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Author

Turner, Robin

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Communities, Conservation, and Tourism-Based Development

Can Community-Based Nature Tourism Live Up to Its Promise?

Robin L. Turner¹

As community-based approaches to natural resource management have gained popularity in conservation circles, some advocates of this approach have looked towards nature tourism as a means to ensure that participating communities benefit from CBNRM. This paper analyzes the opportunities and tensions generated by efforts to use conservation-based tourism as a catalyst for economic development. By exploring how historical legacies position actors and influence relationships between them, characterizing the nature tourism sector and its logic, and examining how liberalizing states are likely to engage with community-based tourism. I situate community-based nature tourism ventures in a broader political economic context. The paper draws from research on the Makuleke Region of Kruger National Park, South Africa to illustrate how these factors influence prospects for community benefit from protected area tourism.² For example, the Makuleke's interactions with conservation managers, donors and advocates, government bureaucrats, and private sector entrepreneurs are structured by their relative poverty, limited technical expertise, and secure title to a valued conservation area—and by tourism market structures. While historical legacies of exclusion and dispossession and market structures often disadvantage community initiatives, nature tourism may have substantial promise in places where communities have secure tenure or title to an area valued by private sector entrepreneurs. Realistic appraisal of nature tourism in community contexts requires attention to the multiple political economies in which these efforts are embedded.

SITUATING COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) generally refers to resource management practices in which people dependent on those resources or affected by management practices are involved in the management and exploitation of these resources. CBNRM usually focuses on people in close proximity to the resources of concern; these people constitute the “community” which is to be involved. In CBNRM sites, the main actors usually include community representatives, conservation or development-focused nongovernmental organizations, government agencies from environmental, parks, or land departments, a variety of international donors, and consultants. CBNRM has gained support in conservation and development circles over the last two decades, and CBNRM strategies are being implemented with increasing frequency. Hulme and Murphree (2001) argue that this approach became “almost a new orthodoxy” in development circles during the 1990s.

Although there are many routes to CBNRM (see Barrow & Murphree 2001), most initiatives begin with a decision by the governmental or private actors controlling a protected area to involve nearby affected communities. In these cases, the extent of community involvement is largely within the control of these actors. In spite of ample rhetoric regarding “participation” in CBNRM plans and literature, brief consultation with local communities appears to be much more common than substantial involvement in decision-making. In those cases where communities do participate in decision-making, the agenda is often severely restricted. For example, proposals to use areas for agriculture or manufacturing instead of conservation may not be considered. When communities have secure title to the land, this may increase their bargaining power with governmental and private actors as the communities can use land title to secure a greater role in decision-making.

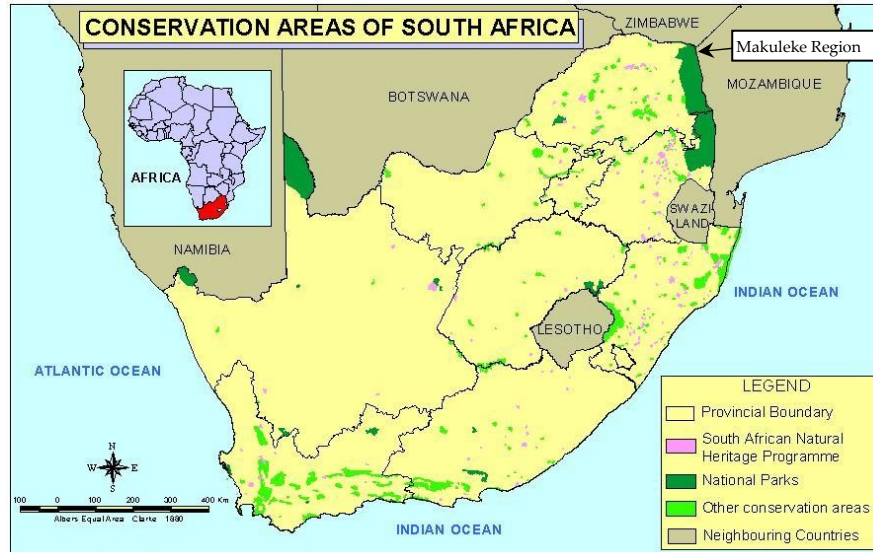
Community-based natural resource management emerged from the confluence of several factors. For close to a century, conservation efforts followed a “fortress conservation” model in which human activity was viewed as intrinsically harmful to nature (Adams & Hulme 2001; Moore, Kosek & Pandian 2003; Nash 1973; Neumann 1998; Peluso 1993; Wells, Brandon & Hannah 1992). The model was deeply in-

vested in a romantic European understanding of nature as fragile and pristine. Conservationists therefore sought to exclude people from nature by creating “protected areas,” reserves in which human residence and consumptive activity (hunting, agriculture) was strictly limited, but nature was subject to expert management. The term “fortress” reflects the fences, fines, and coercion employed to restrict local access to protected areas. Over time, the demonstrated failures of fortress conservation to produce desired conservation outcomes lessened support for this approach. Despite intense investment in policing protected areas against the threat posed by local people and “poachers,” who often were seen as interchangeable (Neumann 1997; Peluso 1993), ecological conditions declined, and the number of threatened species continued to rise. Fortress conservation also came under increasing pressure from human rights and justice-oriented critiques, which questioned the moral basis for expropriation and exclusion in the name of biodiversity (e.g., Geisler & Letsoalo 2000).

