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**RESOURCE TENURE AND POWER
RELATIONS IN COMMUNITY WILDLIFE
CONTEXTS:
THE CASE OF THE MKAMBATI AREA ON
THE WILD COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through a case study of the Mkambati area in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, this paper analyses the prospects for community wildlife management (CWM) for communities who neighbour Mkambati Nature Reserve. In this area, an ambitious Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) project, which hinges around eco-tourism, and with a significant component of community participation, is proposed. Although wildlife is present in the Mkambati Reserve, it is not the sole attraction, and the eco-tourism scheme is premised largely on the scenic beauty of the area. Nevertheless, wildlife and other wild resources do play a role in the present and proposed tourist industry, and also in the livelihoods of local people. Furthermore, many of the problems currently being experienced in relation to the establishment of the SDI are reminiscent of those encountered in wildlife management projects elsewhere (Evaluating Eden Phase I Report). In this case study, therefore, the SDI will stand as a proxy for a community wildlife project.

While there is no focused CWM initiative at Mkambati, authorities responsible for the existing nature reserve have made gestures in that direction in accordance with international trends. While the nature reserve is important for local livelihoods, this is predominantly through illegal use rather than structured participation in conservation based enterprises.

Our analysis of the Mkambati case focuses largely on two clusters of issues, which we propose are crucial in any community based resource management situation. The first cluster is centred on the idea of 'resource tenures', and the need to locate wildlife in a fuller resource/livelihood/tenure institutional context. Who benefits from wildlife, what form do those benefits take, and what institutions regulate the distribution of benefits? Increasingly these have emerged as critical issues in the design of community wildlife projects aimed at reconstituting the social and economic basis of wildlife management. They are pre-eminently resource tenure questions, if tenure is defined as 'the bundle of rights and duties governing access to and control over resources, which provide a stream of benefits to the holders of rights'. This suggests that wildlife tenure could be viewed as only one of the 'sticks' making up the 'bundle' of resource tenures available to rural people - although clearly the wildlife 'stick' could itself be decomposed into a bundle of rights and duties. This means that community wildlife projects must be contextualized within broader resource tenure systems. In the Mkambati area the history of settlement by and dispossession of the nature reserve land from the local communities poses the initial resource tenure struggle that has continued to this day. Subsequent to this, the question of what is legitimate access to and control over resources within the nature reserve by local communities, has become a source of intense conflict. Hence, sections of the local population have over the years made use of local informal institutions such as ukujola (legitimized stealing) to justify their illegal collection of resources.

The second cluster is centre on power dynamics, the multi-layered struggles between diverse sets of actors, and the process through which resource tenures are continuously renegotiated. In Mkambati a host of actors and interest groups has pursued a variety of competing objectives in relation to control over and access to the natural resources of the area. In doing

so they have engaged in a number of power plays, and entered into complex and shifting relationships with each other at different moments in time, ranging from alliances or collaboration, at one end of the spectrum, through wary neutrality or relative indifference, to outright hostility and confrontation, at the other end. Since 1990 the political terrain in Mkambati has become steadily more complex - and less stable - over time.

At local level the main actors have been, firstly, the villagers of Khanyayo, strategizing both individually and collectively to maintain the contribution that natural resources make to their livelihoods. This primary set of interests, although differentiated by livelihood strategies and systems, by gender and by levels of wealth, has united most Khanyayo people behind a powerfully articulated demand for the restoration of their land rights over the disputed territories. (This demand does not, however, necessarily imply occupation and agricultural production of TRACOR or MNR land - in negotiations with SDI managers promoting ecotourism, it has become clear that for Khanyayo villagers land rights are seen primarily as a guarantee of entitlements to benefits, in whatever form is most appropriate.)

Secondly, from mid-1996 Khanyayo interests have been represented by the KMDF - a grouping which has aggressively asserted the land claim, which they formally submitted to the Commission for the Restoration of Land Rights in 1997. The KMDF's status as a representative body has itself been challenged by some elements within the village, however, who have aligned themselves with other interests in the area - notably the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC).

The JMC formed initially to represent people from villages under the Thaweni Tribal Authority in their dealings with the Nature Reserve and TRACOR. Originally the JMC comprised government officials as well as locals, but subsequently the precise make-up of the JMC has been much less clear. Although it is clear that Chief Mhlanga of the Thaweni Tribal Authority supports the JMC in its struggle to assert the land claims of residents of all six administrative areas. On the other hand, Khanyayo people see the JMC as a vehicle for an ambitious local business and political elite. There is some evidence that the JMC, an unelected group without a formal mandate from local populations, have seen the SDI in particular as a potentially lucrative source of income for them. Sitting on the JMC are some powerful individuals (including a local councillor on the TRC), who have political connections with senior officials in the ruling party and in provincial government, connections which they have not hesitated to draw on in their disputes with the KMDF.

Other actors within the local scene include traditional leaders at different levels - e.g. the subheadman of Khanyayo village, Chief Mhlanga of the Thaweni TA, the Bumbantana chieftaincy from Bizana District, and the paramount chief for Pondoland - King Mpondombini Sigcawu. These have mostly not been active in their own right, but rather aligned themselves with one or another of the more active interest groups. Their allegiance in the struggle for land and resources is important because of the historical basis for the land claims - and the explicit or implicit appeals to "customary land tenure rights" which this usually implies. The objectives of these traditional authorities, although not clearly articulated, appear to be focussed on the assertion of their political authority over their subject populations, in a context where this authority has been explicitly challenged both by the emergence of elected local government structures, and by Eastern Cape provincial legislation designed to strip them of their powers.

Also active in the Mkambati situation have been institutional groupings located at regional,

provincial or national levels. These non-local actors have not been able to unilaterally pursue their own objectives in Mkambati without entering into alliances or negotiations (and sometimes open contestations) with the local actors. These include conservation authorities, the SDI personnel, elected rural local governments, political parties, and so forth.

The different actors have engaged in a diverse set of strategies and tactics aimed at increasing the power at their disposal, and thereby achieving their larger objectives. Central to all these strategies has been an appeal to one or more legitimating discourses, or narratives - centred on, for example, either "rights", or "development", or "tradition", or "conservation of biodiversity". In many cases these narratives have been used to justify the assertion of direct control over the resources in question - and sometimes, of the threat of physical force.

This paper argues that wildlife management must always be seen in these larger contexts, and that the prospects for successful community based schemes will depend crucially on how wildlife tenure articulates with other resource tenures, on how it impacts on rural livelihoods considered holistically, and on the relationships which exist between local and non-local institutions. The evidence from Mkambati contradicts the argument that the main actors lack the capacity to make CWM initiatives work. What matters more is whether they perceive the incentives and have the social and political will and skill to succeed with CWM.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses the prospects for community wildlife management (CWM) in the Mkambati area on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape, where an ambitious Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) project, hinged around eco-tourism, and with a significant component of community participation, is proposed. Although wildlife is present in the Mkambati Reserve, it is not the sole attraction, and the eco-tourism scheme is premised largely on the scenic beauty of the area. Nevertheless, wildlife and other wild resources do play a role in the present and proposed tourist industry, and also in the livelihoods of local people. Furthermore, many of the problems currently being experienced in relation to the establishment of the SDI are reminiscent of those encountered in wildlife management projects elsewhere (Evaluating Eden Phase I Report). In this case study, therefore, the SDI will stand as a proxy for a community wildlife project.

