

PARTNERSHIPS IN CONSERVATION:
THE STATE, PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE
COMMUNITY AT MADIKWE GAME RESERVE,
NORTH-WEST PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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SUMMARY

Madikwe Game Reserve (Madikwe) was created ostensibly to provide economic returns to both local neighbouring communities and the North West Province of South Africa. This objective was based on three key assumptions. Firstly, that wildlife-based tourism was the best economic use of the acquired land. Secondly, that the conservation value of the land would be increased by wildlife-based tourism development. Thirdly, that the villages surrounding Madikwe would benefit economically from this form of land use. The objective and assumptions led to the strategy of creating an equal partnership between the Parks Board, private sector, and the community. In this paper we assess these assumptions, as well as the assumption that communities with poorly-defined tenure could in fact be “equal partners”.

Wildlife-based tourism is seemingly the best economic use of the acquired land for two reasons. First, there are no minerals that can be profitably exploited at Madikwe and the land, previously degraded by cattle ranching, is marginal for agricultural production. Second, over 90% of introduced wild animals have increased significantly in numbers with their market values increasing from US\$2.5 million to US\$5.7 million. However, tourism development has not shown the anticipated growth. Of the expected 15 lodge operators with between 500 and 700 beds, only 4 with under 100 beds have invested so far. In that the achievement of most of socio-economic and conservation objectives depended on the financial yields of the private sector, Madikwe is still some 30 years away from reaching its potential. This long time lag is causing an acute delay in the delivery of intended benefits to the community, resulting in tensions and conflict. Nevertheless, by creating 170 high quality jobs, the reserve has already surpassed the 80 poor quality jobs predicated by the cattle ranching option.

It appears that the equal partnership concept with the community was seriously flawed, suggesting that this aspect was not given sufficient thought during the planning and implementation stages. The ‘community’, being made up of three distinct villages under different authorities, was not as homogeneous as previously assumed. Of importance to the equal partnership strategy was that their rights and tenure were not defined. Both the Parks Board and the private sector had far more power than the community. The community, by not owning land, the *sine qua non* of power for effective bargaining, remained paralysed. The Madikwe project was in reality held up by the two legs of the stronger partners, the Parks Board and the Private Sector, while the weaker leg of the community dangled along. But the Parks Board had started to feel the strain of carrying the weaker partner and, as a result, raised financial support to improve the situation.

The lessons learnt in this model are: first, engaging community development in conservation can mean burdening the protected area with broader issues of rural development. But can protected areas totally remove themselves from this? Second, community participation in conservation is complex, difficult and expensive as it depends on other factors outside the local situation. The viability of the Madikwe model is, therefore, influenced by factors beyond its control. How well Madikwe performs is strongly influenced by the performance of the entire South Africa, a country in transition.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is the mission of the North West Parks Board (Parks Board) that wildlife conservation should contribute towards improving the quality of life of people in the North West Province. To achieve this, the Parks Board strives to obtain the support and commitment of neighbouring communities and ultimately of the entire province to their stated mission and strategies. This is in line with current trends in southern Africa where communities are increasingly becoming involved in natural resource management in and outside formal conservation estates at various levels of participation. However, it should be noted that Madikwe Game Reserve (Madikwe) differs from many community-based conservation initiatives in that the ownership of, and management responsibility for the resource base (the game reserve), are clearly vested in the conservation authority, the Parks Board. The model is therefore one of conservation-based community development rather than community-based natural resource management.

Madikwe was created on three assumptions. Firstly, that wildlife-based tourism was the best economic use of the acquired land. Secondly, that the conservation value of the land would be increased by wildlife-based tourism development. Thirdly, that the villages surrounding Madikwe would benefit economically from this form of land use. In broad terms, the Madikwe development model was envisaged as a tripartite equal partnership between the Parks Board, private sector and the community. Like the three legs of a tripod, all the partners would be equally involved in holding up the project. Indeed, it was stated that “without the full and meaningful contribution of these partners, the Madikwe project would fail - sooner rather than later” (Davies 1997:5). However, while the rights and type of tenure for both the Parks Board and the private sector were clearly defined through contracts and lease agreements (see Davies 1997; Davies et al. 1997), the rights and type of tenure for the community were not defined.