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

There are many angles from which these justifications for CBNRM could be and have been usefully critiqued—for example, it is far from clear that local resource exploitation provides an adequate explanation for species decline (Gibson 1999; Leader-Williams 1990). In addition, some conservationists doubt that community participation will improve outcomes (e.g., Spinage 1998). This paper focuses on the interaction between conservation-based development and extra-local political economies.³ As the Makuleke case illustrates, conservation-based development efforts bring the “communities” involved in CBNRM

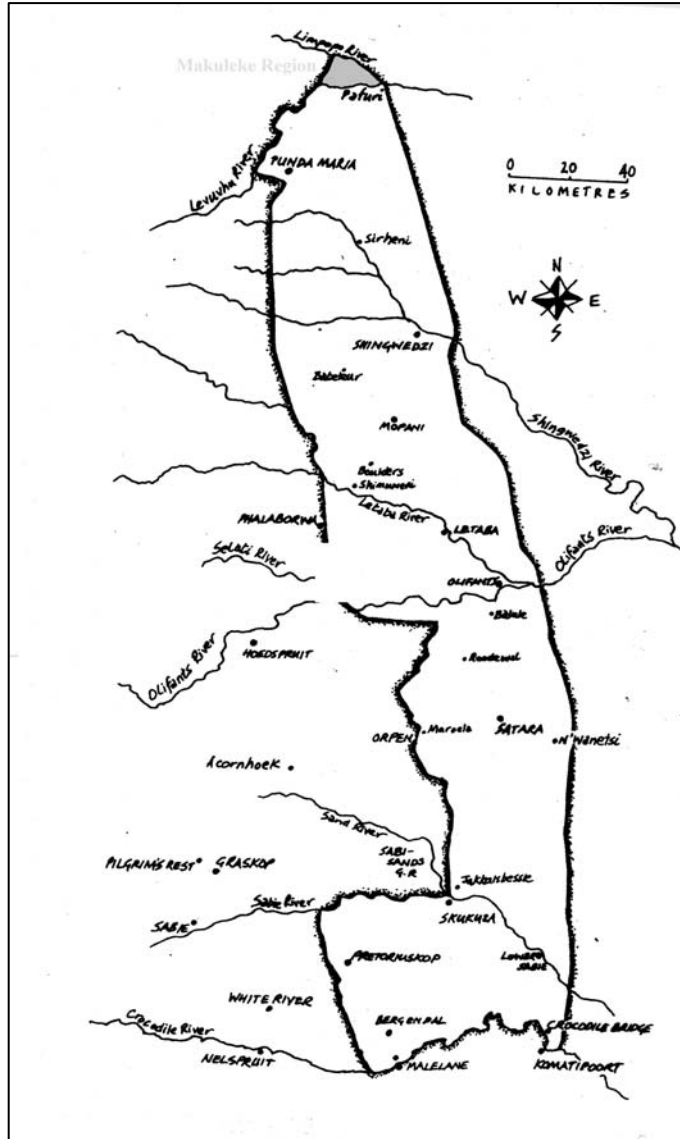
Figure 1: Protected areas in contemporary South Africa. Source: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South Africa (undated).



into complex interactions with processes at several different spatial scales in which they often have extremely limited room for maneuver. My discussion of this case is based on interviews conducted with community members, national parks officials, and other involved individuals during 2002,⁴ on archival research,⁵ and on secondary literature. This paper focuses on developments in the Makuleke Region through August 2002 when interviews were completed.

The Makuleke Region constitutes about 24,000 hectares bounded by the Luvuvhu, Limpopo, and Pafuri (Mutale) rivers. It is situated in the northeastern corner of South Africa near the borders of Zimbabwe and Mozambique (See Figures 1-2). The Region is ecologically rich; it is home to a wide range of flora and fauna, including impala, kudu, leopards, buffalo, lions, deer, and many bird species. It also is located along a wildlife migration route. The land includes floodplains, pans, wetlands and riverine forest and bush. Many plants in the area, such as the lala palm, have multiple subsistence and commercial uses (Harriss 1987). The Thulamela ruins are of archeological, historical, and cultural interest. In 2002, there were a few paved roads, but one had to go off-road or use dirt roads to access most of the area. Monetary

Figure 2: The Makuleke Region in Kruger Park. Located in the northernmost part of the park, the region is bounded by the Limpopo River to the north, the Pafuri River to the south, and the Levuvhu River to the east. Source: Adapted from Carruthers (1995:102).



valuations for the land and existing infrastructure ranged from 20 to 70 million Rand (US \$1.8 to \$6.3 million⁶) in 2000 (Koch & de Beer 2000).