Despite the deviation of Mkambati from the core CWM model, we believe that it is valuable for the project to consider situations like this. Such cases represent very broad swathes of the region in which formal nature conservation measures are either effectively absent or play only a partial role in local livelihoods, institutional dispensations and power dynamics. Places like Mkambati are a challenge to our generalisations about why nature conservation matters to “communities”.

1.1 Two clusters of issues

Our analysis of the Mkambati case focuses largely on two clusters of issues, which we propose are crucial in any community based resource management situation. The first cluster is centred on the idea of '**resource tenures**', and the need to locate wildlife in a fuller resource/livelihood/tenure institutional context. The second cluster is centred on **power dynamics**, the multi-layered struggles between diverse sets of actors, and the processes through which resource tenures are continuously renegotiated.

Linking the two is the question: how can emergent 'communities of interest' be constructed on the basis of shared rights to resources, and what arrangements will give best expression to shared powers of decision making and management? Community wildlife management projects sometimes build on or reinforce current definitions of 'community', sometimes contradict them or provoke massive conflicts between competing definitions, often inventing new versions of belonging and ownership of resources.

Who benefits from wildlife, what form do those benefits take, and what institutions regulate the distribution of benefits? Increasingly these have emerged as critical issues in the design of community wildlife projects aimed at reconstituting the social and economic basis of wildlife management. They are pre-eminently resource tenure questions, if tenure is defined as 'the bundle of rights and duties governing access to and control over resources which provide a stream of benefits to the holders of rights' (see Bruce 1993). This suggests that wildlife tenure could be viewed as only one of the 'sticks' making up the 'bundle' of resource tenures available to rural people - although clearly the wildlife 'stick' could itself be decomposed into a bundle of rights and duties. This means that community wildlife projects must be contextualised within broader resource tenure systems, as the Mkambati data clearly shows.

Furthermore, resource tenures rarely constitute the sole source of rural income anywhere in Southern Africa today - and thus they too must be viewed in a wider context - that of the overall livelihood systems of the people concerned. Non-local livelihood generating activities and relationships, including those mediated by far-flung market relations (eg. the sale in urban markets of resources gathered within Mkambati), are likely to impact on projects at the local level, and must be factored into any analysis of prospects.

In a third contextualisation, formal institutional arrangements governing resource tenures locally (eg. land allocation via traditional leaders) must be seen as parts of a larger institutional matrix, which often determines events at the local level. This must include *informal* (and thus often not very visible at first) institutions as well as the more identifiable, but not necessarily more effective, *formal* institutions. Again, the Mkambati case provides a vivid illustration of the importance of informal institutions to resource utilisation.

This paper argues that wildlife management must always be seen in these larger contexts, and that the prospects for successful community based schemes will depend crucially on how wildlife tenure articulates with other resource tenures, on how it impacts on rural livelihoods considered holistically, and on the relationships which exist between local and non-local institutions.

1.2 Structure of the paper

The second section of the paper briefly outlines the larger policy context and shows how a variety of government policies and programmes have influenced local dynamics in Mkambati, and in turn could learn useful lessons from this case. This is followed, in the third section, by a description of the social, institutional and biophysical features of the area, and a summary of the history of occupation, dispossession and restitution claims in relation to the land which falls within the Mkambati Nature Reserve.

The fourth section of the paper discusses the variety of livelihood strategies pursued by people in Mkambati, and the role within these of wild resources found within the protected area. It also describes how resource tenures mediate the livelihood strategies of members of differentiated rural communities. This understanding is crucial for our analysis of the socio-economic realities which underlie the political dynamics of community-based resource management projects.

The latter are the focus of the fifth section, which provides a brief summary of contestations over land since 1990 and an analysis of power relations in Mkambati, with a particular focus on the conflicts which have arisen over the land restitution claim and in relation to the Spatial Development Initiative ecotourism project. These show just how complex the inner realities of the collectivities known as “rural communities” can be. The paper concludes by attempting to draw out the lessons of the Mkambati experience for community wildlife management programmes in Southern Africa.

2. THE POLICY CONTEXT

The three main policy thrusts of the post-1994 democratic government which have impacted on local processes in the Mkambati context are land reform, nature conservation and the Spatial Development Initiatives initiated by the Department of Trade and Industry¹.

2.1 Land reform

The overarching goal of land reform in South Africa is to redress the racially-based land dispossessions of apartheid era and the highly inequitable distribution of land ownership which resulted, to create security of land tenure for all, and thus to 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). In Mkambati it is restitution and tenure reform which have been most relevant to date.

Restitution policy aims to restore land and provide other remedies (eg alternative land or financial compensation) to people dispossessed by racially discriminatory legislation and practice. Policy and procedure are based on the Bill of Rights and the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994, which provides for claims to be investigated if the claimant was dispossessed of a right in land after 19 June 1913. Claims are investigated by a Commission for the Restitution of Land Rights, and then submitted to the Land Claims Court for adjudication (Department of Land Affairs 1997).

While programmes for land restitution and redistribution have been in place since 1995/96, a programme of land tenure reform to secure the land rights of black South Africans has been slow to emerge. However, a draft Land Rights Bill is now in process of being submitted to Cabinet for approval, and is likely to be legislated by Parliament in the course of 1999 (DLA Tenure Newsletter 1998). According to the Poverty and Inequality report (May et al 1998), tenure reform has the potential to benefit many more rural people than restitution or redistribution.

The 1996 South African Constitution requires that a person or community whose tenure of land is insecure consequent to racial laws or practices should have their tenure legally secured. The proposed law intends to recognise and give *de jure* status to the established occupation, use or access rights of people in the former "homelands" and ex-South African Development Trust (SADT) areas. Most of these are likely to be held on a group basis. Such rights will have the status of property rights in that the law will prohibit the deprivation of rights except with consent or by expropriation. Further, the proposed legislation will provide protected rights holders with decision making powers in respect of land, and with the right to the benefits accruing from the land. Protected rights will be registerable, although this will not be compulsory but "demand-driven".

Current indications are that traditional authorities see tenure reform policies as a threat to their previously advantaged position. It seems likely that they will oppose it, and favour the transfer of land to Tribal Authorities. If the proposed Bill becomes law despite their opposition, then it

¹Space does not permit discussion of other policies which are relevant but have been less important to date eg in relation to local government, agriculture or forestry.

is unclear how this history of contestation will impact on the establishment and operation of the land rights administration structures described above.

