA, the SDI, and consultants all talked about the 'Caguba claim'. Consequently almost all the visits made by the Commission and DLA between 1997 and 1999 were to Caguba village where the headman of Caguba Administrative Area resides. It was only late in 2000 that the people of Sicambeni were finally recognised, when a consultant hired by the Regional Land Claims Commission to document details of potential beneficiaries for the purposes of compensation decided to deal with Sicambeni people separately from the rest of Caguba 'community'. The move appears to have been motivated more by the conflict prevailing among leaders of Caguba village than by mandate from the Commission.



In Caguba both Sanco and the traditional authorities have been fighting for the control of the land claims process. Sanco's claim is that they had initiated the land claim for Mt Thesiger and should therefore see the process to its conclusion. Traditional authorities, on the other hand, claim that they are responsible for all the land in the area. However, what has become apparent is that former Sanco strongman Mpengesi originally signed for claimants at the time it was lodged, but has since become one of the trusted men of the local headman. Naturally, the person who was the signatory is included in meetings to discuss the claim, hence the attention focused on the traditional authorities. This does not mean that the traditional authorities were unhappy about this coincidence, but rather relished being in the driving seat for the Caguba land claim.

In the meantime, the marginalisation of the Sicambeni people's complaint about their grazing rights in Silaka Nature Reserve, coupled with the leadership conflict in Caguba village being allowed to simmer unattended, could be attributed to the SDI's fast-track approach to planning and consultation. Had the SDI not attempted to set the pace of land reform programme in the SDI target areas, the DLA and the Commission might have picked up the dissatisfactions and the conflict among people of Sicambeni and Caguba respectively. Between 1997 and 1998, the SDI organisers became increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of the restitution process in the Port St Johns area and consequently applied pressure on the DLA and the Commission to resolve the land issues in the Port St Johns area as quickly as possible. For that reason, in 1998 DLA officials, working with the staff of the Commission, went to Caguba and asked the headman and his people to 'withdraw' the claim if they wanted development to take place in their area.²² Following these visits to Caguba, DLA promised to come up with an alternative way of resolving the claim (Wild Coast SDI 1999). The villagers of Sicambeni were not involved in any of these discussions, and were for a long time not aware that their claim for grazing rights

to portions of Silaka had been changed into a tenure reform case.

Residents of Sicambeni were very disappointed that their views were not sought or taken into consideration when even during the bantustan/apartheid years there was some room for voicing their concerns. They told of how the land lost to Silaka Nature Reserve was not the only land that used to belong to their village. When Umngazi Bungalows were built, the Transkei Development Corporation (TDC) took some of Sicambeni land, without compensation, to hand over to the new owners. However, despite the fact that the Transkei government ignored their objections to their land being taken, the Sicambeni villagers argued that over the years they managed to work things out with the Umngazi owner, Mr Goss, who had recognised the injustice done to them. Mr Goss had done several things to improve their conditions including building schools and roads and employing people from the village. They explained that Mr Goss's remorse, his willingness to negotiate with them and the visible benefits from the development discouraged them from laying an official land claim with the Commission. They also felt that the land they lost to Umngazi was much smaller in size than that lost to the nature reserve.

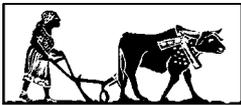
Clearly, the people of Sicambeni need the kind of development promised by the Wild Coast SDI. Proof of this can be deduced from their relative satisfaction with benefits from the Umngazi development. However, at time of writing, they had not been given an opportunity to indicate how they would see their participation in the Wild Coast SDI. They also expressed the need for their situation to be understood and respected by the Wild Coast SDI, the DLA and the Commission. They found it difficult to understand why those government agencies had never bothered to find out about the history of settlement and dispossession in the area. The disrespect shown to them, they argued, made Mr Goss even more deserving of their praise. In an interview on 20 December 2000, a group of men expressed high hopes that conflict over the land



claim among leaders of Caguba village could be a blessing in disguise as it resulted in the consultant treating them as a separate entity from Caguba.²³

Conclusion

There are three main conclusions that can be drawn from the Port St Johns case study. The first is that, despite the area's long-term reputation as a tourist attraction and the numerous planning studies done there over the years, there was not sufficient information about the establishment of the Wild Coast SDI there. As shown by Ntsebeza (1997) and by this report, most previous situational analyses had largely ignored the land question. The impact of the land-related problems currently experienced by the Wild Coast SDI could have been minimised had there been proper situational analysis before intensive planning. Previous studies seemed to have focused too much on the town itself at the expense of surrounding settlements (urban and rural) that were part of the SDI project. In particular, there was little or no insight into the social dynamics of these areas.



The second conclusion from this case study concerns the Wild Coast SDI's response to the land problems that emerged. Rather than making its plans fall in line with the other government programmes being implemented at the same time (for example, land reform), the SDI elected to interfere with them, advocating short cuts. The land claims for Mt Thesiger and Silaka Nature Reserve are good examples of the SDI team favouring a rather fuzzy 'alternative' approach in which people agreed to development on the basis that they would benefit from the land at a later stage. As a result of this haste, questions of representation and consensus were raised. Clearly this approach proved costly for the SDI as it has achieved very little thus far, and almost four years after its

introduction into the area, the Commission is still trying to sort out the land claims (following the failure of the SDI 'alternative' approach).

The third conclusion is that party politics among potential beneficiaries could discredit the Wild Coast SDI in Port St Johns. The perception which currently exist in Mtumbane, that the SDI is a project run by the ANC for the benefit of ANC members, could negatively affect community support for the SDI. It would be good for the Wild Coast SDI and any other project that seeks to reach all people irrespective of their political affiliation to distance themselves from individuals who politicise development processes. They should speak out against intimidatory behaviour by those seeking to monopolise benefits.

With the area's established reputation as a beautiful tourist destination, and the progress already made in renovating the town's entrance, the SDI in Port St Johns has great potential which will not be fully realised without the resolution of the problems highlighted in the case study.

Notes

- 17 An art and craft production project co-ordinated by Hugh Tyrell Associates was initiated from these recommendations.
- 18 Although this was initiated by the Presidential Project Task Team.
- 19 Green's farm informal settlement being the other township.
- 20 Group interview conducted in Mtumbane on 9 February 1999.
- 21 Interview 15 July 1999, Mtumbane township.
- 22 Interview with the Caguba headman and Mr Mpengesi, Caguba, 20 December 2000.
- 23 Meeting at Mr Kalimashe's homestead, Caguba, 20 December 2000.

Chapter Seven: Magwa: The land of tea

Introduction

This chapter explores challenges facing the transformation of a former parastatal, Magwa Tea, within the context of the Wild Coast SDI. This is done in three ways.

Firstly, a somewhat detailed history of the establishment of the tea enterprise in the area is presented which highlights the forceful manner in which the land for growing tea was acquired by the government, and how those residing on the land were forcefully removed. The history also shows how the political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s resulted in the improvement of working conditions, but at the same time brought doubts about the sustainability of this government-funded enterprise. Secondly, the provincial government's plans to transform Magwa Tea into a co-operative within the framework of the Wild Coast SDI is discussed briefly. Finally, the challenges facing the transformation process of the tea enterprise are discussed with a particular focus on:

- the question of land ownership and the uncertainty with which it was handled in the process
- the question of who should benefit from development projects (including the tea venture) in the area
- which people or institutions (should) represent the interests of potential beneficiaries.

In the light of the history of the area and the current obstructions to a successful development, a call is made for government agencies to take a step back and seek a better understanding of social dynamics and local history ahead of planning and implementation of any kind of development.

The information presented in this chapter was collected using various sources. Secondary sources such as books, consultant reports and newspaper articles were consulted. A substantial amount of information on state plans (including those of the DLA) was drawn from government documentation, although not all existing documentation was made available to the researcher. Attempts made to access additional documents and interview key people were unsuccessful. Primary material comprises interviews with people in the area, including managers at Magwa and people from the different villages of Lambasi (including members of the development forum). No attempt was made to interview the Paramount Chief (king) of Eastern Pondoland.

Background

Magwa area is situated in north-eastern Pondoland in the district of Lusikisiki, along the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape. For the purposes of this study, as well as numerous government-initiated economic development projects, this area comprises seven administrative areas, which include Lambasi, Hombe, Nkunzimbini, Malangeni, Matheko, Mbotyi and Goso Forest (see Figure 4). With the exception of Mbotyi Administrative Area, which is under Lower Ntafufu Tribal Authority, all these areas fall under Qawukeni Tribal Authority. The Paramount Chief of Eastern Pondoland is the highest-ranking tradi-