1.1. Background and history

Madikwe covers 75 000 hectares and is situated in the northern region of the North West Province of the democratic or new South Africa (after April 1994). At the time (early 1991) of its conceptual planning and development Madikwe fell under the government of the erstwhile homeland of Bophuthatswana (Bop). During the late 1980s, farm lands belonging to white commercial farmers were expropriated by the “old” South African government in order to incorporate the land into the then “independent” Bop. These farms were to be redistributed by the Bop government to emerging black cattle farmers. Since the land was degraded by cattle farming, the Bop government commissioned independent consultants, Settlements Planning Services (Setplan 1991) to assess the most appropriate land use for the area. Two key land-use options were considered. Firstly, the establishment of extensive cattle ranching together with irrigated agriculture. Secondly, the development of a wildlife-based tourism initiative which included the ‘big five’, i.e., elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, lion and leopard.

In addition to these two options (Anon 1992), special consideration was also given to the following factors:

- job creation including economic and social benefits to the local communities;

- attraction of private sector funding, and;
- attraction of foreign currency through regional and international tourism.

1.1.1. Setplan study

The Setplan (1991) study (see Table 1) showed that wildlife-based tourism development, with a predicted net return of 15% on the capital investment once fully established, far exceeded cattle ranching (predicted net return: 0.43%).

Table1. **Comparison of land-use options for Madikwe.**

	Ranching (US\$)	Wildlife tourism (US\$)
Cost per job	50,000	8,000
Wages paid per annum (p.a.)	160,000	2,433,000
Capital cost to government	1,517,000	3,450,000
Capital cost to private sector	2,500,000	5,917,000
Cost to government (p.a.)	33,000	333,000
Net income to government (p.a.)	27,000	1,613,000

Source: Adapted from Magome (1996).

There were four major reasons for the decision to pursue the game reserve option, based on the results of the Setplan (1991) study. Firstly, that once fully-established, Madikwe could generate jobs in excess of 1200 (compared with 80 jobs from cattle ranching) with an associated payroll of about US\$1.5 million per annum. Secondly, that the spin-off effects of Madikwe on the local economy, through linkages and multipliers, would be much higher than that for cattle ranching. Thirdly, that the local economy, which was highly dependent on agriculture, would be significantly diversified and improved. Fourthly, that net income accruing to the government would be significantly increased.

Following the publication of the Setplan report in February 1991 recommending wildlife-based tourism as the best form of land-use for the area, the Bop government immediately (in March 1991) instructed the Parks Board to develop Madikwe (Anon. 1992).

The development of Madikwe started almost immediately with the launching of *Operation Phoenix* (Box 1) in early 1992. The speed of developing Madikwe was perhaps, despite good intentions of benefiting local communities, the “Achilles’ heel” of the project. Within a year (1991–1992), most of the basic infrastructure needed for managing Madikwe was established, i.e., fencing off the land and introducing wild animals.

Box 1. **Wildlife Re-introduction Projects for Bop Parks.**

During *Operation Phoenix* over 8,000 animals belonging to 25 different species were released into Madikwe. The rationale here was that tourists visit game reserves to see wild animals. Thus, a wide variety of animal species were introduced as quickly as was possible to encourage tourism development. **Source:** Hofmeyr (1997).

Pilanesberg, also under the Bop Government, was developed quickly through what was then called *Operation Genesis*. This exercise was at the time the largest re-introduction of wild animals ever undertaken in the world. **Source:** Molohe (1988).

It needs to be mentioned here that “fast development” was the *modus operandi* of the Bop government. The speed of development at Madikwe surpassed even the development of Pilanesberg National Park (see Box 1). This fast development meant that the communities,

intended to be equal partners in Madikwe, were essentially left out of the planning process (Setplan 1991), despite the intention of the Parks Board to work closely with them “from the very beginning of the project and thereby build relationship of mutual trust and benefit” (Collinson 1992:3).

1.1.2. Initial social survey

The Parks Board staff became so engrossed in speeding up the development of Madikwe that, by default rather than intention, they neglected the community. Indeed, Perkins (1993) stated that “while it is true that an attempt had been made to estimate the likely economic impact of the game reserve during planning, no real effort had been made to gauge community perceptions about the reserve”. In 1993 the Parks Board and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), realising the mistake, initiated a baseline socio-economic survey of the villages neighbouring Madikwe, including Lekgopung, Supingstad, and Molatedi. These three villages were later collectively referred to as ‘the community’ by the Parks Board. Key findings of Perkins (1993) are summarised in Box 2. There were three additional findings which are significant to this analysis. Firstly, although agriculture was the core activity in many villages, most of it was restricted to the production of livestock. Despite this, nearly 50% of households owned no livestock at all and of those that did, 75% owned less than five animals each. Thus, livestock ownership was heavily skewed to a small minority who owned more than 100 head each. In terms of equity, the issue of livestock ownership was an important consideration..