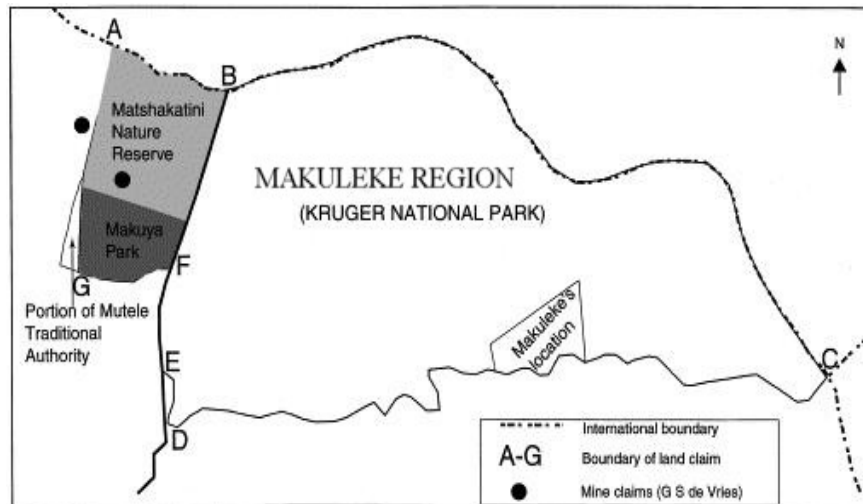
Examination of the Makuleke case brings three factors to light. First, the communities most likely to be targeted for CBNRM have been particularly disadvantaged by the prior processes of conservation through dispossession and the broader legacies of African colonialism and South African apartheid. These legacies may make it more difficult for community actors to engage with their partners on an equal basis. Second, conservation-based development is heavily reliant on capitalist market strategies for success. In most cases, revenue generated through tourism or other leisure spending is expected to provide the resources for community benefit. Although employing a market-based strategy has some benefits, the sectoral attributes of tourism pose special challenges to CBNRM initiatives, and it is not clear that CBNRM tourism projects will produce substantial economic benefits.⁷ Third, the coincidence of the shift to CBNRM with African economic crisis, partial liberalization and democratization has altered the regional landscape on which all conservation efforts, private, state, and community-based are situated. These transformations within and beyond the state may increase market competition and reduce the alternatives for communities seeking development.

LEGACIES OF DISPOSSESSION

African conservation is deeply intertwined with land expropriation and exclusion. As many scholars have documented, the creation of protected areas frequently has involved forced relocation of people long resident in those areas and the exclusion of nearby peoples from access to these areas (Carruthers 1995; Neumann 1998). These practices were widespread during the colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa (Ramutsindela 2003). Some contend that greenlining—placing land under protected status, thereby restricting human residence and use—continues to result in dispossession and the criminalization of customary practices throughout the developing world (Geisler 2003; Neumann 1998, 2002). The Makuleke Region is a product of this history.⁸

Harries (1987) estimates that the Makuleke region was settled 150 to 200 years ago by the Makuleke clan, a branch of the Maluleke clan.

Figure 3: Another view of the Makuleke Region. Boundary lines are the Limpopo River (A-C), Pafuri River (C-D), and Levuvhu River (B-F-E). Letters A-G indicate the circumference of the land claim. All of this area was once occupied by the Makuleke, but Makuleke residence was gradually limited to the small location indicated on the map. Adapted from Makuleke Land Claim Court documents (not dated).



Located along an established trade route known to Europeans and Africans, the area was outside the scope of European settlement and somewhat distant from indigenous state structures. By the 1890s, however, the Makuleke people and the territory had been incorporated into the white supremacist South African (Transvaal) Republic.⁹ Over the next eighty years, the Makuleke gradually lost effective access to and control over the region's resources as provincial and national governments claimed the territory, restricted the Makuleke to a small reserve within the Region (Figure 3), and established protected areas (Carruthers 1995; Harries 1987). This process culminated in the forced removal of the Makuleke in 1969. The Makuleke were resettled in Ntlhaveni, a newly established reserve for Tsonga-speaking people located about 200 kilometers away. In 1971, most of the Makuleke Region was incorporated into Kruger National Park, South Africa's premier national park (Figure 2); a small portion was incorporated into the Madimbo Corridor, a military *cordon sanitaire* (Steenkamp 2001).¹⁰