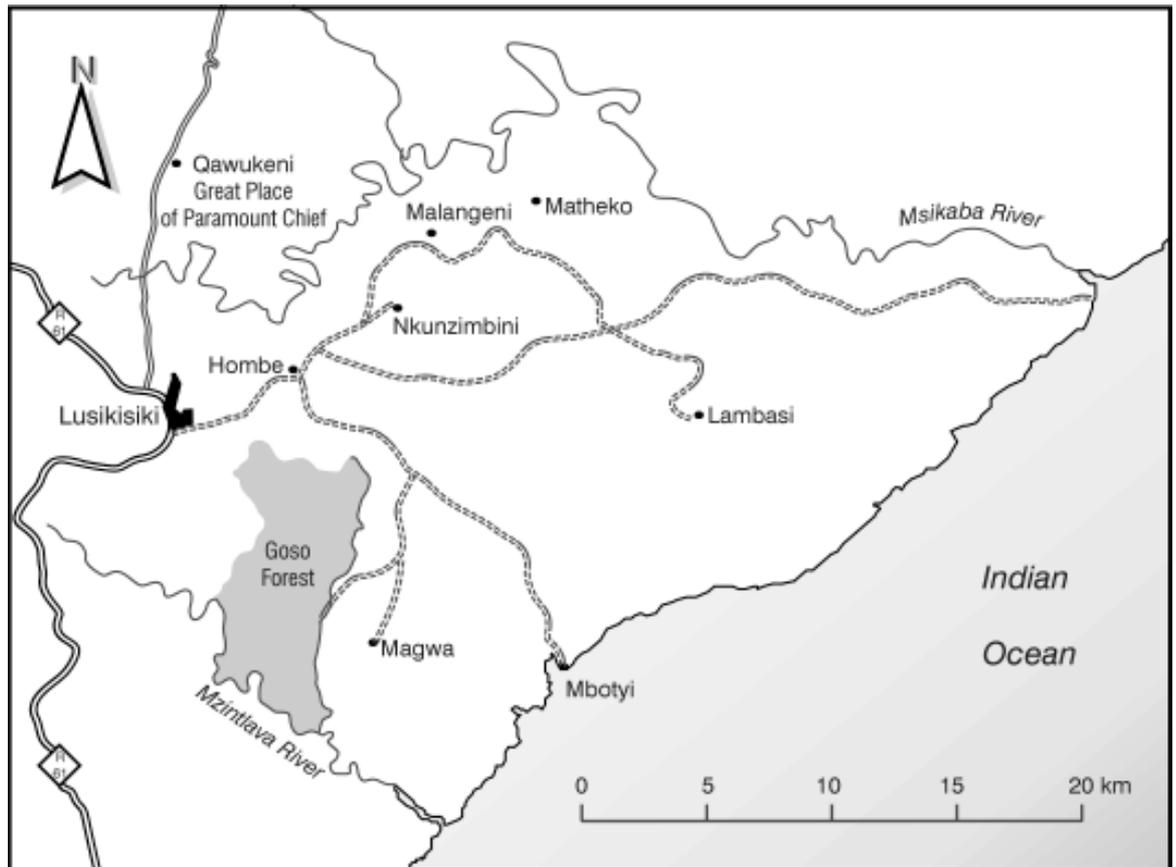
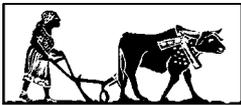


Figure 4: Map of the Magwa area



tional authority for all these administrative areas. Each administrative area is under the administrative control of a government-paid headman who in turn reports to the chief of the tribal authority. The district magistrate located in the town of Lusikisiki is the formal administrative head of the administrative areas in the Magwa area. In addition to this, elected councillors have been engaged in a bitter struggle with traditional authorities, mostly at village level, over administrative roles since late 1995.

During the 1990s the area became one of the targets for government-driven development projects. Firstly, as part of the Wild Coast SDI, the area was identified as being suitable for ecotourism, afforestation and commercial agriculture. It was envisaged that Magwa Tea, a tea-growing project in Lambasi Administrative Area, would serve as a nucleus for other forms of development. Until 1997 Magwa Tea had been heavily subsidised by the state, first by the Transkei government and then the new Eastern Cape Provincial Administration. Running at a loss, the plantation

was liquidated along with other parastatals towards the end of 1997.

Secondly, Lambasi Farms, which were jointly owned and managed by Tracor and Magwa, were also targeted for development under the auspices of the Wild Coast SDI. Plans for this land include forestry and planting of new crops (beans, anatoni's bush and others). Thirdly, the Ntsubane Forest is in the process of being privatised by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, in the hope that this will open opportunities for local development. In addition, there are other smaller projects in the vicinity which are not directly linked to the Wild Coast SDI (for example, mining).

However, all the current economic development plans should be seen in the context of wider socio-economic and political issues, both past and present. These include the history of land dispossession by successive governments and reactions to it; the apartheid government's attempts at developing the area; and the post-apartheid government's national plans

to improve the welfare of formerly marginalised rural people. The next section provides a historical background of the area, particularly on government interventions and conflicts that arose over the last 40 years or so. The section which follows focuses specifically on the plans of the Wild Coast SDI, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and the provincial Department of Land Affairs and Agriculture for developing the area.

Historical background

The case study area has a long history as a cattle-raising area. By the 19th century, the area was being used extensively for transhuman cattle grazing (Beinart 1982). Large herds of cattle, many associated with the Paramount Chief (then resident some 30km inland at Qawukeni) were herded to the coastal grasslands in the winter months when the upland grazing was limited. There is evidence suggesting that the Lambasi plain was one of the most important grazing areas in Eastern Pondoland (Harrison 1988). Herding outposts (*amathanga*) were established, but most settlement at this time was temporary. It was only later, following annexation of Pondoland in 1894 and the subsequent large-scale immigration into the area, that settlements became more permanent with people beginning to keep their livestock in the area year-round and farming activity becoming more common. Yet the reputation of the area as grazing land is remembered by many elderly people and some still refer to it as 'the paramount chief's land' or *umhlaba wakomkhulu* (Manona & Manona 1997).

Land dispossession and resistance

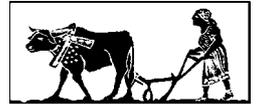
The Magwa area has a rich history of conflict between rural people, traditional authorities and the state over the last 50 years or so. A sketchy but useful history of development-related land conflict in the Magwa area is found in an unpublished manuscript by Harrison (1988), tracing the history of tea growing in the former Transkei, with a special focus on the early years of Magwa Tea. Although not the main focus of the manuscript, the history of land dispossession and resistance during

the early 1960s emerges in the text which identifies conflict over land in Magwa as the result of two interventions by the state. The first of these was betterment planning for Lambasi Administrative Area. According to Harrison, a senior agricultural officer and avid nature lover, Miles Roberts, was impressed by the traditional use of Lambasi as grazing land. Fearing that the influx of people to the Lusikisiki area would result in increased settlement in Lambasi, Roberts convinced Paramount Chief Botha Sigcawu²⁴ that a survey of the area was necessary for conservation reasons and a study was conducted from 1960–63.²⁵ But rumours soon circulated about the motives for the study and suspicions grew. There had been fierce opposition to betterment in this area. One man says:

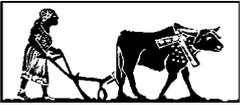
*We still don't understand why we were forced away from our fertile fields to these barren lands. That is why we were prepared to fight. We are also still crying for the graves of obawomkhulu (our forefathers) which were destroyed by whites and no compensation was given.*²⁶

When local people saw researchers in the villages conducting the study, talk was rife that the Paramount Chief was in the process of selling land to the whites and this suspicion fuelled further mistrust between the villagers and those in places of authority (including the Paramount Chief).

The second state intervention that resulted in conflict over land in Magwa was that of tea growing. Negotiation and planning for this venture took place at about the same time as the introduction of betterment planning. Johan Mills, who was then the secretary to the Chief Minister of Transkei, made the initial suggestion that Pondoland needed a commercial venture to provide a local alternative to migrant labour in the sugar cane fields of Natal. Mills discussed this idea with the Paramount Chief and his councillors in Qawukeni and it is said that it was well received.²⁷ What remained was to convince the local villagers to move off the land Botha Sigcawu had set aside for the venture.



The task of convincing residents of Lambasi that they should move was left to the Paramount Chief himself, with assistance from a Transkei member of Parliament, Columbus Madikizela from Bizana. When people rejected the notion that tea was good for the Mpondos, Sigcawu is said to have intimidated the residents, claiming that the land anyway belonged to his father and implying that he could force them to move. When the Paramount Chief failed to convince the villagers, the district magistrate in Lusikisiki, a Mr Fanwick, intervened by persuading people to accept cash compensation in lieu of land rights and promising them jobs on the tea estate. Residents continued to resist the idea and rallied the support of outsiders. According to Harrison (1988) the villagers received help from people in Natal, including a Durban lawyer by the name of Roland Arenstein.²⁸ The resistance to betterment and relocation was in effect the Magwa/Lambasi 'contribution' to the famous 'Mpondo revolts' which are described in great detail in Copelyn (1974), Beinart (1982) and Mbeki (1984). It is said that by the middle of 1960 the Pondoland resistance became violent and an unsuccessful attempt was made to topple Sigcawu (Mbeki 1984; Harrison 1988). In the process, however, attacks on Sigcawu's supporters led to the burning of houses and some were even killed, including the Paramount Chief's brother chief Vukuyibambe Sigcawu.²⁹ Following the Ngquza hill massacre on 6 June 1960 where Mpondo rebels were killed or arrested, resistance in Magwa area subsided and residents finally gave way to the tea plantation. According to Harrison, cash amounting to less than R20 was paid per hut.



Problems with the tea venture: 1963 to 1997

Since its contentious establishment, Magwa Tea experienced numerous problems and failed to live up to expectations. The project, intended to uplift the economy and create employment opportunities for the Mpondo, was hampered by a series of planning, managerial and political problems that lasted for over 40 years.

In relation to planning, the area given over to tea was never large enough to absorb a sizeable labour force or become profitable. Five hundred ha of tea were planted in 1963, increasing by a mere 200ha over the next ten years (Harrison 1988). Today the extent of the plantation at Magwa is 1 750ha and is, according to Porter and Phillips-Howard (1996), not in the best area for successful cultivation because of low winter temperatures which prevent continuous harvesting. Profit has, therefore, always been limited by environmental conditions.

Other complications resulted from poor planning, including a ten-year delay in the construction of worker's accommodation.³⁰ Unhygienic temporary structures were therefore put up by workers from distant Eastern Pondoland. The housing issue also resulted in harvesting delays, and loss of potential produce, as workers had to be transported from many kilometres away. But perhaps the most ironic decision, given the desire to create jobs, was the design of labour-saving machinery in the factory, effectively reducing the number of people who could be employed for processing the tea (Harrison 1988).

The establishment of the tea smallholder section within Magwa was perhaps another planning error which failed to meet its goals. In 1983 a hundred village families from Lambasi were each given one hectare of land in Mazizi estate to plant tea. The project drew on a Kenyan model and was aimed at expanding tea production to partially compensate families of villagers who were removed from the land during the early 1960s and to contribute to local development (Harrison 1988; Porter & Phillips-Howard 1996). Magwa Tea committed itself to providing technical expertise, as well as subsidising some of the inputs. The smallholders were responsible for providing their own labour. The tea was sold to Magwa. However, land tenure issues were left vague. What was made clear was that the smallholders had usufruct rights to the land, but it appears that nobody knew where land ownership vested (Department of Land Affairs 1998). According to Magwa Tea Co-operative

(1999), the smallholder scheme was unsuccessful because the tea was of very low quality. From this assessment it is clear that the goal of contributing to local economic development through smallholder tea production was not achieved. Commitment from Magwa management and uncertainty about land ownership continue to remain stumbling blocks to smallholder tea production in the area.