If the Madikwe land had been distributed to cattle owners as was originally intended, those with the greatest number of animals would have benefited the most, thus further skewing wealth and, thereby, reducing the chance to improve the lives of the poorest. The wildlife-based tourism option was, thus, in a far better position to provide a more equitable distribution of social benefits amongst the communities than cattle ranching.

Box 2. Findings of the 1993 socio-economic survey.

The survey showed that:

- Village residents relied on income generated outside the area with a large percentage (36%) of the population living and employed away from their villages. Most did remit at least some of their income back into the area.
- A large section (37%) of the population was below the age of 20, while 10% was above the age of 65. Many (34%) adults of working age were unemployed.
- The average household income was US\$170 p.m., with formal income accounting for 60%, pensions 18% and informal income contributing 14% to total household income. This income was far below the minimum living wage estimated at the time at US\$263 p.m. per family.

Secondly, the survey results also showed that, generally, there was a high level (>90%) of awareness among villagers about Madikwe. However, half of the respondents had only a partial understanding of what Madikwe was about and what it intended to achieve. The survey also found that expectations amongst the villages about what Madikwe could deliver to them were high. It was thus crucial that the community be involved and informed about all elements of planning and implementation throughout the development

process of Madikwe in order to avoid disappointment on their part (Perkins 1993).

Thirdly, villages were found to have very poor levels of infrastructure development, particularly water supply, sewerage, roads, electricity and telephones. It was realised that the Madikwe development would have to be linked to a development process within the villages, which focused on meeting their basic needs (Perkins 1993). The need to involve the community precipitated the concept of including the three villages (collectively) as an equal partner in the Madikwe model.

1.2. Purpose of this paper

The main purpose of this paper is to test to what extent (if any) communities can have effective participation without defined tenure. We also comment on the achievement of conservation, socio-economic and financial objectives of the Madikwe project.

2. APPROACH

According to the recent 1996 census, the village of Lekgopung has an estimated population of 1672; while Supingstad has 2692 and; Molatedi has 1577. To assess the socio-economic situation of the communities neighbouring Madikwe, we used data collected by Magome and Sentle (1998) as part of this project. Briefly, the villages of Lekgopung, Supingstad and Molatedi were surveyed between March and April 1998 using a face-to-face questionnaire survey (Magome and Sentle 1998). The interviews took place on informal encounters with the interviewees, 16 years and older, others took place in households. A total of 317 people were interviewed which represents about 10% of economically active people in all the three villages combined. Accordingly, the sample sizes for each village were 80 for Lekgopung, 128 for Supingstad, and 109 for Molatedi (Magome and Sentle 1998).

We also analysed minutes of community meetings kept by Mafisa, the management agent appointed by Parks Board in 1997 with funding by DFID (the British Department For International Development) for the purpose of community capacity building at Madikwe, and further interviewed key informants in the three villages. Key documents outlining the rationale for creating Madikwe were also analysed. In particular the following were reviewed: Setplan (1991), Collinson (1992), Perkins (1993), Magome (1996), Davies (1997) and the Madikwe Development Task Team (MDTT) (1997). Our comments on the conservation achievement of Madikwe were based largely on the work of Hofmeyr (1997) while those on the financial and economic performance of Madikwe were based largely on the work of Davies *et al.* (1997). Data on the monetary value of wildlife including employment and salary levels of local residents employed at Madikwe were obtained from the Parks Board.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Communities

3.1.1. Attitudes and needs

The attitudes and needs of the three villages, Lekgopung, Supingstad and Molatedi, with regard to Madikwe were found by Magome and Sentle (1998) to be different. Briefly, they found that the support for Madikwe as the best land-use option was highest (87%) in Lekgopung but lower in both Supingstad (34%) and Molatedi (45%). However, the support for Madikwe as a wildlife sanctuary was high in all villages. For example, 85% of respondents in Lekgopung wanted wildlife kept in Madikwe; 72% in Supingstad and 66% in Molatedi. They also found that complaints about the management of Madikwe were highest in Supingstad and Molatedi. This suggested that each village was unique and had its own dynamics that affected its behaviour and attitudes towards Madikwe. Their results confirmed the highly differentiated nature of these three villages against the false assumption of the Parks Board that these villages represented one single homogeneous community with the same social and economic needs. To some extent, this flawed assumption has contributed to delaying the effective participation of these three villages at Madikwe. For example, up to end of July 1998, the Parks Board has used one combined community development forum to address the needs of all these villages. In

addition, Magome and Sentle (1998) found that although the three villages had similar needs, the needs (Box 3) were prioritised differently in the three villages. The development of village infrastructure here referred to drinking water, tarred roads, electricity supply, telephone lines and recreational facilities. It was found that these villages had expected Madikwe to facilitate rural development.