2.2 Nature conservation policy

Nature conservation and rural people's role in it have not been excluded from the flood of policy making that has swept South Africa since 1994. One existing government policy thrust has been refined and reinforced. This concerns the commitment to maintaining biodiversity. At the same time, however, a very different policy focus has emerged alongside the traditional concern with nature conservation. This is a focus on linking nature conservation into strategies for sustainable rural development and the enhancement of the standards of living of those who live in or near protected areas. National environmental and biodiversity policies commit government to integrating nature conservation with sustainable rural development (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1997).

The National Parks Board has developed a Social Ecology Unit which is trying to transform the social and economic relations between its protected areas and the rural poor in their vicinity. Contractual parks, such as the Richtersveld National Park, are one strategy that is emerging for this purpose. At the provincial level in the Eastern Cape, a policy document as early as 1994 committed the Eastern Cape division of the then Cape Nature Conservation to the 'socio-economic development of local and provincial communities'. Such development would include the sustainable use of various plant and animal resources from within protected areas by local people and the promotion of conservation-related income generation opportunities (Cape Nature Conservation, 1994: 8).

The vocabulary of a sustainable and equitable 'people and parks' relationship is now well installed in South Africa, although it tends to give greater emphasis to income generation and resource offtake than it does to true co-management arrangements. Institutional change and the reorientation of serving conservation staff's attitudes and practices are taking longer, of course. So far, although the first steps have been taken down the long road of transformation in the relationship between rural livelihoods and nature conservation, the practical signs and economic benefits of this transformation are still hard to find on the ground. Institution building and training are proving to be major challenges.

2.3 Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs)

The SDIs, currently co-ordinated by the Department of Trade and Industry, aim at facilitating investment in previously neglected areas that have clear potential for economic development. A number of SDIs are being implemented within the larger Southern Africa region, and in South Africa there are eleven SDIs in different parts of the country (Jourdan 1998). In the Eastern Cape Province, the Wild Coast SDI in the former Transkei is currently being implemented, along with an afforestation initiative in communal areas championed by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF). Both programmes aim to provide opportunities for investors, while creating employment and generating wealth for people resident within these areas.

From the late nineteenth century up to the present, the Wild Coast has attracted much attention and praise from visitors as an area of great natural beauty. Some observers have gone on to label it an "unspoilt" (Schmidt and Doonan, 1997) or "undisturbed" coastal area.

Among its attractive features are its rare vegetation species, including endemic plants, and its rugged shores. Several development nodes have been identified, including Dwesa/Cwebe/Nqabara, Coffee Bay/Hole in the Wall, Port St Johns, Magwa and Mkambati. The aim is to establish eco-tourism ventures in these “anchor” project sites, with the hope that improvements in infrastructure and other investments will encourage a range of economic initiatives in the surrounding areas. It is hoped that the five nature reserves found along the coast, together with scenic 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 that can also contribute to development. In 1997 the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry started a drive to encourage forestry in the Eastern Cape Province, and estimates that there are at least 120 000 hectares of land that can be afforested, mostly in the communal areas of the Wild Coast. Private companies are encouraged to enter into agreements with communities in these areas, with government acting as facilitator of the process. These plans have been discussed and publicized in two consultative meetings for forestry development and two investor conferences.

3. CASE STUDY AREA AND HISTORY

The case study area is situated in north-eastern Pondoland (31°13'–31°20'S and 29°55'–30°4'E), on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape Province, situated between two rivers, Mtentu and Msikaba, in the district of Lusikisiki. The focus of this study is a unit comprising three areas which are under three different tenure regimes: communal tenure settlements to the west, 11 000 hectares of state land, formerly used by a parastatal agricultural project, in the centre, and the 6 000 hectare 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 Chief Zwelibongile Mhlanga. Each administrative area is comprised of several villages, which are further divided into several *izithebe* (singular - *isithebe*) or mat associations. The inhabitants of the area are Xhosa-speaking people (amaMpondo), who 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, 1997). The area has also steadily received immigrants who came from other parts of the former Transkei as a result of population pressure in those areas as well as being attracted by the high rainfall and other physical features of the area (Beinart, 1982).

Mkambati receives a mean annual rainfall of 1,200 mm, with a rainfall peak 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. According to Van Wyk (1994) forests and grasslands of this area contain a rich endemic/near-endemic element of at least 118 plant species. Soils that are close to the coast originate from Natal Group sandstone, hence they are sandy, highly leached, and relatively shallow (Van Wyk, 1994). Patches of rich clay soils of dwyka origin as one moves away from the coast are common (Feely, 1987).

3.1 Contested land: the Mkambati Nature Reserve

As detailed in the following section on livelihoods, Mkambati Nature Reserve is a source of many of the natural resources which are collected (both legally or illegally) by neighbouring residents, and is also the centre of tension and conflict over land rights claimed by different groupings. Central to this conflict is a history of contested occupation and use which gives rise to conflicting ideas on the future of the Reserve, and which is important as background to the current political dynamics.

In 1899 paramount chief Sigcawu agreed to a proposal from the assistant chief Magistrate of Lusikisiki, that he allocate an area of land in Eastern Pondoland for use as a leper colony. It was not until July 1919 that an area of 17 400 hectares on the coast between the Msikaba and Mtentu rivers was identified as suitable land for a leper institution. Before he agreed, Marelane, the then Paramount Chief of eastern Pondoland, had argued that the identified site was "thickly" populated. This claim was later confirmed by the resident Magistrate of Lusikisiki, when he wrote to the Chief Magistrate in uMtata, stating that the area had been reserved for winter grazing, but had since been occupied by the people belonging to chief Mtono of Khanyayo.¹ The Khanyayo people had earlier settled on the southern banks of the Mtentu River as part of the Bumbantaba chiefdom, which occupied both sides of the river. It is not clear how widely Marelane consulted the people in the area about the proposed leper

institution. But in 1920, Marelane had at least two meetings with chief Mtono and his people in Khanyayo, informing them of the government's intentions. It appears that neither Marelane nor the Khanyayo villagers were at first aware of the exact size of the area that the government proposed for the leper colony. What is certain is that the Khanyayo people were under the impression that a small piece of land close to the coast was all that was required, as a site for the buildings of the institution. Evidence from the magisterial archives shows that in October 1920, the Khanyayo people who were resident inside the demarcated area were forcibly removed by a constable sent by the Resident Magistrate of Lusikisiki and an *induna* (steward) of the Paramount Chief. This followed a suggestion by the Secretary of Native Affairs that households which were removed be given some compensation because, though they were regarded as squatters by the magistrate, they still paid hut tax. On the 18th of December 1922, the Minister of Native Affairs, in terms of section 5 of Proclamation No 143 of 1919, formally authorized the reservation of the proposed area as a leper institution.²

Following many years of conflict between villagers and leper reserve officials, including conflict over illegal use of natural resources within the reserve, Paramount Chief Botha Sigcawu intervened. This led to about 5 500 hectares of the reserve being released for "community" grazing in 1956, although this was only implemented in 1959.³

The introduction of tribal authorities by the state during the 1950s complicated things further. The Khanyayo people who were until that time still closely working together 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. The Khanyayo people have all along maintained that they had sole land rights to the land from which they previously used and were removed in 1920. On the other hand other the Thaweni Tribal Authority disputes 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. Some supporters of the Thaweni Tribal Authority claim refuse to be tied down to historical evidence as shown through the archives and other physical evidence (e.g old sites), arguing that the Khanyayo were never removed from the land in question.