Poor management practices were also a factor in the failure of Magwa Tea. Early managers at Magwa were often outsiders or foreigners with little understanding of local dynamics (Harrison 1988; Transkei Chamber of Commerce 1996). In the 1960s and 1970s management and labour relations were at times so poor they jeopardised the future of the tea enterprise. In 1972 it appeared the Transkei budget was being severely drained by the unprofitable tea enterprise and workers were stealing so much tea (sold to dealers in the nearby towns) that the officially appointed marketers threatened to withdraw. Mismanagement continued into the 1990s and millions were lost to corruption (Department of Land Affairs 1998) and loss of productivity, partly caused by labour disputes (Magwa Tea Co-operative 1999).

From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, political changes in South Africa manifested themselves in a radical form in Magwa. In the Transkei, where political repression was intense and labour unions were not allowed to legally organise workers until 1989, Magwa soon found itself regularly plagued by workers' strikes (Porter & Phillips-Howard 1996). Through the Food and Allied Workers' Union (Fawu), the workers at Magwa demanded higher wages. According to Porter and Phillips-Howard, during the 1990s the Fawu office in Umtata had particularly targeted agricultural schemes, as it was thought the state-run enterprises should be setting a good example in their labour practices. Initially Magwa management was resistant but the pressure of strikes resulting in the loss of millions³¹ soon saw Magwa workers becoming some of the highest paid tea estate workers in Southern Africa (Magwa Tea Co-operative 1999).

However, the combination of high pay and unprofitability plunged Magwa into deeper financial troubles. It was no surprise that the new Eastern Cape government concluded that Magwa (as well as other agricultural government-funded schemes) was a financial drain on the province. While the government was reviewing its relationship with Magwa, there were widely reported allegations of financial misappropriation by the estate's managers (Department of Land Affairs 1998). Following an extensive review by consultants hired by the province, the closure of the scheme was proposed in February 1997. Although there was talk of privatising the tea enterprise in an effort to make it profitable and save jobs, the Magwa Tea Co-operative was liquidated in July 1997. The estate did, however, continue to trade under the supervision of the Transformation Authority, and it was widely thought that Magwa might eventually become profitable and complement provincial and national plans to develop the previously disadvantaged areas such as the Wild Coast. By 1996, it was decided that Magwa would become an anchor project of the Wild Coast SDI. The next section explores social dynamics of the Wild Coast SDI in the Magwa area.



Magwa Tea Co-operative and the Wild Coast SDI

It is not clear from SDI documents why Magwa was chosen as a development node. The only clue is found in a strategic document produced by the Eastern Cape provincial government in 1995, which outlines development plans for the Transkei Coast, including Magwa and other agricultural enterprises in existence at the time (Government of the Eastern Cape 1995). Although the status of Magwa as an SDI anchor project had been in doubt in 1997, perhaps because of the pending provincial government review of agricultural parastatals, once it became clear that private investors could be sought for Magwa, SDI interest was renewed.

Following Magwa's liquidation at the end of 1997, the drive by the Department

of Land Affairs to transform Magwa Tea into a co-operative with workers and managers as co-owners was taking place within the Wild Coast SDI framework. A situational analysis on Magwa was commissioned by the DLA to provide both DLA and the SDI team with background information, particularly on the land issue (see Manona & Manona 1997).

A Transformation Authority to oversee the transition of Magwa and other parastatals into co-operatives was established by the Eastern Cape Premier. About 1 700 full-time workers and managers became co-owners of Magwa Tea Co-operative and a land company was formed to benefit the communities around Magwa. It was agreed that Magwa Tea Co-operative would pay R120 000 and 30 per cent of profits each year to the land company. The hopes of co-operative members and villagers were further raised by the publication of details of numerous SDI investment opportunities which would bring employment and share opportunities.

The tea estate was advertised together with the Lambasi Farms – in which Magwa and Tracor had a 50:50 share – as the

'Magwa Package', an invitation to invest in the existing tea business 'plus other agricultural and related opportunities' (Wild Coast SDI 1998). Box 5 outlines the investment opportunities advertised as part of the Wild Coast SDI.

In addition to these agricultural investment opportunities, the Wild Coast SDI and the management of Magwa Tea Co-operative also hoped to attract ecotourism investors into the nearby Mbotyi area. A golf course was envisaged as a possible major attraction for the area. Using its own funds, and claiming to be contributing to local development, Magwa started a pottery project where young people from the neighbouring villages were receiving training. According to the managing director, Mr Greathead, the provincial government and European Union had promised funding for the project.

Management reports of Magwa Tea Co-operative and the enthusiasm of the SDI combined to create a convincing impression that Magwa was destined for greater things. The workers and managers had willingly taken a pay cut, but were receiving better benefits, including pensions,



Box 5: Agricultural investment opportunities advertised in Magwa/Lambasi

- Planting of 1 000ha of clone tea as a replacement programme to introduce new higher quality, higher yielding varieties. It is expected that 1 000 new jobs will be created.
- Planting of 4 000ha of trees by Sappi. The exact location and final area is to be finalised. It is proposed that technical expertise be provided by Sappi and administration by Magwa. The leasing and profit-sharing arrangements are to be agreed.

The income after year 7 is estimated at R1 million per month.

Job creation:

Year 1–3: 500–1 000

Year 7 onward 500–1 000

Permanent staff 90–180 from year 1.

- Dairying. Kynoch and Telkom have offered to provide 200 dairy cows as a gift to provide inexpensive milk direct to villages.
- Anaton's bush. The crushed nut produces a yellow dye which is used as a colorant in margarine. The net income is estimated at R7 000/ha. An area of 2 000ha is envisaged, creating 1 000 permanent new jobs. Flowers during the flowering period will provide a tourist attraction.
- Ntsubane Forest. Bordering on Magwa Tea is 450ha of commercial land and a massive pristine forest which needs to be preserved.

Source: *Wild Coast SDI (1998)*

medical aid and improved housing (Magwa Tea Co-operative 1999). The villagers of Lambasi Administrative Area formed the Lambasi Development Forum to represent the land owners and to co-ordinate development and benefit issues in the villages in co-operation with the traditional authorities and the Magwa Tea Co-operative.³² Notwithstanding this brighter outlook, social dynamics in the area still presented numerous challenges for the Wild Coast SDI. The next section provides an analysis of these challenges and puts them into context of past, present and future development in the area.

Challenges facing development initiatives in the Magwa area

Five years after the Wild Coast SDI identified the Magwa area as a key investment node and three years after Magwa Tea became a co-operative, uncertainty and confusion appear to prevail in the area. Conflict (subtle or overt) is common amongst villagers, as well as between villagers and state agencies working in the area. Several factors contribute to this. When people first heard of the potential benefits that were to come with the introduction of the Wild Coast SDI and the transformation of Magwa Tea into a co-operative, they began to strategically position themselves for maximum benefits. This was followed by delays in some projects and non-delivery of other promised developments. The resulting conflict is, ironically, suggested by some government and SDI personnel as the reason for the delays (Kepe 2000b). But what is clear is that it is necessary to deal with the underlying causes of the conflict if development is to take place in the Magwa area. Some of these issues are dealt with in more detail below.

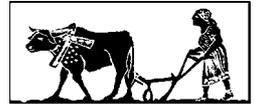
The land question

The history of betterment in the area and the establishment of Magwa Tea and Lambasi Farms several decades ago are relevant for understanding land issues (see the section on land dispossession and resistance above). These events took place against the will of residents, but with the

blessing of some traditional authorities. People who were removed from the land were not given an opportunity to seek redress through the provisions made in land reform legislation. Those removed under betterment planning do not have valid restitution claims, according to the White Paper on South African Land Policy (Department of Land Affairs 1997); the proposal was that these cases be dealt with as part of the tenure reform process (Westaway 2000). This may explain why a formal claim was never lodged by the people of Lambasi, yet some argue that betterment was a violation of land rights, equivalent to the Group Areas Act in urban areas, and was therefore racially motivated (Ngwanya 2000). Some claims of this type were in fact lodged, and later interpretations of the Restitution Act allowed led to the success of some of these, for example the Chatha restitution claim in the Eastern Cape (see Ngwanya 2000; Westaway 2000). This suggests that more of those affected by betterment planning should have been encouraged to lodge claims before the cut-off date of 31 December 1998. Whether or not the earlier interpretation of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 rendered them unqualified for a formal land claim, victims of forced removals in Magwa area appear never to have doubted their rights to the land.

While the question of ownership of the Magwa land is still unclear, few dispute that the people of the area have rights in respect of that land. While these rights have been recognised for 40 years, and various efforts have been made at redress, people still have no formal land tenure rights.

Some who lost their land were given jobs at Magwa and were 'to an extent now mollified' (Porter & Phillips-Howard 1996:293), as employment met their immediate livelihood needs. One hundred families were awarded 1ha each to grow tea, a strategy that failed in its goal of making the families financially independent. Furthermore, ownership of these plots is currently unclear. Later, DLA advocated the formation of a company to own land on behalf of local villagers, which would



receive shares from the tea enterprise, as well as annual rent. Despite the clear recognition of people's rights to the land on which Magwa Tea was built reflected in the above initiatives, DLA has not yet made a concerted effort to implement security of tenure in this area.

Another confusing aspect of the land question in Magwa area is the role of the Mpondo king. As Manona and Manona (1997) reported, many continue to refer to the land in question as the 'king's land'. DLA proposals included that the Qawukeni Great Place become a shareholding 'stakeholder' in the transformed Magwa Tea venture. If the proposal puts the king on the same footing as the proposed land-owning company, this implies that the king is also formally recognised as having land rights to the area.