Box 3. The needs of the 3 villages ranked in order of priority.

Lekgopung

- development of the village infrastructure
- creation of job opportunities; and
- provision of school bursaries.

Supingstad

- the creation of job opportunities;
- the development of the village, and
- bursaries lumped with other small needs.

Molatedi

- school bursaries;
- the creation of job opportunities;
- the development of the village

3.1.2. Poverty levels

A major consideration for creating Madikwe was to improve livelihoods, particularly in the three villages (Anon 1992). On the contrary, Magome and Sentle (1998:11) found that “since the survey by Perkins (1993) livelihoods have deteriorated in the three villages despite the presence of Madikwe”. For example, unemployment has increased from 34% to 91%. Fourteen percent (14%) of Lekgopung residents received income compared to 16% for Supingstad and 20% for Molatedi. But these figures included pensioners who derived income from government and thus were not a good indicator of the social impact of Madikwe (Magome and Sentle 1998).

If pensioners (Table 2) are excluded, then only 5% of Lekgopung residents are in formal employment as compared to significantly higher figures of 9% at Supingstad and 16% at Molatedi.

	Available for employment	Actually employed	% employed
Lekgopung	844	38	5
Molatedi	692	110	16
Supingstad	1448	130	9

3.1.3. Power struggles between communities

There were major power differences among the three villages that hindered achievement of collective goals (Magome and Sentle 1998). As stated by Murphree (1994), for any community to obtain benefits it must be structured so as to accommodate internal differences for collective goals. Although Magome and Sentle (1998), for ethical reasons, did not reveal the sources of power, based on our own observations, we concurred with their analysis. Briefly, power among these villages existed in two distinct forms. Firstly, the power of the chieftainship, i.e., the tribal authority. Supingstad village had the strongest leadership, with Molatedi at a distant second and Lekgopung by far the weakest (Magome and Sentle 1998). Secondly, the power of individuals within the three villages, in terms of intellect and leadership abilities. Here, Molatedi was the undisputed leader with Supingstad a distant second and, again, Lekgopung at the far end (Magome and Sentle 1998). Of all the villages, Lekgopung was also by far the least developed in terms of infrastructure, e.g., lack of easy access to electricity and water.

3.2. Parks Board

3.2.1. Conservation development

There are no minerals that can be profitably exploited at Madikwe and the land, previously degraded by cattle ranching, is marginal for agricultural production. Wildlife-based tourism was, thus, the best land use for this area. Most wildlife populations are thriving (see Hofmeyr 1997). Wildlife has increased in value from US\$2.5 million (purchase cost) to US\$5.7 million (present value). The land value is now estimated at US\$7.8 million (Davies *et al.* 1997).

3.2.2. Job creation

Most of the employment opportunities are facilitated by the Parks Board through ecotourism development (see 3.3.2 below). However, there are a number of job opportunities that the Parks Board has already provided. For example, the maintenance contract for the 150-kilometre perimeter fence is contracted to a local entrepreneur (Davies 1997) who employs local people.

3.3. Private Sector

3.3.1. Ecotourism development

The private sector provides all tourism facilities through lease agreements with the Parks Board. Currently there are four lodges with under 100 beds (Box 4). The private sector is expected to invest US\$26.7-US\$433.3 million in the reserve (Davies *et al.* 1997).

Box 4. Lease agreements with lodge operators in Madikwe.

River Lodge: US\$10,000 p.a. escalating at 10% p.a. for the 1st 5 years, thereafter an additional 8% of turnover p.a. (above the basic lease).

Tau Lodge: US\$ 20,000 p.a. escalating at 10% p.a. and after 2 years 8% of turnover p.a. (over and above the basic lease).

Corporate Lodge: US\$14,000 once off and thereafter US\$4,000 p.a., escalating at 10% p.a. (revisable every 5 years).

Honey Guide: US\$4,000 escalating @ 20% p.a. (revisable after 2yrs).

3.3.2. Job creation

In terms of job creation (Table 3), Madikwe has already exceeded the 80 cattle ranching jobs predicted.

The quality of the jobs in terms of careers and salaries are far better than those of cattle ranching. In cattle ranching, the salary of a farm supervisor, the most senior position, was estimated at US\$70 per month.

Table 3. Current employment levels at Madikwe.