Forced removal to Ntlhaveni was accompanied by political and economic changes. First, political authority within the homelands was structured by “traditional” authorities as recognized by the Department of Bantu Affairs. At removal, the Makuleke chief was made a “headman,” formally subordinate to Maluleke Chief Mhinga. Chief Mhinga was complicit in the Makuleke’s removal, which gave him authority over this related, but largely independent, clan (Harries 1987). Because recognized chiefs had considerable discretion over land and revenue allocation, the formal status of the Makuleke chief had material consequences. Secondly, removal brought a decisive shift in the relative importance of subsistence agriculture versus wage labor. The Makuleke were concentrated on a relatively small parcel of land, comprising 5,000 hectares divided into three villages, and agricultural plots could no longer be scattered. Ntlhaveni lacked the rich game, wild fruits, lala palm, and fish of the Makuleke Region, so the Makuleke had to adapt their farming practices to the different agricultural conditions of the dry savannah. There were several crop failures during the first few years, and many men migrated so that they could earn wages to purchase food. Wage labor became essential to survival, but Ntlhaveni’s remote location limited employment opportunities to nearby farms, Kruger Park, and migrant labor. The forced removal of the Makuleke was part and parcel of the broader process through which the majority of the South African population was restricted to a small portion of the land, about 13 percent in the “African” case, and the black rural population became dependent upon farm and migrant labor for survival.

During the negotiated transition from apartheid to democracy, property rights and land issues were a major issue of contention. The National Party argued strongly for protection of private property rights, which could entrench white claims to property acquired during segregation and apartheid. The African National Congress sought to facilitate land reform and restitution. Eventually, the parties agreed that the new Bill of Rights would include protection for property, including a right to compensation for expropriation (Rugege 2004). The Bill of Rights in the 1996 Constitution included provisions protecting property, establishing a right to redress for those expropriated since 1913; and compelling the state to foster equitable access to land (Section 25). The new government then established a three-pronged land reform process including land restitution, land redistribution, and ten-

ure reform. For the most part the government has sought to achieve land reform through negotiation, using a willing buyer-willing seller approach, and progress has been slow.¹¹

With the passage of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 in 1994, the Makuleke had the opportunity to reclaim their lost land. This Act established the process through which individuals and groups deprived of their land after June 1913 as a consequence of racially discriminatory laws could seek individual or collective restoration of lost land, alternative land, or compensation. After learning of the Act, the Makuleke filed a collective restitution claim, and established the Makuleke Communal Property Association (CPA) as the legal vehicle to pursue their land claim and receive title. The CPA membership included all individuals who had lived in the Makuleke Region and their descendents, as well as individuals who had joined the Makuleke community after removal. Representatives of the Makuleke then negotiated with the National Parks Board (now SANParks) and other government ministries. Three years after the claim was filed, the parties reached a settlement. In late 1998, Land Claims Court recognized the settlement and ordered the transfer of title to the Makuleke Region to the Makuleke CPA.¹² (Table 1 describes the resultant property rights regime.) The court order marked the first successful settlement of a land restitution claim involving a South African national park.

Although SANParks resisted the Makuleke's land claim for most of the negotiation process, the final resolution was portrayed as a "win-win solution." For SANParks, the most important outcome may be the retention of the Makuleke Region within Kruger Park. In fact, Kruger Park grew slightly with the addition of the 3,000 hectares the Makuleke reclaimed from the Madimbo Corridor. SANParks also gained a formal commitment to continued conservation of the area, and the ability to monitor and sometimes participate in Makuleke decision-making. The Restitution Agreement included the proviso that the Makuleke Region would be administered as a contractual national park for 20 to 50 years.¹³ Since the resolution of the land claim, the Region has been co-managed by the Makuleke Communal Property Association (CPA) and SANParks, the parastatal that manages all national protected areas (See Figure 4). Because the CPA does not possess sufficient conservation expertise or manpower to manage the region without assistance, SANParks is responsible for day-to-day conservation management.

Table 1: The Distribution of Property Rights to the Makuleke Region

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

Acronyms: JMB: Joint Management Board; SANP: South African National Parks; Makuleke CPA: Makuleke Community Property Association

The Makuleke agreed to preserve the Makuleke Region's status as a conservation area early in the negotiation process. The commitment to conserve the Makuleke region in perpetuity means that the land cannot be used for agriculture, mining, or mass settlement (see Table 1). Other activities are allowed to the extent that they are compatible with conservation; this compatibility is to be assessed by comparison with the conservation management plan developed and agreed to by the Joint Management Board comprised of representatives of the Makuleke CPA and SANParks. Several measures ensure that maintaining the Makuleke region as a conservation area will not pose a financial burden to the Makuleke. For the first 5 years of co-management, SAN-

Figure 4: Makuleke Region Co-Management Arrangement established in Land Restitution Agreement.