The beneficiaries in the Magwa area

As is the case in many other coastal areas where SDI and land reform programmes are being implemented, outsiders have played a major role in defining the boundaries of the beneficiary 'community' in Magwa. The resulting definition of project beneficiaries has resulted in numerous conflicts. Some people would prefer the 'community' of beneficiaries to be larger so that they can be included, while others prefer a smaller 'community' in order to maximise their own benefits. Thus the 'community' of beneficiaries for the Magwa area SDI and membership in the land owning company include Goso Forest, Hombe, Lambasi, Mbotyi, Malangeni, Matheko and Nkunzimbini administrative areas. While these areas all neighbour on Magwa Tea, they do not share a common history. The land on which Magwa was established is part of Lambasi Administrative Area and the majority of those who were dispossessed of their land still live there. Only a few moved to one of the six other administrative areas.

It is only possible to speculate on how the DLA and the Wild Coast SDI decided on its 'community' of beneficiaries, as this is not clarified in documents accessed during the research. The areas are all close

to Magwa Tea and the SDI team tend to see inclusivity as a means of avoiding or reducing potential conflict (see Kepe 1999). Yet the inclusion of all Magwa neighbours in the land owning company by DLA is inconsistent, given that rent to be paid by Magwa Tea was intended for 'land owners'. The only explanation for this appears to be that some of those dispossessed of their land now live in those other areas.

The people of Lambasi were clearly against an all-inclusive definition of beneficiaries, as illustrated by the following comment:

*Land belongs to Lambasi, but they say we must share the money. This is not right. When other villages have a project nobody tells us to join them. At present, Nkunzimbini Administrative Area has a mining project and people are employed, but people from Lambasi don't get anything.*³³

Some question the inclusion of the king as a share-holder in Magwa Tea. As one man commented: 'The king gave our forefathers' land away, but now his son has shares from our land'.³⁴ Local hostility to traditional authority is reflected even more strongly in the following statement:

*What king? Don't tell me about a king here. We don't have a king, we are on our own. As far as I am concerned Qawukeni (the Great Place) does not exist. It stopped existing when our land was taken away through ucando (betterment) and by this tea.*³⁵

These sentiments raise important questions about 'representation' of interests in development projects in this area. The next section attempts to shed light on this.

Who represents whose interests in Magwa?

While the DLA's suggested 'community' of beneficiaries included several administrative areas, it appears that Lambasi Administrative Area was from the outset afforded a superior status and, in relation to Magwa Tea, it appears that people from other areas also recognised Lambasi as having a greater stake. In 1997 the people of



Lambasi formed the Lambasi Development Forum (LDF) to represent the interests of potential beneficiaries, primarily relating to the transformation of Magwa Tea. The Forum soon became the only 'community' voice in negotiations: at numerous meetings attended by the DLA and SDI consultants at Magwa Tea estate, LDF members were the only community representatives present. The LDF continued to function as the main community negotiating body after SDI projects were mooted beyond the boundaries of Lambasi.

At the time of the research, the LDF was headed by a local businessman and had two representatives on the Magwa management committee. According to Greathead,³⁶ the organisation received intellectual and political support from local government politicians in Lusikisiki and was considered a powerful force. Eventually, due to the need for broader representation on the 'community' negotiating forum brought about the introduction of projects outside Lambasi, a new structure – including members nominated by several administrative areas – was formed towards the end of 2000. Members of the powerful LDF, however, occupy key positions on the new body.

Greathead³⁷ says that the LDF always misrepresented the interests of the people it claimed to represent and that many of the proposed agricultural investment projects, including the Sappi initiative, failed because of the organisation. He alleges the LDF received poor advice (from 'Lusikisiki comrades') and consequently demanded a share in the Sappi Project far larger than that held by the Magwa Tea Co-operative. When Magwa decided to pull out of the project, Sappi argued it would be impossible to continue. Rumours suggest similar problems may have derailed other potential investments in the region.

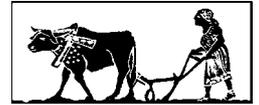
In the meantime the LDF continued to interact with high profile agencies and individuals, including the President. On Saturday 25 November 2000 President Mbeki visited Lambasi to launch a Community Production Centre (CPC), an agricultural project aimed at fighting

poverty. According to *Daily Dispatch* (2000d) nearly 57 000 people in the area stood to benefit from the development, although it is unclear whether these are people in Lambasi Administrative Area or the wider 'community' in Lusikisiki District.³⁸

The king's role as a representative of the people in the area is also not without controversy. Some in Lambasi are critical of the king's involvement in discussions about development in the area and of government agencies for giving more 'respect' to the king than they give to his 'subjects'. As one local leader said:

*We hear that the king has been sitting in meetings about Magwa. What makes us angry is that he is suddenly the hero and government would rather please him than us. We are the ones who lost land, not him. Government does not come here, but they go to Qawukeni all the time. If the king says yes to something, we hear from around that all the people of this area also agree. This is not right. We are the ones who suffered, not the king.*³⁹

Unfortunately, this research was unable to gauge the level of acceptance of the king as a 'representative' in areas beyond Lambasi. The strong feelings in Lambasi should, however, be given serious consideration.



Discussion: Magwa – a place of dreams or nightmares?

Several issues emerge from the case study of Magwa area which could provide useful lessons. The first has to do with the political origins of the current conflicts and economic development initiatives. The establishment of Magwa Tea was associated with the political power of the king and his apartheid allies. Magwa and Lambasi Farms, therefore, have long been associated with violent politics; the promise of jobs and business partnerships was not about to make people forget that past. But outsiders are still generally blind to this history and approach the development

initiatives as if they are conducting the first government interventions in the area.

Secondly, it appears that Magwa Tea – unsuccessful from the outset – survived for political reasons. In earlier years the Transkei government promoted Magwa, pouring millions of rands into the project (Harrison 1988). The support continued after 1994 when the Eastern Cape government took over. Those who argued that Magwa could become a profitable private venture did so, it appears, in ignorance of the understanding that the project had been established as a job creation venture for the Mpondos. To be profitable and to provide good salaries, Magwa would have to lay off workers (Magwa Tea Co-operative 1999). DLA's motivation for a co-operative to be formed is therefore puzzling (see Department of Land Affairs 1998).

During 1999, the management of Magwa reported that the tea enterprise was starting to make profit for the first time in many years (Magwa Tea Co-operative 1999). Yet by the middle of 2000 many workers at Magwa had not been paid for months. The acting managing director had left Magwa, and an informant who worked there claimed that the co-operative members had chased him out.⁴⁰ Once again the future of Magwa Tea was uncertain.

Thirdly, in spite of the unhappiness about what happened in the past and about how government is handling the land issue, people in the area are clear that if economic opportunities emerge, they will be met with enthusiasm. The following comments reflect the urgent need for development in the area:⁴¹

We are still crying for our forefathers' graves which are now on the other side of the fence. But we would go and work there if jobs can open up. While graves mean a lot to us, they are not food. Our children need jobs now.

We don't necessarily want to move back to where our forefathers' graves are. What would we do with the graves we have now? If they can bring this development that they have been talking about for so long

now, we are not likely to be as bitter as we are at present.

Taking our land away was not right, but I am prepared to work on the graves themselves if jobs become available. Life without a job is very difficult.

Jobs and land rights do not clash. The two are both important. We can get our land rights back and let people with money develop the land. It is unfortunate that we don't see this development and we still don't have our land.

Lastly, for all the agencies that seek to work in this area, the uncertainty over the Magwa tea venture as well as many other development proposals (for example, the Community Production Centre – CPC) represents an opportunity to make a fresh start. In addition to addressing the land rights issue in the area, an opportunity is presented to be more precise in identifying potential beneficiaries. It is not enough to simply say 'people of the area' or 'the community' will benefit in a project. Criteria for determining beneficiaries, worked out with relevant people in the affected areas, need to be established for every development project. Finally, local dynamics, including the role and influence of traditional authorities need to be reviewed in the context of economic development.

Notes

- 24 According to Mbeki (1984) Botha Sigcawu had already long been a supporter of betterment planning and was for that reason unpopular among Mpondos in Eastern Pondoland. The first attempt at introducing betterment in areas around Lusikisiki during the mid 1950s had failed following resistance by local people.
- 25 Cape Town Archives 1/LSK, Vol 142.
- 26 A elderly man during a community workshop in Ntlavukazi, Lambasi Administrative Area, 17 July 2000.
- 27 Prime Minister KD Matanzima visited



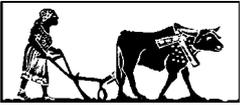
- the area but remained in favour of cattle farming rather than tea production (Harrison 1988).
- 28 Arenstein was later banned by the South African government for assisting the rebels (Harrison 1988).
- 29 The three men who were charged for the murder of Vukuyibambe Sigcawu were executed in March 1962 (Mbeki 1984).
- 30 The delay in providing accommodation was also a violation of the earlier promise that people who were originally removed from the land and worked on the estate would also be provided with housing there (Harrison 1988).
- 31 The first legal workers' strike in 1990 lasted from May to September and caused a tremendous loss of revenue to Magwa (Porter & Phillips-Howard 1996). Earlier unrest in 1981 hinted at ongoing unhappiness among workers on the estate (Harrison 1988).
- 32 Personal communication, J Greathead, Magwa Tea Estate, 9 August 1999.
- 33 Interview with a local leader, Ntlavukazi, 10 July 2000.
- 34 Group discussion at headman's place, Lambasi, 17 July 2000.
- 35 Group discussion at headman's place, Lambasi, 17 July 2000.
- 36 Personal communication, Magwa Tea Estate, 9 August 1999.
- 37 Personal communication, Magwa Tea Estate, 9 August 1999.
- 38 Even this Community Production Centre initiative is troubled by land problems and planning blunders. However, an in-depth analysis of this project falls outside the scope of this report.
- 39 Group discussion at headman's place, Lambasi, 17 July 2000.
- 40 Interview with a Magwa worker, 10 July 2000.
- 41 Group discussion at headman's place, Lambasi, 17 July 2000.