	River Lodge	Tau Lodge	Corporate. Lodge	Honey Guide	Parks Board
Employed	35	70	4	6	54
Locals	80%	80%	40%	40%	80%
Average salary US\$	200	200	340	340	400

3.4. Power relations between Parks Board, private sector and communities

That “Madikwe is run as a three-way partnership between the State (represented by the Parks Board), local communities and the private sector” (e.g., see prefaces in Davies 1997; Davies *et al.* 1997; Hofmeyr 1997), is presented as a statement of fact. The project has been running for nearly 7 years, 1991-1998. We consider 7 years as sufficient period of time to allow for a critical review of the process that was followed and also of an assessment of whether the Madikwe project is meeting its stated key objective of equal partnership. Detailed roles of these partners are outlined in Davies (1997). Since power affects both access to resources and effective participation in projects (Magome and Sentle 1998), we analysed power differences among the three partners.

3.4.1. The Parks Board

Briefly, the Parks Board provides and ensures that all the conservation infrastructure is managed according to the plans, objectives and policies set out in the Madikwe management plan (MDTT 1997). The Parks Board facilitates and co-ordinates the involvement of the two other partners, the private sector and the community. As a

representative of the state, the Parks Board is the “principal partner” (Davies 1997:5) and accordingly “sets out the responsibilities and *modus operandi* of the other role players” (MDTT 1997:3). As a result, the Parks Board is the most influential and powerful partner in Madikwe.

3.4.2. The Private Sector

The role of the private sector in Madikwe partnership was summarised by Davies (1997:8) who stated: “It is the private sector on which the ultimate success of the Madikwe project depends. Without the private sector’s investment in the development and management of a range of tourism facilities and activities in the reserve, Madikwe would not be able to meet its conservation and community development objectives. This is because the private sector provides the financial and economic engine on which the reserve depends”. Therefore, the private sector plays a key role in the ‘partnership in conservation’ that exists at Madikwe (Davies 1997) and consequently, the private sector could be considered to be as powerful as the Parks Board.

3.4.3. The Community

The community is the partner with the weakest power in the Madikwe project. As previously stated, their rights, obligations and tenure are not well defined and even if they were, their enforceability is highly questionable. Indeed, Davies (1997:17) recognised this and stated: “the employment and business opportunities being offered by the reserve at present and those which will arise in the future, constitute the only realistic and tangible options open to people in what is a remote and under-developed region of South Africa”.

3.4.4. The effect of power imbalance

Our observations confirmed that this huge power imbalance disrupted effective community participation at Madikwe. Given this, we ask whether power can be shifted sufficiently in favour of the community to enable meaningful participation in the future. It is commonly believed that the more balanced the power, the better the outcome. In reality, however, power is never constant, it is of a continuously shifting nature (Bendix 1996).

A classical example of the effects of power imbalance can be seen in the Industrial Relations (IR) sector, the typical employer-employee relation. The IR analogy is relevant to Madikwe case study since IR always involves a tripartite relation between the state, business and labour. In IR, the state usually sets the rules, business provides capital for development and labour provides human workforce. In IR, a balance of power is often unachievable since, as soon as one party perceives the other as having more power, the former strives for greater power, leading to continuous competition Bendix (1996). An extreme imbalance of power, however, can create tensions and conflict. In the villages, tensions and conflict soon became evident and were manifested by reluctance of community representatives to invest time and energy in the project. For example, there was both low attendance and participation at meetings. In most meetings, much time was spent resolving conflict.

Given this analysis, can the “community” at Madikwe achieve more power than they now

have? As emphasised by Bendix (1996:14), “power, if it exists, must be seen to exist”. In IR, for any party to have power, it must have certain key power variables. Of these, the most important are dependence, scarcity and non-substitutability (Bendix 1996). Using these to analyse power relations at Madikwe, it is apparent that apart from the Parks Board depending on the community to support the conservation objective in order to reduce poaching, the community is at a disadvantage having neither scarce nor non-substitutable resources. How can the Parks Board and the Private Sector start to perceive the community as having greater power?

In the South African context, with its history of land dispossession, land ownership is the most important power variable that a rural community can possess (Hanekom 1996). In fact, “the reality of land claims process in South Africa may indeed be the strongest mechanism to ensure maximum participation of and maximum economic benefit flow into communities” (Hanekom 1996:14). The three villages at Madikwe do not have land ownership, the *sine qua non* of power for effective bargaining. Since tenure determines the way property rights are defined and enforced in a particular system, its analysis can give insights about constraints to effective community participation at Madikwe.