After a cure for leprosy had been discovered, the hospital of the Mkambati Leper Reserve began admitting patients who suffered from tuberculosis (TB) in 1958 (Vincent 1996). Following the acceptance of independence by Transkei in 1976, the hospital was closed and the land handed over to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the Transkei "homeland". The inland two thirds of the leper reserve was to be used by the Transkei Agricultural Corporation (TRACOR) for a sugar enterprise, while the seaward third was established as a nature reserve in 1977 in terms of the Nature Conservation Act of 1971 (Government Notice No.45 of 27 April 1977). Two successive private companies were each given 49% shares to run the reserve as a hunting concern, while the Transkei government held the other 51%. In 1982, due to alleged gross mismanagement of the reserve, especially the neglect of the ecological aspects, the Transkei government terminated the partnership. Mkambati Game Reserve (Pty) Ltd under the Department of Finance (Transkei) continued to

²Cape Town Archives-1 LSK 13/2/5/2

³Cape Town Archives-1 LSK 177 file N2/7/3/13

manage the reserve providing accommodation and other facilities, for non-hunting visitors. In 1991, the company 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, 1971 (Act No.6 of 1971).

Mkambati is currently a provincial nature reserve, falling under the Department of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism of the Eastern Cape. Because of the presence of numerous rare plants, including the endemic Pondo coconut palm (*Jubaeopsis caffra*), this reserve has also been declared a national. The Marine Reserve extends about 11 kilometres along the coast and 11 kilometres offshore, making it the largest marine reserve on the Wild Coast. The Nature Reserve currently supports over 2 000 wild herbivores, dominated by the Blesbok, and currently offers self-catering facilities mostly to national tourists, with fishing being one of the most popular activities.

4. LIVELIHOODS AND WILD RESOURCES

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 Mkambati area, 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 a variable combinations of arable and livestock farming, the collection of a range of natural resources, and a range of off-farm sources, including remittances and pensions (see Table 1). These variables help to identify a variety of livelihood "clusters".

Table 1 Major household livelihood sources in Mkambati

Livelihood Sources	Number	Percentage
Pensions	42	17.9
Remittances	73	31.2
Full-time job	36	15.4
Piece job	7	2.9
Medicinal Plant or grass or sedges	24	10.3
Beer brewing	10	4.3
House building	12	5.1
Store operation	6	2.6
Herbalist	5	2.1
Livestock sales	2	0.9
Crop sales	4	1.7
Prostitution	1	0.4
Total dependency on kin	2	0.9
Not known	10	4.3
Total	234	100

Source: Kepe 1997

Kepe (1997) identifies several clusters of livelihood sources in the area, grouped around activities which are supplementary to those considered as basic by the majority of local people. For instance, fuelwood 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 opportunities for cash income, in a variety of ways.

In the *first* cluster, the livelihoods of households are centred on migrant remittances, state welfare grants or pensions, and agriculture. Most of these households are headed by elderly people who receive old-age pensions, or remittances from their unmarried or married children.

The cash received from these two sources allows these households the opportunity to practise a form of agriculture which is slightly above subsistence level (ie some proportion of production is sometimes sold).

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. 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 main activity in this cluster. When jobs within the village are scarce some of the people associated with this cluster become involved in hunting activities in Mkambati Nature Reserve, as discussed below.

A *fourth* cluster that is fast gaining prominence, particularly for female headed households, is beer brewing and small groceries sales. Many households, often the poorest, are found within a *fifth* cluster that has 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 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. The material includes medicinal plants, thatch grass, fuelwood and baskets made from sedges. People who belong to this cluster tend to be involved in the trade of all the products mentioned above. In certain localities the sale of seaweed tends to be more popular than the sale of medicinal plants. In all these cases availability of the plant material, as well as the accessibility of the markets in which the products based on it is sold, determines the intensity of the harvest. Mkambati Nature Reserve is a prime collection site for many of these plant materials.

The women found in livelihood clusters 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 are in a position to, travel to distant markets to sell their products. For most of these women, the heavy labour and time demands of their trade increase the burden imposed by their other domestic duties - which often includes cultivation.

Three broad conclusions emerge from this discussion of rural livelihoods in the case study area. Firstly, rural livelihoods are diverse and complex, and while it is too easy to assume that this is so for poor households only, this is not in fact the case. Wealthier households also have to maintain diversity if they are to remain wealthy. It is true however that less wealthy people tend to diversify more. Secondly, the time and energy invested in crop and livestock production is highly variable and is crucially influenced the wealth status of the household, with the wealthier households cultivating larger fields than less wealthy ones. However, even in the best cases, commercial agriculture as a main source of livelihood is limited. Thirdly, access to cash income from wage labour and pensions is important. Most of the 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.

We turn now to a more detailed description of some of the ways in which wild resources contribute to livelihoods in Mkambati, and of the institutional forms which mediate this resource use.

4.1 *Ukujola* and wild resource use

Ukujola is a local term that refers to locally legitimate “stealing” of a resource, based on an historical claim that predates existing legislation. The term is taken from that used when a love relationship between two young people of the opposite sex must keep their affair hidden from their respective parents or other relatives of respectable status. *Ukujola* means that the two lovers have reached an understanding, but do everything in their power to keep it secret because of the possible consequences. They firmly believe, however, that they are doing nothing wrong. Two examples of livelihood activities involving *ukujola* and wild resources are examined here (but see Kepe 1997 for a wider analysis).

Case 1: Game Hunting

The first case examines hunting of wildlife inside Mkambati Nature Reserve. Able-bodied and usually unemployed men from neighbouring villages occasionally hunt wildlife, many in order to supplement their maize-based diet with bushmeat. However, in recent years a growing number have been motivated by the increasing demand for certain animal species in the traditional medicine business, and trade in animal parts to supplement their income. Another group of hunters is comprised of wealthier men who come from distant areas to hunt for trophy illegally.

Local hunters justify their "illegal hunting" by reference to the notion of *ukujola*. In terms of this notion, hunting in Mkambati reserve does not constitute a crime due to the historical claim that villagers have on the land and its resources. But *ukujola* is non-confrontational, the hunters ensuring that they avoid direct confrontation with law enforcers. Conservation laws and other regulations imposed by government forbid hunting by villagers inside the reserve, something which pits two institutions (the formal, government regulations versus the informal, *ukujola*) against each other. In the past, traditional authorities assisted the government in implementing the formal regulations, but since the political changes in the 1990s their role in this regard has increasingly become uncertain.