Chapter Eight: Mkambati: Land conflict in a 'pristine' environment

Introduction

There was a time when the name Mkambati was synonymous with leprosy, at least to rural people in Eastern Pondoland. The Mkambati Leper Reserve was functional between 1920 and 1954. In the succeeding decades, Mkambati has increasingly come to be associated with issues of ecology and biodiversity. Mkambati Nature Reserve is one of the key biodiversity hot spots in Southern Africa. So ecologically important is Mkambati Nature Reserve that government has earmarked it for expansion in the near future to a 30 000ha new national park (*Mail & Guardian* 2000; *Cape Argus* 2000). The plan would satisfy many environmental activists who have over the years campaigned for strict conservation of this 'pristine' environment (see Briers et al. 1996; Cawe 1992). Mkambati's floral endowments are also important to its ecotourism potential (see Kepe 2000a). For these reasons, the area was earmarked as a key investment node within the Wild Coast SDI.



However, it is also over the last five years that the name Mkambati became synonymous with conflict over land. A range of outsiders working in various government departments (for example, DLA), NGOs and consultancy companies have come to acknowledge the complexity of the land situation in this area. Land is a theme that cuts across the entire history of Mkambati and has been a force for both unity and division in the post-apartheid era.

This case study examines the reaction of local people to outsiders' visions for Mkambati, as well as the impact of these visions on local livelihoods. The introduction provides an historical background together with information about the natural and social environment. The next section

deals with the introduction of the Wild Coast SDI to the area and how that triggered unintended consequences. The analysis in this case study raises many more questions than it answers, but given the embryonic stage of most policies dealing with rural areas in post-apartheid South Africa, the questions raised could be of assistance to policy makers and implementers alike.

Description of case study area

Mkambati is situated in north-eastern Pondoland between two rivers, the Mtentu and the Msikaba, in the district of Lusikisiki (see Figure 5). This case study focuses on a unit comprising three areas under different tenure regimes: communal

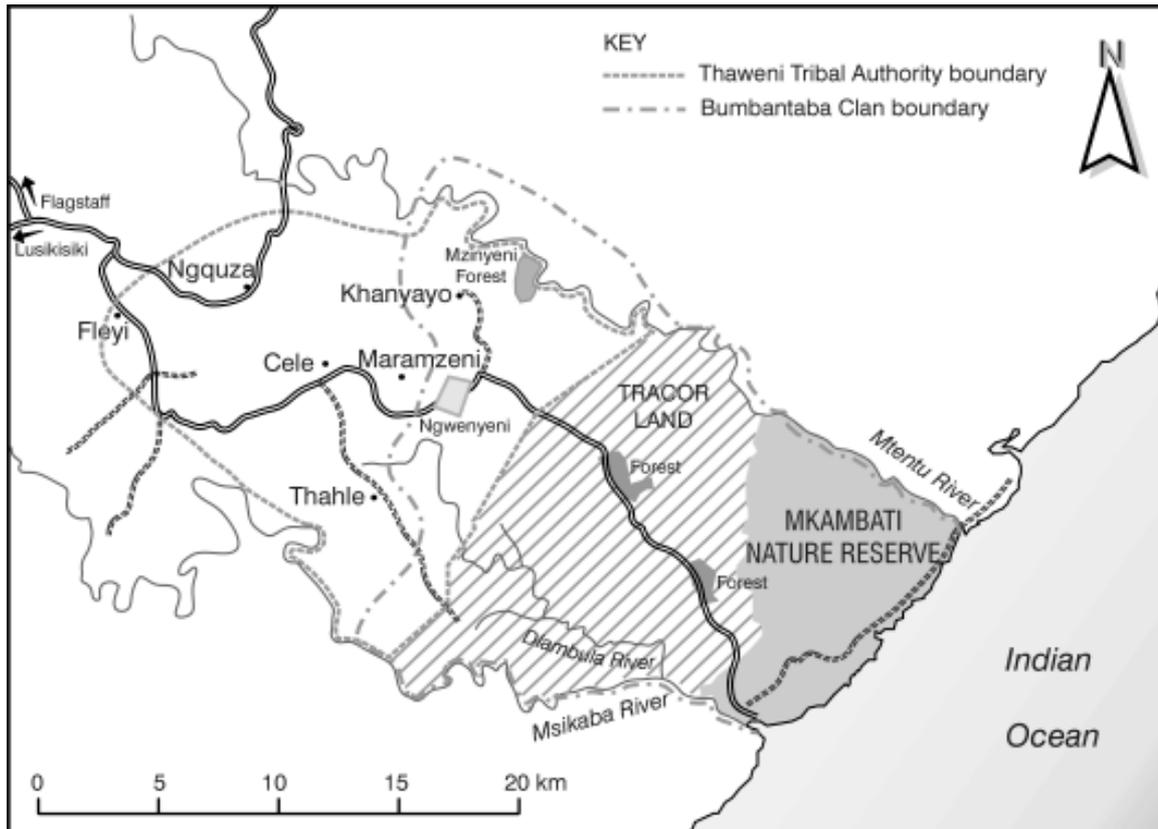


Figure 5: Map of the Mkambati area

tenure settlements to the west; 11 000ha of state land in the centre, formerly used by the now-defunct Transkei Agricultural Corporation (Tracor) agricultural parastatal project; and the 7 000ha state-owned Mkambati Nature Reserve to the east. The communal area falls under the Thaweni Tribal Authority and comprises six administrative areas, each of which is headed by a headman under the authority of the Tribal Authority Chief. Each administrative area is comprised of several villages, which are further divided into several *izithebe* or 'mat associations'. The inhabitants are Xhosa-speaking (amaMpondo) and generate their livelihoods through a mixture of arable and livestock farming, the collection of a range of natural resources, and a range of off-farm sources, including remittances and pensions (Kepe 1997a). The area has also steadily received immigrants from other parts of the former Transkei as a result of population pressure in those areas but also because of its attractive coastal climatic conditions and vegetation (Beinart 1982).

Mkambati receives a mean annual rainfall of 1 200mm, peaking in summer. While the area is rated highly by botanists for its floristic diversity, it is largely sour grassland with small patches of subtropical, evergreen forest along river gorges or along the dune systems by the coast. The coastal soil type favours high biodiversity of plant species but limits extensive crop production, especially the locally-favoured maize.



Historical background: Land politics

Any discussion of rural livelihood strategies and economic development in the Mkambati area would be incomplete without first providing some background on land politics. This history is characterised by century-long conflict between different groups of people.

In 1920 the government identified an area of almost 18 000ha on the coast between the Msikaba and Mntentu rivers as being suitable for a leper institution. Without consulting their subjects, Mpondo chiefs agreed to these proposals. The

Khanyayo people, who had earlier settled on the southern banks of the Mntentu River as part of the Bumbantaba chiefdom which occupied both sides of the river, were forcibly removed and resettled themselves on the borders of the new leper colony. Following many years of conflict between villagers and leper reserve officials, including conflict over illegal use of natural resources within the reserve, about 5 500ha of the reserve were released to the Khanyayo for 'community' grazing in 1959.⁴² According to archival sources⁴³ and local oral testimony, the release of this land for grazing was triggered by several incidences of violence between the Khanyayo residents and the managers of the leper reserve. But the most serious of these incidences occurred in 1956, when a certain Mr Austin (known as 'Wostile') from the leper reserve attempted to impound cattle belonging to the villagers. The boys who were looking after the cattle ran to the village to tell their fathers. It is said that one of these villagers was so angry that he chased after Mr Austin and wrestled his gun from him before repossessing the cattle. Fearing similar incidents, the management of the leper reserve sought the intervention of the Eastern Mpondo Paramount Chief Botha Sigcawu. So tense was the situation after the gun incident that both Sigcawu and the reserve managers had to compromise. The now rusty gun is still kept by the Khanyayo, at the house belonging to one of the political activists in the village. The villagers were so impressed that the story of Wostile (Austin) and the gun was recorded in the archives. The story is told to the younger generation whenever there reference is made to the Mkambati land struggle.

The introduction of tribal authorities by the state during the 1950s complicated matters further. The Khanyayo people, who until this time worked closely with the Bumbantaba chiefdom in Bizana, were required to divert their loyalties towards Chief Mhlanga of the Thaweni Tribal Authority within which Khanyayo's boundaries were located. To this day the Khanyayo people have claimed sole land rights to the land from which they were

removed in 1920. Members of the Thaweni Tribal Authority, however, dispute the Khanyayo's version of the history of the land in question, asserting that from the time tribal authorities were introduced, the land became the property of the chief and that all the chief's subjects therefore have rights to it.

It was the finding of the cure for leprosy during the 1950s (Vincent 1996) and the subsequent closure of the leper institution that gave birth to the Mkambati Nature Reserve. After a brief period as a tuberculosis hospital, the former leper institution was handed over to the newly independent Transkei in 1976, which closed the hospital and gave the land to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the Transkei 'homeland' (bantustan). The inland two thirds of the former leper reserve was used by Tracor as a state farm, while the sea-ward third was established as a nature reserve in 1977 in terms of the Nature Conservation Act of 1971 (Government Notice 45 of 27 April 1977). Two successive private companies were given a 49 per cent share to run the reserve as a hunting concern, while the Transkei government held the other 51 per cent. In 1982, due to alleged gross mismanagement of the reserve, and the neglect of its ecology in particular, the Transkei government terminated the partnership. Mkambati Game Reserve (Pty) Ltd under the Department of Finance (Transkei) continued to manage the reserve, providing accommodation and other facilities for non-hunting visitors. In 1991, the company was dissolved, returning the nature reserve to the control of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry (Transkei), as was required by the Transkeian Nature Conservation Act 6 of 1971.

The 7 000ha Mkambati Nature Reserve is currently the property of the provincial government and falls under the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism. Because of the presence of numerous rare plants, including the endemic Pondo coconut palm (*Jubaeopsis caffra*), the reserve was declared a national monument in 1936.⁴⁴ The marine reserve within Mkambati extends



about 11km along the coast and 11km offshore, making it the largest marine reserve on the Wild Coast. The Nature Reserve currently supports over 2 000 wild herbivores, dominated by antelopes (for example, blesbok) and provides self-catering facilities to tourists involved mainly in recreational fishing.