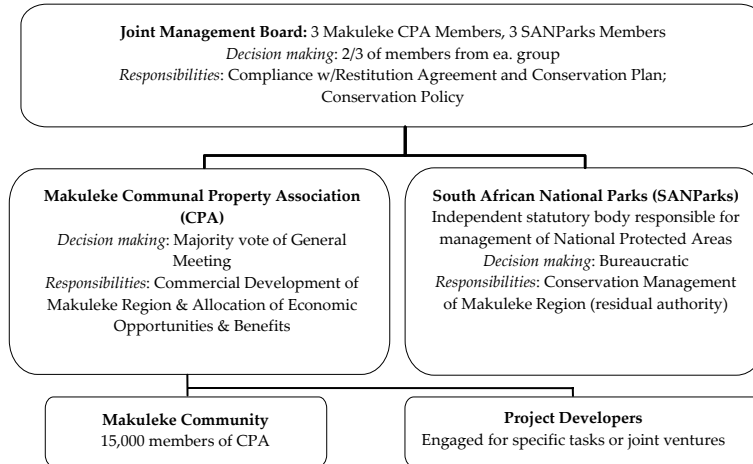


Table 2: Revenue and Cost-Sharing Arrangement

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

Parks was obligated to bear all operational costs. Subsequently, the Makuleke CPA will pay up to 50 percent of these costs (See Table 2), but the costs paid by the CPA may not exceed 50 percent of their net profit from the region. Although SANParks retains the revenue from the fees that visitors pay to enter the Park through Pafuri gate, which is closest to the Makuleke region, as of 2001, SANParks' operational costs for the Makuleke region outweighed gate revenues (Reid 2001). In practice, SANParks is obligated to subsidize continued conservation if ecotourism ventures do not pay off.

The Makuleke have been expressly committed to conservation-based development since they initiated the land claim. In their public statements during the land claim negotiations and subsequently, community leaders have consistently argued that the community seeks to use ecotourism as a means to development. The following statements are representative:

Since the area is now developed into a conservation area, we would like it retained as such and not go and live there. The entire community feels strongly about this. We want to own the area but not live in it. *Lamson Maluleke, Makuleke community leader (M. Nel 1996)*

If we can get land rights, we want to make use of resources so that the community can benefit. One of the resources is eco-tourism; we would like to build some lodges to cater for overseas and local markets. *Livingstone Maluleke, Makuleke community leader (M. Nel 1996).*

It is difficult to determine whether Makuleke commitment to conservation was truly voluntary or merely a pragmatic decision seeking to strengthen their land claim given the political environment.¹⁴ The Constitution establishes a right to redress, but not to restoration, and Land Claims Court documents indicate that restoration without conservation was unlikely.¹⁵

Other benefits of the negotiated agreement are easy to see. Symbolically, the Makuleke gained the enormous victory of official recognition of the injustices against them. Legally, the Makuleke gained formal title to the Makuleke region and exclusive rights to commercially develop the area in a manner consistent with conservation. The CPA constitution states that the Makuleke Region is to serve as a means towards achieving economic self reliance and development (Makuleke CPA Constitution Section 5.4). Tourism ventures, such as

lodges, tours, and safari hunting, are the chief development strategy the CPA has pursued. The agreement also strengthened the Makuleke's tenure security in Ntlhaveni; the Court Order and Agreement officially acknowledge Makuleke residence in Ntlhaveni and oblige the State to secure rights for the Makuleke in Ntlhaveni (Court Order, Section 19).

However, the legacy of poverty resulting from land dispossession has had lasting effects on the Makuleke, and these effects were not erased with the transfer of land title. Most CPA members live in Ntlhaveni, which is one of the poorest regions in the poorest province in South Africa (Koch & de Beer 2000).¹⁶ To pursue their goal of tourism-based development, the Makuleke have had to partner with outside actors who possess material resources and/or necessary expertise. To raise revenue from safari hunting, for example, the CPA partnered with a private firm that advertised, organized, and managed the hunt.

The Makuleke have been quite effective at developing these useful relationships. Since the mid-1990s, a steady stream of volunteers and NGOs such as the Legal Resources Center, Environmental Wildlife Trust, the Ford Foundation, and the German Agency for Technical Co-Operation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) have assisted community members with a variety of tasks. However, the risk of exploitation and unequal partnership is a continuing concern. The Makuleke CPA has had to rely on others for assistance in gathering information and determining the options available at strategic decision points such as approaching the land claims negotiations, ascertaining development options, developing a conservation management plan, and issuing requests for development proposals. The Makuleke may not always be able to tell if they are receiving full, fair, and unbiased information.¹⁷ While the risk of exploitation has declined somewhat as the skills and experience of community members increase, early decisions may have lasting effects. Some participants in the German-funded Transform project assert that it initially hindered the Makuleke's land restitution claim by suppressing recognition of conflicts of interests between SANParks and the community (Steenkamp & Urh 2000). For several years, the Makuleke CPA worked closely with several individuals whom Makuleke community leaders perceived to have no conflicts of interest. This loose grouping of individuals was collectively called the Friends of Makuleke. The Friends were most intensely involved with the Makuleke during the land claim ne-

gotiations; involvement has lessened with the Friends' perception that the Makuleke had developed some capacity and should become self-sufficient.¹⁸