New power relations at local level are making a major impact on the overall institutional matrix which determines people's access to resources, as well as the ways in which different practices are interpreted and legitimised. For example, the rise of the civic organizations has affected the hunting activities of local communities in Mkambati Nature Reserve in a number of ways. In their attempt to claim authority over the chiefs and headmen of the area and to be seen as a legitimate leadership which strives for development and justice, the civic organizations have encouraged people to support *ukujola* as a means to claim rights of access to wildlife, and to lay a claim to land and resources they believe belongs to the community. There are however, some traditional authorities who, although not directly encouraging

ukujola, turn a blind eye to it and are reluctant to co-operate with formal authorities.

External poachers make no claim for legitimate access to wild game in Mkambati. . They hunt as individuals or very small groups, using high powered guns. Their access amounts to skilful theft of game, bringing them into conflict with the locals, who view them with contempt

There are other informal institutions which mediate access to these resources: local hunters organize themselves into hunting parties (*ingqina*) drawn from homesteads, within neighbourhood groupings (*isithebe*). Guns for hunting are made locally, borrowed or bought. Mutual aid (*ukuncedisana*) is important as hunters burn grass strips close to the reserve boundary to encourage new growth that will attract wildlife. In the past conservation officials have burned in the centre of the reserve to encourage animals to stay away from the boundaries where they become easy victims for the hunters. Burning and counter-burning, by hunters and conservation officials respectively, results in the temporary disappearance of certain grass species (e.g. the important thatch grass *Cymbopogon validus*) in certain sites of the reserve.

Analysis of data on wildlife populations over the past decade leads us to the conclusion that sporadic hunting through *ukujola* is unlikely to have negative effects on animal populations (Kepe 1997). Selective hunting for trophy and other lucrative purposes by poachers is, however, a cause of great concern amongst conservation officials. It appears that the potential for co-management arrangements exists only in relation to local hunters – not the external poachers, who do not form a coherent social group.

Case 2: Thatch Grass Collection

The second livelihood case looks at thatch grass collection within Mkambati Nature Reserve. Certain grass species such as *Cymbopogon validus* (*umqungu*), *Miscanthus capensis* (*umthala*) and *Hyperrinia* spp. (*iDobo*) have a very high value as thatching material. Of these three grasses, *Cymbopogon validus* is the most preferred, due to its smooth finish (Johnson, 1982). Spatial and temporal variation in ecological sites in the case study area result in regular shortages of *Cymbopogon validus*. However, patch distribution of this grass is better inside the reserve than in the village area.

Able-bodied, often poor women from neighbouring villages collect grass from the reserve for personal use; for sale and as hired labourers. Rights of access to the grass are through payment of cash to the reserve officials, bribery of guards by unmarried women offering sexual favours, and *ukujola*. Co-operative labour institutions such as work parties (*amalima*) and mutual aid are important for transporting grass to the village. Seasonal harvesting of *Cymbopogon validus* results in higher grass productivity, through the production of new tillers, and the spreading of seeds (Shackleton, 1990). Uncontrolled burning activities in both village and reserve environments result in increasing scarcity of the grass. Consequently villagers protect grass patches close to their homesteads through creation of firebreaks. Those villagers with big fields even plant seeds of *C. validus* in order to sell the grass within the village. It is concluded here that thatch grass availability inside Mkambati Nature Reserve is not only affected by social actors who are interested in its thatching abilities, but by those who manage it for attracting wild game (e.g. hunters and reserve officials). This conflict of interest among resource users could be important when deciding on development interventions.

These two cases are illuminating, in relation to the complexity of the relationships between formal and informal institutions and resource tenures in particular. Our analysis has highlighted the serious conflicts over authority at a local level, with major effects on people's livelihood (e.g. chieftaincy and civic associations); the conflicts between the national legal framework and local definitions of what is legitimate (e.g. between government legislation on nature reserves and *ukujola*); and the high degree of complementarity between informal institutions mediating access to natural resources. For example, sexual divisions of labour, kinship network, neighbourhood groupings (*isithebe*), mutual aid norms (*ukuncedisana*), work parties (*amalima*) and so on, complement each other in mobilizing labour resources.

These case studies also show that understanding social difference is critical in exploring options for the use of environmental resource. For example, it is largely poor women who collect thatch grass in the nature reserve, but it is mostly either poor local men or wealthier externally-based poachers who do the hunting (indicating differences along lines of gender and wealth). It is important to have a clear understanding of these social differences and any conflicts that might exist between them in terms of who uses what resource. This, in turn, needs to inform the design of participatory and co-management arrangements between local communities and protected area authorities.

5. THE POLITICS OF LAND IN MKAMBATI, 1990-1998.

In the Mkambati area people have clearly developed complex systems of livelihoods, which combine a wide variety of assets, activities, and social relationships. These, together with the socially embedded resource tenures which mediate their access to natural resources, constitute the material base for the strategies people pursue in their attempts to enhance their well-being. Given the importance of land-based resources, it is not surprising that a tempestuous politics of land and development has emerged in recent years, against the backdrop of the ambitious policy thrusts of land reform and co-management of nature conservation introduced by the new government. This politics has in turn given rise to an enveloping web of power relations structured by intense competition between organised groupings and their allies. A brief chronological account of these conflicts is provided here, followed by a summary and analysis of the key elements of the pervasive power relations.

5.1 Sit-ins, committees and land claims

In the 1970s and 1980s there were a great many restrictions on political activity in the Transkei bantustan, but from 1990 on the political changes sweeping the country manifested in Mkambati in a locally radical form. Khanyayo villagers came into conflict with the TRACOR management with livestock from Khanyayo being impounded once found within the boundaries of the TRACOR land. The local civic leadership from Khanyayo used their new found political strength to regain grazing rights to an area of about 3 500 hectares. The momentum gained through the struggle for grazing land motivated the Khanyayo to begin asking other questions they had always wanted to ask, were it not for fear of political persecution under the bantustan government. These included the question of the status of the Mkambati Nature Reserve.

By 1992, most residents of the villages under the Thaweni Tribal Authority had been politically mobilised and had joined the ANC in droves. In August 1992, the Khanyayo branch of the ANC, supported by several other branches in the Thaweni area, marched on Mkambati Nature Reserve, and occupied offices and cottages for a period of nine days. The sit-in was prompted by a widely held perception that the Transkei 'government' had sold Mkambati to a private company (*inkampani*). At least four demands were made. Firstly, clarity was sought on how the change from a leper institution to a nature reserve and a state farm had come about. Secondly, the marchers demanded the re-opening of the Mkambati Hospital, which for many decades had provided employment to local communities. Thirdly, they demanded that a school be built for the children of those who were employed in Mkambati Nature Reserve. Fourthly, the marchers wanted neighbouring communities to be involved in the day to day management of the Reserve.