After an unsuccessful attempt at establishing a sugar cane project, Tracor planted about 70ha of eucalyptus plantations for commercial timber in 1990.⁴⁵ By late 1999, Tracor was keeping about 500 Nguni cattle⁴⁶ on the land, which it was intending to sell to local people for both breeding and slaughtering purposes. To maintain integrity of its forestry and cattle enterprises, Tracor attempted to exclude the livestock from the neighbouring villages which formerly grazed the area (the 5 500ha given to them in 1956), and impounded many animals found grazing there. This resulted in numerous conflicts with the Khanyayo people, who later managed to get 3 500ha of Tracor land for grazing. Following the closure of several parastatals by the provincial government in 1997, the Tracor project was also closed down and finally liquidated at the end of 1999.

The Wild Coast SDI in Mkambati

Due to the Wild Coast SDI's focus on agritourism, all the protected areas along this coast are viewed as crucial to the success of the project. The Mkambati area – the nature reserve in particular – was thus identified as one of the few nodes on which initial developments will concentrate. The unique vegetation, captivating landscape and favourable coastal climate were seen as features that could draw visitors from different walks of life. Therefore the private sector investment that is envisaged for Mkambati includes upgrading and extension of existing tourist facilities. The government's contribution is to improve infrastructure in the vicinity of the reserve, including roads, telephones, electricity and so forth. Outside the reserve, private companies are being encour-

aged to invest in agricultural and commercial forestry enterprises. It is envisaged that 'local communities' will benefit from the Wild Coast SDI in a number of ways including through forming business partnerships with external investors, government support for local business development, rental payments for land leased to investors, job opportunities, capacity building and improved infrastructure.

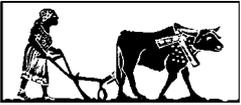
Following the identification of Mkambati as a key node in the Wild Coast SDI, intensive planning took place in both provincial and national government departments tasked with implementing the programme. Consultants briefly visited Mkambati Nature Reserve in 1996 to get a profile of the area and identify opportunities for investment. It was, however, only in late 1997 that the neighbouring villagers heard about the Wild Coast SDI in Mkambati for the first time (Kepe 1999). Even the first meeting convened by the consultants and which was mostly attended by the local elite, focused on helping villagers to choose a development benefit model. When one considers events since the meeting (see Manona & Kepe 1997; Kepe 1997b; 1999; Kepe et al. 1998), one can easily conclude that the facilitators were not aware that they were triggering a range of primarily unintentional positive and negative impacts on local livelihood systems. The following sections deal with those impacts on the livelihoods of people in the area.

Land conflict

While land conflict is not new to the people of Mkambati, the SDI has elevated the importance of rights to land in the Mkambati Nature Reserve and Tracor area. Conflict exists between villagers and outsiders (including government) as well as amongst villagers who live in the vicinity of the areas identified for development. The SDI has highlighted the urgent need for land rights to be clarified ahead of investment. This is particularly important as it is clear that benefits to local communities will be strongly linked to land ownership, while investors will require secure tenure on the land.



The SDI's emphasis on land-related benefits triggered a land claim by the Khanyayo people, but before the claim could be lodged with the Commission for Restitution of Land Rights, the Khanyayo's neighbours, who also fall under the Thaweni Tribal Authority, objected to the impending claim, arguing that no one administrative area can claim land which rightfully belongs to all the people of the tribal authority. The neighbours further argued that the community of beneficiaries in the Mkambati SDI should include all six administrative areas falling under Thaweni Tribal Authority. This follows the SDI's initial reference to the 'Mkambati community', intending to comprise inhabitants of a village close to Mkambati Nature Reserve. It was not until late 1997 that outsiders (including the SDI team) realised that the 'Mkambati community' may be much broader than initially thought (Wild Coast SDI 1997). The Khanyayo people, on the other hand, favoured a narrower definition of local community which was tied more closely to the history of occupation of the land in question.



Recognising that land was a central issue in the areas targeted by the Wild Coast SDI, the provincial office of DLA commissioned situational analyses in all the development nodes, including Mkambati. Based on oral history and archival research, the Mkambati situational analysis chronicled the tension, starting from the time the leper reserve was established to the middle of 1997 (see Kepe 1997a). The report also highlighted the existing conflict among various people and organisations about land rights in Mkambati and Tracor. The study concluded by recommending that this conflict over land be dealt with ahead of investment in the area and a mediation process was commissioned – after much hesitation – by the SDI and DLA in July 1997. An independent facilitator was hired to bring the conflicting sides together and attempt to find solutions. The facilitator subsequently contracted the author of the situational analysis report to participate as a resource person. In addition, various people from relevant agencies were invited

as either resource people or observers. Unfortunately there were no representatives from the two key players from government (DLA and SDI). The Khanyayo people, represented by the Khanyayo-Mkambati Development Forum (KMDF) and the other six administrative areas under Thaweni Tribal Authority, represented by the Joint Management Committee (JMC) (see Box 6) were invited as the key sides in the conflict. The three day meeting took place inside Mkambati Nature Reserve.

The first day concentrated on allowing the conflicting sides to table their arguments. The facilitator skilfully steered people towards dealing with the issue at hand, as it became clear that there were bones of contention between people unrelated to the land question (for example, kangaroo court justice and alleged embezzlement of organisational funds). On the second day, the author of the situational analysis report provided information in the form of history. This was followed by information from the representative of the Regional Land Claims Commission. After these information sessions, a long discussion followed, with both sides indicating their desire to have the area developed. Compromises were offered by both sides, with the Khanyayo agreeing to share benefits from development in Mkambati and the JMC agreeing to withdraw its insistence that the land belongs to all six administrative areas and not to the Khanyayo alone. The SDI and DLA were given the responsibility of doing follow-up, where they would ensure that the issues that resulted in the conflict were systematically dealt with. These agreements were taken to Khanyayo and to Thaweni Great Place, where they were presented to those who did not attend the meeting. The SDI and DLA personnel were very pleased that the conflict seemed to have been dealt with.

Following mediation, the Khanyayo were encouraged to claim the land they lost in 1920, which now included Mkambati Nature Reserve and Tracor land. However, the slow pace of land restitution in the country as a whole and the unco-

ordinated efforts of several government departments resulted in the conflict flaring up again. For almost a year following the mediation process neither the DLA or the SDI were involved in Mkambati. Agreements made during the mediation process were therefore never enforced.

DLA – under pressure from the SDI – attempted to conduct an inquiry to establish rights to land. The SDI team, however, continued to refer to the 'Mkambati community', the geographical boundaries of which were unclear to both outsiders and local people. Both the Khanyayo and the neighbouring areas waged a bitter struggle to influence government agencies working in the area. A range of (sometimes violent) incidents soon made it almost impossible for either government or NGOs to visit the area. Those who sought to work in certain communities were forced to take sides. DLA and SDI personnel decided to work with the rest of Thaweni Tribal Authority areas, as they were most vocal and were quick to threaten violence. By December 2000 the claim issue was still not resolved.

Committees, training and job lists

Playing a key role in the land struggle in the Mkambati area were a number of local committees, many of which were created or strengthened by the SDI. While these were originally formed for specific purposes, responsibilities are unclear and the same people appear to occupy positions in all of them. The committees are also used by the local elite as power bases.

The committees not only interfered with the land situation but their members (with the exception of the KMDF) were the first to receive SDI training. Where more trainees were required, committee members identified 'suitable' candidates. A popular perception developed that those who were trained would be the first to get jobs, resulting in conflict around who got onto lists for training. Rumour has it that certain committee leaders have identified themselves as future managers of various tourist facilities in Mkambati Nature Reserve. SDI consultants hired to conduct training were either unaware of or deliberately ignored the controversy.

Tracor land: Old struggle, new battles

When the Khanyayo felt excluded from SDI processes and ignored by the DLA and the Regional Land Claims Commission with regard to their land claim, they resorted to using 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985). Historically it had been their strategy to continue using any site even if it did not officially belong to them, as long as they believed that they had a right to it which predated the new tenure arrangement. Thus the Khanyayo allowed various people and groups to make use of the Tracor land. The late headman of the Khanyayo (Ngxolo Makita), working with the KMDF, allocated Tracor land to at least four Mpondo commercial farmers. Squatters looking for jobs in Mkambati were also allowed to build houses on the land, with the blessing of the headman and KMDF, even before talk of any development in the area. This 'illegal' use of the Tracor land by the Khanyayo triggered accusations of 'selling' plots against the headman and KMDF. These accusations mainly came from the SDI committee or JMC, with support from the Lusikisiki TRC. They argued that this action by the Khanyayo would scare investors away. The Khanyayo, on the other hand, were arguing that as far as they were concerned the land belong to them, and they were waiting for somebody to prove that this was not the case. They further argued that this action would ensure SDI investors knew who had rights to the land. This was just the beginning, as the Tracor land was later to become a new battleground between the Khanyayo, the JMC and the state.

When Tracor was liquidated in 1997, confusion reigned in the area. The JMC and the SDI Committees (minus the Khanyayo) had several discussions with the provincial MEC⁴⁷ responsible for agriculture about how to make the former Tracor land productive. There were rumours that the MEC had told them that Tracor currently belonged to the 'community'. These discussions with the MEC could be directly responsible for the Tracor manager's constant harassment from the JMC and the SDI committee. Tracor was not finally closed down until late in 1999.



Box 6: A selection of development committees in Mkambati

Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC):

Formed in 1992 between government officials and villagers to monitor the transformation of Mkambati Nature Reserve although the organisation never fulfilled its mandate and didn't hold a single general meeting to report back to people. It currently has no mission statement, but operates as a political organisation. It claims to represent all the six Thaweni administrative areas (including Khanyayo), plus a seventh adopted one (Mtshayelo). When it started this was indeed the case, but Khanyayo people who were part of the committee have since withdrawn, following conflict within the committee as early as 1996. The JMC's current leader is a local business person who also chairs many other committees in the area. Two politicians who were past leaders of the JMC – a member of the national Parliament and a member of the Lusikisiki Transitional Rural Council – still act as its 'brains'. JMC has also campaigned vigorously over the years to gain more members from Khanyayo in order to make the committee appear to be a legitimate representative of the entire Thaweni Tribal Authority. In this it has failed, but a handful of Khanyayo elite are members of the committee.