3.4.5. Tenure

Tenure confers ownership of resources, which here equate to property, and usually provides the incentives for effective participation. It is important to understand what the terms tenure, property rights and ownership actually mean, and how they impact on the level of participation. Tenure is “simply a bundle of rights” (Bruce & Fortmann 1988:2) that defines the obligations of individuals or groups regarding resources governed by a particular system (Murombedzi 1990). Tenure is often misunderstood as defining relationships between people and property; in fact, tenure defines social relations between people (Lynch & Alcorn 1994). Those people with tenurial rights have certain status *vis-à-vis* natural resources in comparison to those without tenurial rights to those resources. As a result, “tenure determines who can (and can’t) do what with the property in question and under which circumstances they can (or can’t) do it” (Lynch & Alcorn 1994:374).

A property right is a secure claim to a resource or the services that resources provide (Berkes 1989). A right is the capacity to call upon the authority or legal system to enforce a claim to a benefit stream (Bromley 1995; IFAD 1995). But property rights cannot be unilaterally claimed, there must first be agreement that the right is worth protecting (Bromley 1995). Hence, the right must be morally and socially justifiable.

Ownership is simply the placement with a person or a group of certain rights to property: the right of possession, use and disposal of worth (‘t Sas-Rolfes 1995). The strength of ownership is determined by its tenure, i.e., time frame and conditions attached to it (Alchian 1987). Hence, security of tenure is more important than the type of tenure as it ensures the ability to exclude or include others in resource use. What makes participation viable is tenure with sanctioned use rights, including the right to determine the mode and extent of management and use, and the right to benefit fully from use and management (Murphree 1994). In the absence of tenure, “other forms of community ‘involvement’ or ‘participation’ should be accepted for what they are: co-optive, co-operative or collaborative arrangements” (Murphree 1994:409).

3.4.6. Property rights at Madikwe

Two distinct property rights exist at Madikwe. The 75 000 ha land with estimated capital infrastructure of US\$15.6 million is state-owned (Davies et al. 1997). The lodges for accommodation, with capital cost of infrastructure estimated between US\$44,000 and US\$67,000 per bed, are owned and financed by the private sector, through lease agreements (Davies *et al.* 1997). Since the property rights of the community were not defined their investment cannot be quantified, and thus their tenure is weak.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Although the Parks Board had identified the importance of involving the community as a major partner from 'day one' (Davies 1997:6), this was not done (Perkins 1993). As noted by Bell (1987:95), "however well-intentioned, plans imposed from above are liable to generate social conflict or to contain technical errors". Sadly and despite good intentions by the Parks Board to start "on the right foot" (Matlala and Munnik 1992:15), the Madikwe project was imposed on the community. Two key factors support this assertion.

Firstly, and as already stated, the speed with which Madikwe was created excluded the community from the planning of the project. Community participation in the initial decision-making process is a critical step towards minimising conflict. As emphasised by Bell (1987:95), "the process of development and implementation of a plan is as important as its content". Indeed, the socio-economic survey of Perkins (1993) was done 2 years after the project had started. Moreover, the survey was not designed to establish the level of community support for Madikwe, but to assess community poverty levels and expectations, if any, about the project. Secondly, although the community was later included as an 'equal partner' in the Madikwe project in order to obtain their support (Davies 1997), their security of tenure was not given serious thought. In reality, the Madikwe project is held up by the two legs of the stronger partners, the Parks Board and the Private Sector. The weaker leg, that of the community, dangles along. The Parks Board is aware of this situation. Indeed, Davies (1997:16) stated that "for any partnership to be truly successful, therefore, all the major partners should be independent and equal ... It is realised, though, that for many of the communities, *this is not so* (italic added)".

Recognising this, the Parks Board raised financial support of £600,000 from DFID to ensure effective community participation at Madikwe. The process formally started in January 1998 and has already sparked a series of other problems two of which are relevant to this analysis. First, some sectors of the 'community' are resisting the DFID capacity training initiative, claiming that it was imposed on them.

They are frustrated that due to slow development of tourism, there are few jobs to be accessed once their "capacity" is built (Box 5). Second, the other villages in the region that were excluded questioned the right of the three villages to this funding. There was therefore, a scramble contest for the £600,000 with some elements within the community insisting that the money be divided among the three villages in order for the villages to decide their own development programme.

Box 5. Extract from Minutes of a meeting at Supingstad village (15/12/1998).