A committee comprising elected villagers and government officials was elected to monitor the process of dealing with the demands. This was named the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC). The JMC was meant to give constant feedback to villagers concerning the progress of the negotiations. It soon became clear that bringing together educated government officials, wealthy local business people and uneducated, poor villagers in a single committee was extremely problematic. By 1993 the JMC had become divided and meetings were no longer held regularly. General meetings to provide feed-back to villagers never took place.

One issue that the JMC managed to pursue with vigour was the re-establishment of the hospital at Mkambati. Despite initial reluctance from the government, a Health Centre was ceremonially opened in June 1996, and attention turned to the question of who was going to be employed there. It appears that the JMC had started lobbying for support from villagers by promising jobs in 'Mkambati Hospital'. The sudden rise of the JMC's popularity did not please the leaders of Khanyayo, who saw the JMC as having effectively taken over the struggle for Mkambati. They began to withdraw from the JMC one by one.

For the Khanyayo, regaining their rights to and control over the land was still centrally important. It is alleged that the respected civil servant and local politician who led the march to Mkambati in 1992 advised Khanyayo people that they could now stand on their own if they wanted to "carry the fight forward". "We gave you a firm base (as JMC) to carry on fighting for your land". In July 1996 the Khanyayo Mkambati Development Forum (KMDF) was formed to carry forward the struggle for land rights and deal with any future development on the contested land.

One of the first actions of the KMDF was to seek the assistance of the Transkei Land Services Organization (TRALSO) in lodging a restitution claim to the Mkambati/TRACOR land. They also requested TRALSO to ask the JMC to back-off from the land claim it had allegedly lodged in 1995, on the grounds that it was not the appropriate structure to lodge a claim. In October 1996 TRALSO field staff brought some JMC and KMDF members together, where they made the suggestion that only Khanyayo lodge a land claim. The meeting did not go well and ended with people pulling guns on each other. The JMC refused to withdraw their claim.

Unfortunately, just as this conflict flared up the government began to plan the implementation of the Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) in the area.

5.2 SDI plans for Mkambati

The Nature Reserve, with its rich floral and faunal endowments and pleasant climate, is central to SDI plans for encouraging large external investment in environmental tourism ventures. The private sector investment that is envisaged includes upgrading and adding to the existing tourist facilities, to cater for both local and international tourists and sport hunters. The government's contribution will be to improve infrastructure in the reserve area, including roads, telephones and so forth. Outside the nature reserve, forestry companies are being encouraged to plant commercial forests in sections of the former state land, as well as in the surrounding communal areas.

It is envisaged that "local communities" will benefit from SDIs in a number of ways. These include 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 (Koch et al 1998). In the case of Mkambati possibilities exist for "local communities" to gain access to and control over carcasses left by hunters.

5.3 Local politics and the SDI

While it is still too early to comment on the successes and failures of the SDI in Mkambati, major conflicts centred on resource tenure have emerged and threaten to undermine the proposed development. We identify three axes of conflict: definitions of “community”; ownership of land; and ownership of resources.

5.3.1. Which “community” will benefit?

When the SDI was introduced into the area the “Mkambati community” was an abstract concept which was adequate for planning purposes. A year passed before the SDI planners realized that there is no neat and easily defined “community” of beneficiaries in Mkambati. The SDI’s initial definition of the local “community” appeared to lean towards one based on geographical location (Kepe 1998). This initially pleased the Khanyayo people who saw themselves as both the immediate neighbours of the project area and also a group with a strong historical claim to the land. But it soon became clear that leaders from other administrative areas within the Thaweni Tribal Authority were not happy with this definition. Hence the JMC, claiming to represent the Tribal Authority, made it clear to SDI personnel that in their view the Mkambati “community” should be the whole population of Thaweni. With the JMC threatening violence, the SDI quickly yielded to their demands. This decision has contributed in great part to the ongoing tensions between Khanyayo villagers, the KMDF grouping, and the JMC.

5.3.2. Who owns the land?

Following concerns expressed by lobby groups that the SDI might result in local populations losing their land to investors, studies were commissioned throughout the Wild Coast to provide a picture of land issues. These revealed that there were no less than 65 land claims in the area between Port St Johns and Port Edward alone, which the Eastern Cape Land Claims Commission was struggling to deal with (Natal Witness, 1997). One of these areas was Mkambati Nature Reserve. The Khanyayo people had finally lodged a land claim for the reserve in July 1997, followed by a counter-claim lodged by the JMC in September 1998. It soon became clear that the SDI would not progress until these conflicting claims were resolved, and that in this area government’s tenure reform programme would face an upward battle as well.

As outlined above, land in the area is still nominally owned by the state, with the Minister of Land Affairs holding it on behalf of the people who occupy and use land. Questions began to be asked as to whether the SDI investors should negotiate with the government or with local people who occupy the land – and who should be treated “as if” they are the owners of the land according to tenure reform policy (DLA 1998). But with tenure reform not yet implemented, the people who occupy the land are not able to sign contracts with investors, and government will have to sign on their behalf. It is therefore crucial for the SDI to ensure that the future legal owners of the land are fully involved in the negotiations and that they agree to the terms of any contracts signed.

For these reasons, officials from the Department of Land Affairs, the Commission for the Restitution of Land Rights and the SDI attempted to resolve both the land claim and the land tenure issues at the same time. Following earlier failed mediations organized by the SDI and

Land Affairs, the Khanyayo people and the JMC have now agreed to let only the relatives of people who were directly removed from Mkambati reserve benefit from any compensation paid as part of the resolution of the land claims. This is the substance of an agreement signed in November 1998. However, allegations have been made that certain sections of the meeting were coerced into signing the agreement before they fully understood its implications.

While the state and the SDI team seem to have made a break-through in relation to land-related conflicts in Mkambati, several connected issues might well stall the SDI process once again. Firstly, the treatment of the land tenure issue during the latest mediation has focused too narrowly on the Nature Reserve land, and attempted to answer only the question of who could legitimately claim rights to it. This intervention has neglected other resource struggles which are taking place, mostly in the communal area outside the reserve. In these struggles, tenure issues are central, particularly in relation to boundaries.

5.3.3. *Who owns the resources?*

An example of conflict over rights and access to resources is the tension over alluvial river sand taken from the Dlambula River, in which the chief protagonists are the JMC and the Khanyayo people. The Dlambula River runs through Khanyayo and Thahle administrative areas, and in 1993 the residents in these areas decided to charge ten rands (R10) per truckload of sand collected from the river. The JMC was given responsibility for with managing these monies. It was agreed that the money would be shared out equally later on. Since then it has become unclear what has happened to the money. Noticing this, leaders from Khanyayo and Thahle began suggesting that each administrative area should collect their own levies from the trucks. But with the JMC controlling the finances and with its leadership coming from a different area, which does not have sand in its rivers, the suggestions fell on deaf ears. The JMC has since claimed that the sand does not belong to Khanyayo or Thahle but to all the people of the Tribal Authority.