The current resolution requires that the Makuleke Region is to remain a conservation area in perpetuity. Because of this proviso, all commercial ventures must be consistent with conservation. If the CPA wishes to build a lodge, to extend a road, or to create a helipad, it must be able to demonstrate these changes would not impede conservation. In practice, this means that the CPA must present all commercial plans to the Makuleke-SANParks Joint Management Board, compare proposals with the conservation management plan, and conduct environmental impact assessments for each proposal. The CPA must justify its decisions to SANParks, although SANParks' ability to block ventures is limited to environmental grounds. Technical expertise is an important resource in making these arguments about environmental impact, but it is not equally distributed between the two co-managers. Much of the imbalance between SANParks and the CPA can be traced to past state policies and resource allocations. In this respect, the Makuleke are similar to many collectives targeted for participatory resource management. Ecologically significant areas are often remote, and the people living in them or dispossessed from them are often politically and economically marginal. Inequality is deeply sedimented in the terrain on which communities and partners seek to develop conservation projects.

Ntlhaveni was part of the Gazankulu "self-governing" Bantustan. Like others in the former homelands, the Makuleke face unresolved conflict over authority and land tenure (Classens 2001; Ntsebeza 1999; Turner & Ibsen 2000), threatening the already problematic notion of coherent community. Although elected local governments have been installed, the role of "traditional authorities" (chiefs) in postapartheid South Africa has not yet been resolved. In many places it is not clear who owns which land in the homelands, nor who possesses the authority to allocate land. It is not clear whether the recently enacted Community Land Rights Act of 2004 will resolve these issues.¹⁹ The successful land claim strengthened the Makuleke's tenure security in Ntlhaveni, but conflict between Chief Mhinga, Chief Makuleke and their adherents has continued.

Additionally, questions of community membership and coherence remain salient. The Makuleke established formal membership criteria

and a communal property association in response to the requirements of the land claim process, but the presence of formal membership definitions should not be assumed to have created a unified collectivity. As Agrawal and Gibson (1999) contend, communities are rarely homogenous. If participation in natural resource management and tourism initiatives produces disparities in perceived benefits, it may increase communal tensions and conflicts. Since the land claim process began, CPA executive members have been the locus of external efforts to assist the Makuleke. They have received training, subsidized travel, and other perks. These programs have helped Executive Committee members to develop the skills necessary to make good decisions, but they also placed these individuals in a favored position. In contrast, the tangible benefits received by non-executive CPA members as of 2002 were fairly small. After each safari hunt, animal meat was shared among the community, and several dozen CPA members were hired to work in the Makuleke Region. Perceived benefit disparities place severe pressures on the CPA Executive Committee. Research on other cases suggests that disparities in benefit are common (Kellert, Mehta, Ebbin & Lichtenfeld 2000).

Local decision-making processes reflect multiple actors, multiple, often conflicting, interests and local institutions. The 1996 Community Property Association Act had two curious gaps: it ignores "traditional" authority and customary law, and it makes no reference to local government; these lacunae could facilitate deeply divisive contestation over authority (Cousins & Hornby 2001).²⁰ The Makuleke have sought to avoid conflict by creating informal linkages between the CPA and traditional Authority; the Makuleke Chief and other members of the royal family were elected to the CPA executive committee. Additionally, the Development Forum in Ntlhaveni brings together representatives from all the local organizations. These measures facilitate organizational communication and coordination, but they cannot prevent conflict as the balance of resources controlled by different organization shifts. The Makuleke CPA has enjoyed technical assistance and financial support from several sources while the local government and civic organizations' financial resources have remained quite limited. Because the CPA receives all revenue from development initiatives in the Makuleke region, it may eventually control substantial resources.²¹ Because the CPA Executive Committee is an elective body, the shifts in influence are likely to be expressed in increased contestation for posi-

tions. In 2002, the executive committee was largely comprised of relatively well-educated, employed individuals and members of the royal family. While changes in membership could make the executive more representative, it also could make it more difficult for the CPA to maintain unity in its interactions with SANParks and other partners.

CAPITALISM AND MARKETS: THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY-BASED NATURE TOURISM

The shift to community-based natural resource management has coincided with widespread adoption of sustainable development and market-based conservation strategies (Hulme & Murphree 2001). Taken jointly, this perspective implies that the route to successful CBNRM goes through the market. This approach has some clear benefits. A capitalist logic makes it possible to assign values to conservation and to assess its costs and benefits. As discussed, conservation efforts have imposed severe social, material, and economic costs on communities subject to dislocation and use restrictions. There have been few efforts to estimate these financial costs of fortress conservation.²² Conversely, conservation efforts have benefited individuals for whom conservation has intrinsic value, people who have had access to protected areas, and those able to mount related commercial enterprises. Economic logic implies that if all parties were willing, those who benefit from conservation could compensate those individuals or groups who were adversely affected by conservation measures. This would benefit all parties involved.²³ This has not been the dominant strategy.