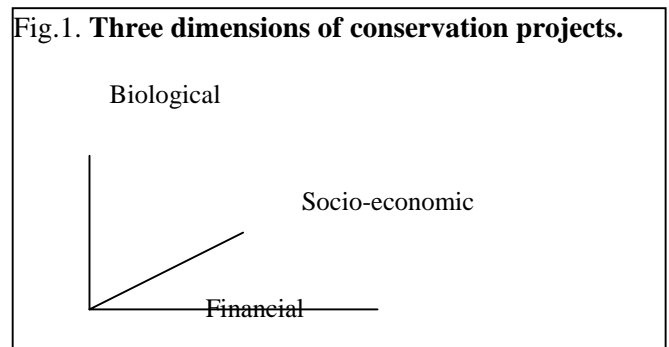
Chief Suping remarked that: "at the early stages of the park (Madikwe), there were agreements made with the then Bop government, that communities would benefit. This has not happened. Unlike Pilanesberg where communities are thriving, there has been no progress in the Madikwe area. The promised funds from the park to the local communities have not arrived".

Thus, the three villages recognised that they lacked *de jure* and *de facto* mechanisms to exclude other villages or to include themselves.

4.1. Three dimensions of conservation projects

Most conservation problems reflect a conflict of interest between alternative ways of using resources (McNeely 1996). Indeed, conservation as a social process is primarily about managing conflict, a delicate balance of three factors (Fig. 1).

Firstly, the socio-economic factor. Here social acceptance and political will play a key role in determining the success of a project. Secondly, the biological or ecological factor. Emphasis is placed on the right of organisms to existence. Thirdly, the financial factor. Simply, the state's willingness to fund conservation. Therefore, the responsibility of the state to fund conservation cannot be entirely left to the private sector.



4.2. The three Madikwe assumptions

The first assumption, “that wildlife-based tourism was the best economic use of the acquired land” and the second, “that the conservation value of the land would be increased by wildlife-based tourism development” are linked and were grouped under ecotourism analysis (4.2.1). The third, “that the villages surrounding Madikwe would benefit economically from this form of land use” is briefly discussed under socio-economic analysis (4.2.2). We drew a distinction between economic and financial analysis (see Dixon and Sherman 1990). Economic analysis “uses social-welfare values of an activity and eliminates distortions in prices by means of shadow prices and other devices”, while financial analysis which is “based on the perspective of a private individual or firm, uses market prices and market interest rates”(McNeely 1996:42).

4.2.1. Ecotourism

The Madikwe model, entirely dependent on private sector tourism facilities, aims to achieve two financial objectives. Firstly, Madikwe must meet the costs of managing the conservation function, estimated at US\$1million per annum. Secondly, Madikwe must generate a surplus income to meet unspecified costs of community initiatives. To achieve these objectives a total of 15 lodges with between 500 and 700 beds are required (Davies *et al.* 1997) but new developers are not ‘pouring in’. It is estimated that it will take 15 years from the inception of the reserve for the last established lodge to operate at its full capacity, but the lodge would need to run for several years before its financial viability was proven (Davies *et al.* 1997).

To exacerbate the situation, the predicted financial returns of the Madikwe project (page 3) were found by Davies *et al.* (1997) to be unrealistically high. Accordingly, Davies *et al.* (1997) have adjusted the original return on the investment from 15% to 2%. To be valid, the Madikwe model needs to run for at least 30 years to allow all the various cash streams and projections to be in line with one another (Davies *et al.* 1997). To individuals within communities, 30 years is a lifetime! In ecotourism projects, it is the expected. Ecotourism “has a time lag between initiation and realisation of its full potential” (Magome 1996:12). This time lag, though well appreciated in business, introduces mismatched scales in partners with different needs.

The scale difference affects benefit flow to these villages, making ‘the equal partnership concept’ at Madikwe unattainable during the lifetime of most villagers. As indicated by McNeely (1996:42), “many people apply a ‘discount rate’ to their decisions, preferring present returns to future benefits”. It is not surprising that the three villages prefer cashing in the £600,000 intended to build their capacity. With their weak ownership, and hence insecurity, any right that Madikwe might give to them would be difficult to defend. If one land claim was to become successful at Madikwe, the current partnership with the three villages will be seriously affected.

4.2.2. Socio-economics

The third assumption, that neighbouring communities would benefit economically from this form of land use, is starting to take off. The only delay is the predicted economic performance of Madikwe. Madikwe is far from reaching its expected economic potential. If, as predicted by Davies *et al.* (1997), some lodges are developed within the next 10 years, Madikwe might improve livelihoods in these villages. With 91% of people unemployed, these villages were far above the provincial average of 33% (Magome and Sentle 1998). However, 50% of the people in the villages are economically active, which is similar to the provincial average of 52%. To bring unemployment levels on par with that of the Province, a total of 985 people need to be employed, suggesting an additional 707 jobs. How long it will take for these additional jobs to be realised, depends on the private sector, the economy, politics and the potential of the fragile giant, ecotourism. The Madikwe model is highly dependant on the influx of foreign tourists. Thus, “any factors that may contribute to reducing South Africa’s potential as a tourist destination for foreigners will obviously impact on the financial and economic viability of Madikwe” (Davies *et al.* 1997:15). South Africa is a country in transition and the ‘wait-and-see strategy’ of the private sector summarises the dilemma faced by Madikwe.