By the end of 1998 talk of factional violence was common in the area as a result of the conflict over river sand. This raises serious resource tenure questions, which should not be ignored by departments dealing with land, local government, economic development and water. Unsurprisingly, struggles such as these have now become inextricably intertwined with other conflicts, which could delay the SDI and other development initiatives.

5.4 Analysis of power relations in Mkambati

5.4.1 *Actors, intentions, objectives*

In Mkambati a host of actors and interest groups has pursued a variety of competing objectives in relation to control over and access to the natural resources of the area. In doing so they have engaged in a number of power plays, and entered into complex and shifting relationships with each other at different moments in time, ranging from alliances or collaboration, at one end of the spectrum, through wary neutrality or relative indifference, to outright hostility and confrontation, at the other end. As the preceding section has made clear, since 1990 the political terrain in Mkambati has become steadily more complex - and less stable - over time.

At *local level* the main actors have been, firstly, the villagers of Khanyayo, strategising both

individually and collectively to maintain the contribution that natural resources make to their livelihoods. This primary set of interests has united most Khanyayo people behind a powerfully articulated demand for the restoration of their land rights over the disputed territories.

Secondly, from mid-1996 Khanyayo interests have been represented by the KMDF - a grouping which has aggressively asserted the land claim, brought in TRALSO to assist them in this project, and in 1997 formally submitted a claim to the Commission for the Restoration of Land Rights.

The third interest group active locally is the JMC, formed initially to represent people from villages under the Thaweni Tribal Authority in their dealings with the Nature Reserve and TRACOR. Originally the JMC comprised government officials as well as locals, but subsequently the precise make-up of the JMC has been much less clear. Although it is clear that Chief Mhlanga of the Thaweni Tribal Authority supports the JMC in its struggle to assert the land claims of residents of all six administrative areas, the JMC is seen by Khanyayo people as a vehicle for an ambitious local business and political elite. There is some evidence that the JMC, an unelected group without a formal mandate from local populations, has seen the SDI as a potentially lucrative source of income for themselves. Sitting on the JMC are some powerful individuals (including a local councillor on the TRC), who have political connections with senior officials in the ruling party and in provincial government, connections which they have not hesitated to draw on in their disputes with the KMDF.

Other actors within the local scene include traditional leaders at different levels - eg. the subheadman of Khanyayo village, Chief Mhlanga of the Thaweni TA, the Bumbantana chieftaincy from Bizana District, and the paramount chief for Pondoland – King Mpondombini Sigcawu. These have mostly not been active in their own right, but rather aligned themselves with one or another of the more active interest groups. The objectives of these traditional authorities, although not clearly articulated, appear to be focussed on the assertion of their political authority over their subject populations, in a context where this authority has been explicitly challenged both by the emergence of elected local government structures, and by Eastern Cape provincial legislation designed to strip them of their powers (Ntsebeza, 1998).

Also active in the Mkambati situation have been institutional groupings located at regional, provincial or national levels. These *non-local* actors have not been able to unilaterally pursue their own objectives in Mkambati without entering into alliances or negotiations (and sometimes open contestations) with the local actors.

Thus conservation authorities in the Eastern Cape have defended the status of MNR as an area with important biodiversity characteristics and resources, and simultaneously sought to negotiate limited rights of access and use with local people while also preserving its protected status within the proposed SDI ecotourism development.

The SDI personnel active in Mkambati have actively promoted the notion of job creation through external investment in tourism, and the distribution of profits through joint ventures between investors and "the community". As described above, this led the SDI managers into an alliance with the (apparently) most representative local grouping, the JMC - and thus into conflict with the KMDF. In contrast, government and civil society agencies active in the land

reform arena (eg. the Department of Land Affairs office in the Eastern Cape, the Commission for the Restoration of Land Rights, and TRALSO) have emphasised the need for negotiations and due process in the resolution of disputes over land rights, however long this takes.

5.4.2 Mechanisms or actions to increase power endowments

The different actors have engaged in a diverse set of strategies and tactics aimed at increasing the power at their disposal, and thereby achieving their larger objectives. Central to all these strategies has been an appeal to one or more legitimating discourses, or narratives - centred on, for example, either "rights", or "development", or "tradition", or "conservation of biodiversity". In many cases these narratives have been used to justify the assertion of direct control over the resources in question - and sometimes, of the threat of physical force.

Khanyayo villagers have asserted their rights to resources by continuing their grazing, gathering, and hunting activities, whether legal or illegal in formal terms, and justifying this discursively by reference to ancestral rights and to *ukujola*. This resource use regime has underpinned the formal land claim instituted by the KMDF on behalf of Khanyayo, pursued through the available legal channels and argued with reference to history and custom. When under threat from the JMC's counter claim, and by the seeming support lent to the JMC by the SDI process, Khanyayo residents have threatened violence (as have their opponents in the JMC) but have also been willing to enter into negotiations to resolve the conflict.

The JMC grouping has pursued its objectives by building strong alliances with powerful local and non-local actors, and by making use of discourses of local development, community empowerment and job creation through facilitated external investment (ie. the SDI model). This powerful narrative has been joined to that of the land rights claims of the residents of Thaweni TA, and to the ambitions of traditional leadership in relation to its political authority. As with Khanyayo, threats of violence have been tempered at times by a willingness to enter into negotiations.

The non-local actors have pursued their "sectoral" objectives largely though attempting to identify legitimate local interest groups and their representatives, and subsequently entering into either a working relationship with these groups as a "channel" for activities and outcomes (eg. SDI-style development, or conservation goals), or into a supportive relationship aimed at assisting the local group assert its legitimate claim to land or resource use rights..

5.4.3 Outcomes and benefits

In early 1999, the outcomes of the diverse power plays in Mkambati over the past five years is an unstable *impasse*, an uneasy equilibrium characterised by non-action (in relation to the SDI and resolution of the land claim) rather than forward movement. The dispute over the highly remunerative river sand enterprise has not been addressed in any mediation process to date, and this continues to fuel tension and resentment in most quarters. Thus few tangible benefits from the ongoing disputes and power plays have emerged for any of the groups to date.

6. LESSONS FOR COMMUNITY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

The Mkambati case study differs significantly from others being reviewed by the *Evaluating Eden* project in southern Africa. There is no focused CWM initiative at Mkambati, although the authorities responsible for the existing nature reserve have made gestures in that direction in accordance with international trends, and the new SDI proposals resound with commitments to community benefits from sustainable resource use, nature conservation and ecotourism. While the nature reserve is important for local livelihoods, this is predominantly through illegal use rather than structured participation in conservation based enterprises. Furthermore – and here Mkambati does resemble many other nature conservation scenarios in the region – the collection of wild plant resources is at least as important in livelihoods as the collection of wild animal resources. “Wildlife” is too narrow a term for the natural resources that rural people use or might use in protected areas and/or community management contexts.