Instead, market-based approaches to CBNRM have focused on providing a stream of benefits to the participating community. Most benefits originate from two sources: government or private sector project funds and income from extractive or non-extractive use of protected areas. Organizational actors that support conservation often are willing to subsidize initial organizational and project costs for CBNRM. The Makuleke CPA has received grants from government agencies, NGOs, and foreign foundations, and community members have been hired to work on projects in Kruger Park.²⁴ These external subsidies to the communities participating in conservation initiatives are usually viewed as short term and unsustainable.

In the long run, revenue from natural resources is meant to serve as the main source of community development. Communities are to achieve development by putting nature on the market. The most substantial sources of income from protected areas involve tourism. Tourists are accustomed to paying for access to nature *in nature*, for related services such as transportation, lodging, and guidance, and purchasing goods and souvenirs linked to the experience such as post-cards and local crafts. These goods and services are, in principle, compatible with conservation. While there is an established and lucrative market for game hunting (Chardonnet et al. 2002), conservation principles and constituencies constrain the potential for profit. The conservation plan for the Makuleke Region permits limited hunting, but the first elephant hunts in the Makuleke Region produced an outcry among conservationists. In 2000, the Makuleke were able to sell the rights to hunt two elephants and two buffalo. The hunt produced R520,000 (about US\$47 thousand or \$3/beneficiary) and animal meat (Mahony & Van Zyl 2001). Hunts also occurred in 2001 and 2002.

Superficial analysis suggests that tourism is a promising strategy. Many African protected areas contain stunning landscapes, large game, and exotic flora. Large numbers of people pay fees to enter existing protected areas; more than a million people visited South Africa's national parks in 1995 (Wells 1996). The tourism sector directly accounts for 3.7 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) (World Travel and Tourism Council 2003b), and tourism comprises the main source of foreign currency for at least thirty eight percent of all countries (Roe & Urquhart 2001). In 1997, ten countries in continental sub-Saharan Africa garnered more than US\$100 million in tourism receipts (World Tourism Organization. 2002). In South Africa, tourism is the third largest industry and the fourth most important source of foreign exchange (Spenceley 2003); it comprises about 7 percent of GDP (South Africa. Government Communications (GCIS) 2003). Although few solid figures are available, it is clear that nature tourism generates substantial revenue (Emerton 2001). Wells (1996) estimates that South African nature tourism accounted for R710-6,087 (US\$225 to 1,909 million) in 1993.²⁵

Although these figures are promising, closer examination of the economic logic regarding tourism, the sectoral attributes of tourism, and the political economy within which CBNRM initiatives are situated raises several concerns. First, community conservation tourism

initiatives are relatively new entrants to a large and competitive field. In addition to the many state-owned protected areas, there is a large private nature tourism industry. Community initiatives will have to compete with these public and private initiatives. Although some may be able to find a market niche by highlighting community control or ecotourism (see Honey 1999), it is not self-evident that communities are well placed to compete successfully.

Second, because the sites tourists select are influenced by international trends and events, even success may prove fleeting. For example, the events of September 11, 2001 led many travelers to re-evaluate the safety of different destinations. Observers suggest that South Africa has benefited from this re-evaluation because the threat of terrorism is believed to be low, but they worry that high crime rates will discourage foreign tourists (Spenceley 2003; World Travel and Tourism Council 2003a). During the latter years of apartheid, sanctions and boycotts limited travel to South Africa. Since the transition, international travel has increased, and the tourism sector has grown substantially. At present, tourism is the fastest-growing sector (GCIS 2003). While recent trends have benefited South Africa, tourism to Kenya and Zimbabwe declined sharply over the same period as the bombing of the US embassy and perceived domestic instability diminished their attractiveness to foreign tourists. Tourist markets are highly sensitive to international and national factors and events that are largely outside the control of tourist sites and host communities.

Third, profitable tourism often requires substantial investment. Although tourists often pay access fees, the larger share of revenue is garnered through housing, transport, and tour management (Clancy 1998). Lodging is perhaps the simplest of these components for communities to provide, and it may range from local homestays to luxury accommodation. If a community is located near the protected area, lodging within the community may be feasible. Because Ntlhaveni is about 200 kilometers away from the Makuleke Region, providing lodging for visitors to the Region has less potential. Conservation concerns are likely to limit construction within the protected area. When this is the case, low volume, high cost lodging may be more profitable. One study of the Makuleke Region estimated that 5-6 lodges could produce US\$360 to 540 thousand per year (Koch & de Beer 2000).²⁶ But provision of independent accommodation is likely to require substantial financial investment up-front. Oldham, Creemers and Rebeck

(2000) estimate that mid-market nature lodges in KwaZulu/Natal invested R200 thousand per bed; the operating surplus was approximately R9 thousand per year.