4.3. What went wrong?

Generally, projects have a life cycle – a time of planning, a time of implementation, and a time of completion. Madikwe has just started with the most difficult phase of implementation and already there are two major “teething problems” (Magome and Sentle 1998).

Firstly, Madikwe was planned and partly implemented in a different political and economic climate. Huge promises were made (Box 6) before the demise of the former Bop government and they still haunt Madikwe even without those who made them. Secondly, Madikwe was created on ‘number crunching’ land use figures (see Table 1, page 3).

Box 6. Extract from an address at Madikwe by President L.M. Mangope.

“Each of the lodges is estimated to produce an income of over R4 million (US\$1.3m) p.a. Hunting will ...bring in ... over R20 million (US\$6.7m). The sale of live game will generate over R2 million a year (US\$670,000). This total of over R46 million (US\$15.3m) does not include the possibility of a large resort-style hotel ... on the Molatedi dam ...with a multiplier effect ...of over R400 million (US\$133m) in the area ...being stimulated”.

Source: Mangope (1992:3).

A lot of variables have since changed including the land restitution initiative of the democratic government which has led to land claims by other communities on parts of the reserve. This has considerably disrupted the phasing in of new tourism developments. Accordingly, the model has been adjusted (Davies *et al.* 1997). The problem is that village residents are not familiar with modelling techniques but they do remember what they were promised.

5. CONCLUSION

The 'equal partnership' concept with 'the community', in the Madikwe project is unattainable and the community is equally aware of this. Undefined tenure caused by the lack of land ownership are the main constraints to making the equal partnership with the community a reality. Elsewhere (Anon 1998:2), communities have recognised the importance of tenure and resolved that "communities would only be in a position to advance their interests and secure local benefits from regional initiatives through establishing legally recognised community institutions, and *clear land and resource tenure* (italics added)". Indeed, it is questionable whether South Africa can have effective community conservation projects without first addressing land tenure reform. Given this, the social objective of equal partnership with the community needs to be adjusted to two key and attainable socio-economic objectives. Firstly, a strong participation by elected community structures in all the decisions that directly affect their villages. This should be a dynamic learn-as-you-go situation with each village allowed to evolve at its own pace. The key here is to build relationships of mutual trust and good rapport based on two-way communication. Secondly, a high focus on job creation is needed and this is one of the major objectives of Madikwe. But this depends on the success of the private sector and the Parks Board.

There are two learning experiences from the Madikwe model. First, there was genuine attempt by the Parks Board to involve communities in tangible benefits accruing from conservation. But the model was technically flawed. The Parks Board, being aware of this, raised financial support from DFID in order to build the capacity of the communities to realise benefits. The Parks Board, with a strong willingness to learn from their own mistakes, has thereby opened the Madikwe project to external review. Second, even though the Parks Board did not achieve effective community participation, by stating the principle and intention, they created a framework for attracting development to this marginal area. The area had weak local government support, and the Parks Board, invariably, became entangled in rural development by taking the role of local government. The local government, now starting to operate more actively in this area is highly appreciative of the initiative by the Parks Board. In fact, the Parks Board is now largely relieved of this function.

Engaging community development in conservation can mean burdening the protected area with broader issues of rural development. On the other hand, one must ask whether can protected areas can or should totally remove themselves from this. Since no two communities are the same, a differential approach to development with each community appears logical. The pitfall is that despite being expensive, differential approaches can be perceived by communities to be forms of discrimination. Community participation in conservation is, therefore, complex and expensive. Accordingly, we believe that protected area managers will do well if they adhere to the following principles:

- A sense of pride belonging and ownership is often more important to a community than material upliftment, and easier for protected area management to provide.
- Building relationships based on transparency, trust and participation could in many

cases be more important for gaining the support of neighbouring communities than the flow of material benefits.

- Never create false expectations and make promises that the protected area cannot deliver in the long run, and be open about the time lag before “full production” is reached.
- Working with communities is complex as they are not isolated homogeneous units. Rather they are but small cogs in the greater communities at both regional and national levels and are greatly influenced by the politics prevailing at these various levels.
- Within the community itself, there are usually oppositions groups (with personal agendas) and political forces that that need to be recognised, as they can undermine even the most sincere at community development.

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