Nevertheless, Mkambati offers important lessons to the CWM sector in southern Africa and beyond: primarily because it focuses attention on the themes of resource tenure and livelihoods and of power dynamics as key determinants of whether CWM is viable; whom it benefits; and how.

So far, CWM as conventionally understood is more of a proposal than an actual practice in Mkambati. At the same time, community use and management of wild resources do take place through a range of tenure frameworks, use practices and economic activities that either ignore or openly contravene the current official systems and structures. At present, the collective financial benefits of resource conservation and the use of protected resources in the area are negligible, while the livelihood benefits to individuals and households are significant. This is the way things will have to stay under any SDI nature conservation or ecotourism programmes. An intricate balance of formal and informal resource tenures, mediated by stated and unstated interactions of regional and local power dynamics, will have to ensure that economic benefits continue to accrue at the household level. In the future, as now, important benefits from CWM will probably continue to come from ‘illegal’ harvesting and direct employment by nature conservation authorities and enterprises. But an over emphasis of the ‘legality’ of resource exploitation probably indicates an unrealistic concentration on formal regulation. In reality, definitions of legality and appropriate use in places like Mkambati are much more subtle. They focus on livelihood benefits at the individual and household level more than on community benefits or apparently abstract biodiversity h benefits.

If CWM were to be successfully developed through the SDI programme, the success of that initiative would have important and broader benefits for at least some local people and authorities through the stabilisation of resource tenure frameworks and their associated power dynamics. The attainment of these broader objectives might appear to be unrelated to local biodiversity and wild resource management. In fact, the relationship would be real. Stronger CWM systems in the area would reinforce and be dependent on the development of broader land and resource tenure systems, which in turn is essential for the future stability and prosperity of the area. Current and future livelihoods and development strategies on the Wild Coast can never be disaggregated into independent sectors. The joint dependence on nature conservation, ecotourism, agriculture, wild resource extraction, forestry and other activities will continue. At both the economic and the political levels, the broader benefits of enhanced CWM in Mkambati will be significantly related to wild resource management.

We turn now to look more at the institutions, power dynamics and social relations that guide livelihoods and CWM in Mkambati. We have shown that different types of household and livelihood strategy have differing levels of dependence on wild plant and animal use in Mkambati. Now and in the future, the deepest significant of CWM lies at the economic level of the individual household. Those that currently have the higher levels of dependence are in the economically and socially weaker strata. While undeniably resourceful, these households and individuals are not ‘in the driving seat’ of current tenure and management systems; nor will they ever be. The emergence of more highly capitalised ecotourism or other resource-based enterprises may give the role of resourceful entrepreneurs greater significance. But even in a future, SDI version of successful ecotourism and nature conservation along the Wild Coast, the key roles will lie at the group level of local authorities and institutions, not at the individual or household level..

At the same time, as we have pointed out, it is simplistic to speak of ‘collective’ or ‘community’ control over CWM initiatives. The “community” is so elusive a species as to make its pursuit in our analysis unhelpful. Collective control and incentives are certainly the key to understanding CWM. But they happen at many social and political levels and within many formal and informal groupings simultaneously. What we need to learn is how the various scales and motives of collective action can best combine to achieve the necessary consensus between local political and economic interest groups and external ones, such as investors, nature conservation authorities and economic development agencies.

Do the main actors in Mkambati have the capacity to make CWM initiatives work? Despite the history of deprivation and the multiple livelihood strategies that we have described at Mkambati, there is little doubt that a broad knowledge base about local wild resources and their management is still available there. What is less convincingly evident is the necessary range of skills and depth of understanding needed among the external authorities. The nature conservation agencies are moving their hearts to the right place with regard to “community” participation. But they still lack practical experience. While the SDI programme has some highly capable planning and management capacity at its disposal, it lacks depth and subtlety in dealing with the intricacies of Wild Coast resource tenure and power dynamics. Above all, it is driven by deadlines, and lacks the time to address these intricacies with the care and sensitivity that they demand. It is sometimes true that a looming deadline can help loosen deadlocked negotiations and dig people out of entrenched positions. There is some evidence that SDI pressures may have helped in this way with regard to conflicting Mkambati land claims. It remains to be seen whether these achievements are as superficial and short lived as is often the case.

What is the role of external agencies in a complex situation such as we find at Mkambati? In a superficial sense, it is certainly true that development initiatives are largely controlled by outside agencies rather than by “the community”. As the SDI programme and its proposals for ecotourism and nature conservation unfold, the dominance of outside agencies appears to be reinforced, despite the new political framework that has replaced the old dispensations of external control over local resource use. As usual in African CWM, this is a central threat to biodiversity, livelihoods and the prospects for sustainable use of protected resources. If the SDI becomes too much of a steamroller and the apartheid frameworks of nature conservation are replaced by the dominance of capitalist ecotourism, CWM will fail. Local people will either simply pursue their own economic agendas, often in direct contravention of CWM goals; or they may actively oppose or sabotage CWM initiatives. This is why external control

of CWM initiatives is only superficial. More fundamentally, power is always in the hands of the people. A more subtle dispensation is possible, and has prevailed in recent decades in Mkambati. Here, external authorities have a semblance of control, and their biodiversity targets are adequately met. At the same time, local people are largely untroubled by the authorities' pretensions, and are able to operate at least some of their own systems of resource management and use. Two perceived realities of resource control, and two overlapping sets of not wholly incompatible management motives, coexist. A realistic prognosis for the SDI-dominated future of CWM on the Wild Coast (if official insensitivities and haste do not cancel that future before it has started) is that some sort of coexistence of perceived controls will remain the key to viability.

As we have shown, local institutions in and around Mkambati have been deeply fragmented by the colonial and apartheid experience. The more recent institutional experience of the 1990s, as we have described, has been unstable and tense as various interest groups and political entrepreneurs strive to gain a footing and face the complex challenges and opportunities of the emerging dispensation. Right now in Mkambati, it is true to say that local institutions cannot cope with CWM. This is one of the gravest challenges of CWM in South Africa. Not only do all the conventional institutional challenges of the sector have to be tackled; they must also be addressed as land tenure and local government systems are being completely rebuilt. This is not the usual CWM problem of externally imposed CWM projects disrupting existing institutions and foisting new committees on local people. This is a much broader institutional challenge of trying to fabricate workable CWM structures with hardly any secure points in the broader institutional framework to tie them to. It could be argued that this is an advantage, in that the institutional innovations or disruption of CWM initiatives may pale into insignificance or be easily absorbed in the wider institutional flux that currently prevails. The institutional challenges of CWM in South Africa today call for cool heads, modest ambitions and maximum flexibility as locally acceptable and workable institutional compromises and 'communities of interest' are tied together in places like Mkambati. So far, the prospects are mixed.

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