Khanyayo-Mkambati Development Forum (KMDF):

A development forum set up by Khanyayo people in 1996. It has a constitution and mission statement endorsed by the Paramount Chief and was set up to deal with development issues in Khanyayo and Mkambati, following the souring of relationships with the JMC. Rumours are that it was formed with the blessing of the then president of the JMC (now a mayor in one of the municipalities in the former Transkei), who allegedly said 'Khanyayo people we have now assisted you on your fight for Mkambati, it's now time for you to stand on your own and carry the struggle forward'. KMDF's leadership is, however, very weak and certain individuals participate to further their own interests. When it was formed, it had the support of the local headman. This headman has since passed away and his son, who took over the position, appears not to have given the committee his full support. The main support for this committee comes from people who live on the borders of the contested land. This committee has sought to represent Khanyayo people's interests in the SDI.

Mkambati SDI Committee:

The SDI facilitators formed this committee in 1997, mainly to act as a link between 'local people', the SDI and investors. Khanyayo activists saw this committee as an extension of the JMC and for years refused to be part of it. However, two male members of the Khanyayo elite sit on the committee, but are there without the blessing of the majority of the community. The Mkambati SDI Committee has also involved itself in the fight for Mkambati land on behalf of the entire tribal authority.

Mkambati Hospital Board:

This was formed in 1996, following the re-opening of a health centre in the place of the former leprosy/tuberculosis hospital. Its mandate was to liaise with the provincial Department of Health to arrange the practicalities of opening the centre. Most members of the board are also JMC and SDI committee members. One of the most notable actions of the hospital board was to take over the empty wards of the former leper hospital and hire them out to teachers, students and workers of Mkambati Nature Reserve. All the proceeds have gone to the JMC.



Large-scale looting at Tracor began on the night the liquidators arrived. A few days after Tracor was deserted by the managers and workers, people from distant villages came to collect natural resources, particularly sand and eucalyptus trees. Truck owners who had previously paid Tracor for collecting trees were now freely collecting and selling loads of trees to villagers close to Flagstaff. This triggered a response from the Khanyayo villagers. KMDF and the headman convened a meeting where it was decided that 'Tracor must be protected from the outsiders'. One elderly political activist from Khanyayo had this to say:

When we saw our land being made bare by outsiders we had to act quickly. It is now clear from what these people are doing that they do not own the land. How many people from Khanyayo have trucks to remove loads of trees? People who do not own something find it easy to destroy it. We have bigger plans for this land. We don't see the departure of Tracor as an end. We can manage things on our own.⁴⁸

The Khanyayo hastily put together a management committee to operate Tracor and what remained of its resources. A manager, receptionist and guards were asked to live on the premises to put a stop to the looting and denudation of natural resources. Most of the guards were former employees of Tracor and knew the place well. Following this move by the Khanyayo, all trucks had to go through a gate, where they had to show proof that they paid for the trees or sand they were carrying. Teachers who had been renting rooms within Tracor now had to pay rent to the Khanyayo. Government and the SDI were nowhere to be seen. This prompted Khanyayo people to wonder if government still cared about the former Tracor land. The Khanyayo were even more puzzled by the government's silence, given that investors (Khulani Ma-Africa) had won a tender for Mkambati (including Tracor land) and were planning to develop the area.

However, the takeover of Tracor by Khanyayo villagers did not last more than six months, as the JMC and the SDI committee returned to drive the Khanyayo out. They succeeded in doing this at a time when the KMDF and the headman were having a dispute and no resistance against the JMC invasion could be sustained. It was now up to individual and brave Khanyayo youth to attempt to repossess Tracor land. However, before any confrontation took place, hired guards were sent by the Department of Public Works to look after the buildings.⁴⁹ When asked what other instructions they had been given, the guards responded by saying that they did not get very clear instructions and were never aware that there was this much conflict. By December 2000 the guards and JMC were still in Tracor, but not really working together. The Khanyayo were claiming to be regrouping and were planning another 'offensive' to take possession of the land they believed was theirs.

The long wait for investors

Land conflict was not the only response to proposed SDI development. Many residents stopped seeking work elsewhere because of the opportunities that believed would arise from the promised investments. Those who would normally travel to KwaZulu/Natal to work in the sugar cane plantations thought they might lose out if they were not around when the jobs arrived. Some villagers had been 'waiting' since 1997, while others gave up after a year or two. A few hopefuls were even camped inside Mkambati Nature Reserve to wait for jobs and were supported by their families back in the villages.

Members of the local elite had responded to the planned developments by making investments of their own. As early as 1997, local business people had acquired mini-buses and trucks with a view to transporting workers between the villages and Mkambati Nature Reserve. Supermarkets and cottages were built on the borders of the Mkambati/Tracor land, to take advantage of the promised boom in tourism. Most of these investments took place between 1998 and 1999 but some



were abandoned as hopes faded. One local store owner recently indicated his regret for selling his store in order to purchase a transport vehicle. Three years later he sold the vehicle and bought his store back, complaining that he exchanged his livelihood (the store) for nothing (the SDI).

Thirdly, the Khanyayo elite took advantage by building mansions on the Tracor land. Few of these had attended village meetings where discussions about claiming the land were conducted. In other words their occupation of the Tracor land was not motivated by resistance, but amounted to a calculated plan to force compensation for their 'property' out of future investors or government.

While the Khanyayo villagers supported the occupation of the Tracor land, they appeared to resent the elite for their actions on the land; some of the poorer villages said '*sibabhekile*' (we are watching them). By late 2000, poorer villagers were vowing to build their own structures on the Tracor land, even though they had no plans to move from their present homesteads. In that way, they argued, they would be continuing resistance, but also be showing the elite that the land belonged to all the villagers and not only to the rich.

Many villagers, particularly the elderly men, never believed there would be jobs for them and their children. From the moment they heard that the SDI was a government initiative they made comments like:

Government is the same. They make promises and you never see them again. Those who think that government has stopped telling lies can continue to wait, but I will continue doing what I have been doing for all these years.

Villagers have thus responded differently to the pending SDI investment, mainly according to their social status.

Social relations in the village

Tensions around land claims, committee membership and perceived privileges seriously strained social relations in the villages. The rift between the people of Khanyayo and other areas of the Thaweni

Tribal Authority also negatively affected the relationship between the chief of the tribal authority and the headman of Khanyayo, bringing the conflicting parties into both magistrate's and traditional courts. Divisions also existed between those involved in the land claims and non-claimants.

The SDI and DLA pushed affected parties towards setting aside a community claim and focusing on those 50 households or so who were actually removed from the land. This infuriated the majority, who argued that the land belonged to them as a community and that they grazed their animals there. Some claimants came to feel that the DLA and the Regional Land Claims Commission had victimised them. They argued that the amount the Commission had offered was not based on realistic costs. At one stage during the early part of 2000, people belonging to the claiming group began rallying support from the non-claimants. This campaign only abated when the Commission sent a consultant to collect details of the claimants in December 2000. Suddenly the claimants became confident and started talking about 'our land', which was insulting to the rest of the Khanyayo people. The relationship between the claimants and the non-claimants was further strained when it was alleged that many people who were not related to the people who were removed from Mkambati were also furnishing the consultants with their details. Now villagers are saying '*sawukhe sibone*' (we will see), and vowing to cause trouble if only a minority benefits from the land.

A third sphere in which social relationships have been affected is political. Prior to the 1999 national elections, politicians rallied support around the SDI, in spite of the arguments that the SDI should not go ahead until land claims are resolved. Those favouring resolution of the land question before SDI investment were denounced as anti-government United Democratic Movement (UDM) members, and were ostracised by those in power. The DLA and the SDI team advanced factionalism by working with those who favoured fast-tracking the process.



Infrastructure and jobs so far

By the end of 1999, a consortium won the bid to invest in tourism in the Mkambati Nature Reserve. During the same year the government began improving infrastructure. Roads were and are being re-gravelled between Flagstaff and Mkambati and electricity and telephone poles are being installed (although the majority of people are still without these services). What these infrastructural improvements brought was a few hundred temporary jobs with some villagers working a week each in order to give others a chance, although the majority have not yet had any work. The number of jobs said to be provided by the road building projects might therefore not be a true indication of the level of employment provided.

Another problem relating to jobs was the way people were hired: the local elite – including business people and political activists – took control of job allocations. When a Working for Water project⁵⁰ started in Mkambati Nature Reserve, the SDI committee decided to draw workers from all the administrative areas under Thaweni Tribal Authority. Ten people per area were hired to work for one month each in the four-month project. The pay was R25 per day, a standard rate for short-term employment in government projects in the area at that time. In Khanyayo it was decided that since there were so few vacancies, only the very poor, particularly widows, should be given the opportunities. However, in the end it was the wives of political activists and committee members who got the jobs. In addition to this, a few worked for more than the one month that was agreed upon locally. This raised questions among other villagers, especially those who never got an opportunity to work.

Conclusion

There are at least three main lessons that can be drawn from the Mkambati case study. The first is that existing conflict in the area shows that people were aware of benefits that came with holding rights to a piece of land. For the Khanyayo it was mainly for the benefit of grazing their

cattle, but also the collection of a range of natural resources from Tracor and the reserve, that they fought for their land rights. When the SDI was introduced to the area, their reasons for seeking ownership of the land became more complex. They also realised that land gives them bargaining power. Not that they did not know this before, but the SDI was promising to present them with opportunities they never had before including negotiating with wealthy investors who were interested in their land. It would therefore be incorrect to think that villagers, who are poor and uneducated, do not make the link between land rights and benefits in a changing socio-economic environment.

Secondly, current activities of the elite with regard to development in the area can provide lessons for the future. It is clear that in the face of limited opportunities, the elite will do everything in its power to maximise its own gain. If opportunities were greater in number, there is no reason to assume these would not also be captured by the local elite. There is little to counter the power of this group and government is failing to protect the interests of the poor, although the developments are specifically intended to benefit this group.

Thirdly, although the Wild Coast SDI is not fully implemented in the area, it is making an impact on livelihoods evidenced by the conflict over land, animosity between people living in the same village, and the large numbers of youth waiting in the village for jobs. Even the elite is negatively affected as investments made in anticipation of reaping benefits from the SDI are not bearing fruit.



Notes

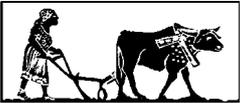
- 42 Cape Town Archives-1 LSK 177 file N2/7/3/13.
- 43 Cape Town Archives-1 LSK 177 file N2/7/3/13.
- 44 Foresters of the Transkeian territories were initially reluctant to endorse the use of this area as a leper reserve for the same reasons. They even recommended the construction of a fence to prevent the lepers from destroying the dune forests, although this was never

done. (Cape Town Archives – 1 LSK 177 file N2/7/3/13).

- 45 These were harvested between 1998 and 1999.
- 46 An indigenous breed.
- 47 Member of the Executive Committee of the province.
- 48 Interview with a village elder,

Ngwenyeni, Khanyayo, 13 November 1999.

- 49 This information is from the guards themselves and was not confirmed with other sources.
- 50 A national Department of Water Affairs and Forestry programme to protect water resources by removing alien vegetation.



Chapter Nine: Stalled development initiatives: Lessons from the Wild Coast SDI

Introduction

This study has sought to analyse an attempt by government to revitalise the rural economy of the Wild Coast area by promoting private sector investment through the Spatial Development Initiative. More specifically it attempted to analyse the process of 'implementation' of the SDI and land reform (for example, conflict resolution, consultation and inter-departmental co-ordination). These issues are explored in detail in three areas which are investment nodes of the Wild Coast SDI, namely Port St Johns, Magwa and Mkambati. From observing the impact of the Wild Coast SDI on rural livelihoods and social life in these areas, several lessons have emerged, and these are discussed below.

The real reasons for stalled implementation

This study has largely focused on how shortcomings in the process of implementation have resulted in delays of the Wild Coast SDI. However, before drawing lessons related to the process of the SDI, I need to point out that this study was not blind to a larger problem of the SDI strategy. It is not my intention to leave an impression that if the process issues, as presented in this conclusion, are resolved, then the Wild Coast SDI would achieve its goals. While resolving these process issues would go a long way towards smoothing the implementation of this programme, a major stumbling block is the conceptual model of the SDI.

The 'growth = development' paradigm implicit in the SDI programme is widely believed to be without merit (Kepe et al. 2001; Marais 1998). Unequal distribution of assets in poor (rural) areas, and the heavy reliance on leveraging private sector

investment into poor areas are just two of the challenges that were never likely to be resolved within the time-frame the SDI allowed itself. The SDI plan was thus conceptually limited from the start. Current delays in the implementation of the strategy, therefore, are likely to be permanent unless there is serious rethinking of the conceptual model on which the SDI is based. This said, even if the SDI was based on a workable conceptual model, process issues would still be crucial to its implementation.

Information and consultation

One of the key reasons for the failure of the SDI to gain popular support is the way in which information about the project has been conveyed. As this study shows, one of the main limitations on getting potential beneficiaries to participate in the planning and implementation of SDI activities was the lack of adequate information. This shortcoming was found to result from the



poorly-executed communication strategy of the Wild Coast SDI. The use of primarily urban-based facilitators seriously inhibited the project because of their lack of experience and credibility in rural areas. Furthermore, the facilitators were themselves short of adequate information about the programme. The little information they did have was not disseminated adequately due to a combination of lack of support from the government and poor choices on the part of the facilitators with regard to channels of communication, venues of meetings and so forth. At times the inappropriateness of the methods of dissemination encouraged conflict, rather than participation in the SDI.

Government departments not involved in the planning of the SDI but whose involvement in the programme was crucial (for example, DLA), also experienced problems in gaining adequate information. Public support for the SDIs was also hampered by the secrecy surrounding implementation plans, which particularly affected researchers and journalists. It is argued here that SDI outcomes could be improved if the information strategy is improved. The SDI team could also benefit from making use of the detailed empirical research conducted by independent people and institutions in the project areas of the Wild Coast.



The land question

The land question has turned out to be a primary factor explaining the slow implementation of the Wild Coast SDI. This report has shown how the delays in the implementation of land reform in the former bantustans have been problematic for the SDI. Tenure reform and restitution have been the most relevant to date in the areas targeted for development. The introduction of the Wild Coast SDI encouraged numerous fresh land claims and in certain areas intensified conflict around competing claims to land. With the Regional Land Claims Commission struggling to deal with rural claims (Turner & Ibsen 2000), very few claims have been resolved amicably.

The discussion on the three case study areas shows how the Wild Coast SDI attempted to influence the course of the restitution process by promising economic development (*uphuhliso*) in exchange for withdrawal of claims or acceptance of alternative compensation by rural claimants. Instead of helping to fast-track the land claim process in SDI areas, these alternative measures resulted in conflicts between those villagers who wanted the process to take its course and those who 'would rather have jobs'.

Government also appears unable to decide how tenure rights to communal land should be held; whether it should be by individuals, community trusts, companies, 'tribes' or traditional authorities. At present traditional authorities are exploiting the state's indecision over how tenure rights should be held in order to bolster their claim for control of communal areas (Ntsebeza 2000). In areas where opposition to traditional authorities holding land rights is more visible (for example, in areas of Lusikisiki), there are more problems for the SDI. One of the major problems for both restitution and tenure is the uncertainty about who should enter negotiations about land with investors. The proposal that the Minister of Land Affairs should enter into negotiations with investors on behalf of rural people is unlikely to satisfy all interested parties. These emerging land problems with the SDI highlight the need for land rights to be clarified ahead of any investment or intervention that is targeting land in the former bantustans.

Another lesson offered by the land situation is that the SDI and any other development intervention targeting former bantustans should be preceded by thorough situational analysis. Where such a situational analysis is conducted, it should not only serve as a mere fulfilment of a requirement; the findings should be used, and alternative plans made where things appear unworkable.

Definitions of beneficiary 'communities'

The problems relating to the land question also affect SDI benefits to people in the

Wild Coast area. The SDI has always insinuated that benefits from its projects will be strongly linked to land ownership, hence the fierce conflict over land experienced in most parts of the Wild Coast. Yet the SDI operates on ill-defined notions of 'community' (Kepe 1999). In most cases, the SDI is comfortable with a narrow geographical concept of 'community', with little sensitivity to historical divisions or associations. However, when the realities on the ground prove to be incompatible with this definition, the SDI has found it easy to shift, generally favouring those with the strongest voice. This in turn results in power struggles at local level as was seen in the Port St Johns and Mkambati case study areas.

In many cases, the question of who benefits from what development within the SDI depends on who represents whom and in what forum. The politics of representation are not unique to the Wild Coast SDI, they are a worldwide problem. Within the SDI, people strive to be on the different committees, hoping that when benefits come, they and their chosen ones will be the first to benefit. It is clear from the study that party politics and the influence of traditional authorities undermine transparency and fairness. In Mkambati and Port St Johns the role played by party politics has given the SDI a very bad name. People who do not support the ruling party feel sidelined and the SDI appears to turn a blind eye to this. At the same time, people are using political parties to strengthen their claims. In Magwa area the Mpondo king seems to enjoy unqualified support from government structures and this opens up an opportunity for him to personally gain from development ventures.

With little implementation having taken place thus far, the SDI still has an opportunity to seek proper advice on how SDI benefits should be shared, taking into consideration history and the present *status quo*. In listening to the locals it would have to deal cautiously with the existing power imbalances.

The environment

With the Wild Coast being targeted mainly because of its beauty, the environment has

become central to the SDI project. Chapter 3 of this report highlighted the range of views on how the Wild Coast environment should be managed. However, certain issues have been non-negotiable. For instance, in areas where there were land claims within nature reserves the SDI, with support from other government departments, made it clear that changing land use on land on which there is a claim is out of the question. These nature reserves are seen as the main attraction for ecotourists in the area. This approach has led to questions about the constitutional rights of individual claimants.

The SDI itself has been charged with environmental insensitivity in some of its proposed projects. Proposals to build high-rise buildings and toll-roads or to encourage commercial forestry in environmentally-sensitive areas has damaged the credibility of the programme. In addition to this, most of the environmental studies commissioned by the SDI on these sites ignored patterns of local use of natural resources and were conducted within the SDI's overall framework of 'fast-tracking'. Within the fast-track process, the fact that development is really about people seems to have been lost and the need for a livelihoods perspective within the SDI is glaringly evident.



Inter-departmental co-ordination

Inter-departmental co-operation is essential in projects of the magnitude of the SDI. This was, however, shown to be lacking in the Wild Coast SDI, in particular with regard to the relationship between the DLA and the SDI team. In addition the SDI organisers noted that:

complications exist in situations where a programme (SDI) requires specific feed stocks (local governance, environment, infrastructure, etc.) that fall outside the competency of the driving department (DTF¹) (Mahlati 1999).

In the absence of such co-ordination, conflicting plans were commonplace, as was seen in the conflict over dune-mining

at Wavecrest, a Wild Coast ecological hotspot.

Rural livelihoods

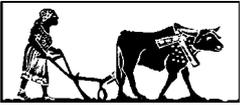
The Wild Coast SDI is aimed at improving rural livelihoods, yet five years on from inception there are few signs that this goal will be met in the near future. The case studies demonstrate that a high level of expectation exists, and local people are keen to participate in future developments. So far, the prospect of development promised by the SDI has led to people turning down work in other areas (as in the case of sugar-cane workers), investing in idle infrastructure and services (such as transport), and committing their time to com-

mittee activities before their daily livelihood work (for example, in agriculture).

The SDI should be cautious about promising more than can be delivered and should ensure that, in its enthusiasm to derive benefits from the programme, people do not neglect their other sources of livelihood. The diverse and complex livelihood strategies of rural people should inform the efforts of the SDI team, particularly as opportunities in new ventures such as tourism are likely to supplement, rather than replace, existing economic activities.

Notes

51 The national Department of Trade and Industry in which the SDIs are based.



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