Communities engaged in CBNRM are unlikely to have sufficient funds to set up these high-cost tourism ventures on their own, and existing state and nongovernmental partners often are unwilling or unable to provide funds for profit-oriented investment. To address this situation, the Makuleke CPA has issued calls for private sector bids to develop the region. Bid documents clearly state that the private partners will be responsible for financing any joint projects. Although partners are expected to have a reasonable rate of return, they are also required to implement their ventures in a manner that advances the community. Ventures also must include provisos for the eventual transfer of lodges built on Makuleke land to the CPA. Although this strategy seeks to protect the Makuleke's interests while advancing their tourism initiative, it may also render the region less attractive to investors. The Makuleke CPA reached an agreement with one partner, Matswani Safaris, to build one high end lodge, a tent camp, and a museum (Spenceley 2003). At 60 percent occupancy, the Makuleke CPA would receive annual lodge rent of about \$75,000. In July 2003, the CPA announced an R45 million concessionary agreement with a different partner, Wilderness Safaris, to build three luxury tented lodges.²⁷ It is not clear whether other CBNRM sites will be sufficiently attractive to garner this sort of investment.

Fourth, the structure of the tourism sector may make it difficult for communities to capture substantial benefits. Tourism is a complexly structured global industry. The hotel and transport sectors are highly concentrated, and the majority of benefits accrue to the larger players (Clancy 1998). Nature tourism is less likely to be controlled by the largest transnational firms, but Emerton's (2001) research indicates that benefits often flow away from communities. The individuals or firms that manage tours—arranging transportation, accommodation, guides, and schedules—often capture much of the revenue. These agents are often situated closer to potential tourists and have easier access to them. Evidence also indicates that the most lucrative employment opportunities—for example as safari leaders or lodge managers—are often captured by outsiders, ostensibly on the basis of skills (Murombedzi 2001; Sindiga 2000). As with lodging, some communities may be able to build local employment requirements into their con-

tracts with partners; the Makuleke CPA has adopted this approach. Matswani Wilderness Safaris proposed to implement a vocational training program so that Makuleke could serve as tour guides, hospitality staff, and managers. Additionally, several Makuleke youth are participating in a training program sponsored by the Endangered Wildlife Foundation. Training has included conservation management, tourism, business, safari guidance, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) wildlife monitoring. The program relies heavily on distance learning, with short intensive training sessions conducted in Ntlhaveni or Kruger Park. This program has been in progress for several years and is intended to lead to formal certification, but advancement has been slow and some students dropped out.

There is reason to believe that tourist expectations may limit movement away from common employment patterns in which local people fill many of the lower level, lower paying jobs, but non-local people dominate the higher-level better paying positions. Although the “nature” tourists experience reflects a complex interaction between biological and human labor (Moore et al. 2003), the experience is often marketed and understood as a journey into the authentic and pristine (Bruner & Kirshenblattgimblett 1994; Moore et al. 2003; Norton 1996). The development of nature tourism in southern Africa has been deeply racialized, and ventures into “wild” nature typically have been mediated by non-local, “skilled,” usually white, guides assisted by local, “unskilled” black laborers.²⁸ Disrupting these expectations may reduce commercial success among white tourists, who appear to constitute the majority at present (Wells 1996).²⁹

For most communities, engaging in nature tourism will involve developing a new set of relationships with extra-local actors on an uneven terrain.³⁰ Communities’ ability to negotiate the terms of their engagement will depend crucially on their position with regard to the protected area and their relationships with other, better situated actors. When communities hold title to the land or have secure, state-recognized tenure,³¹ they possess greater ability to determine how that area will be used. When another party holds formal rights, the community must rely on that actor to address its interests. Some of the largest southern African CBNRM initiatives, such as Zimbabwe’s CAMPFIRE program, have involved communal land. In many communal areas, effective control over use of this land resides in community actors but formal property rights are held by the state. While these property ar-

rangements usually are rooted in colonial disregard for African land tenure, postcolonial governments have not rectified the situation. This lack of local property rights has made it more difficult for community residents to benefit from tourism initiatives on these lands (Murombedzi 2001). The ability to make credible threats to comply with or sabotage arrangements also affects negotiating power. Regardless of land tenure, close ties between members of the community and well-positioned actors may help to lessen the imbalance between the community and prospective private sector partners.

The Makuleke community is better situated than most communities engaged in CBNRM tourism initiatives. This is primarily due to their strong formal relationship to the Makuleke Region, a site recognized to have ecological value and commercial potential. Because the Makuleke CPA has title to the region and court-recognized exclusive rights to commercial development, any actor seeking to use the land must engage with them. Additionally, there is a formal co-management agreement between the Makuleke CPA and SANParks. Although the Restitution Agreement is subject to continual re-interpretation, it was carefully crafted through negotiation and establishes clear expectations and constraints for each partner (Reid, 2001). Finally, the Makuleke have a strong network of supporters with media ties, technical expertise, and financial resources.

CBNRM IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATION

The shift in conservation towards community based natural resource management cannot be understood in isolation. Core aspects of the CBNRM development model—such as reliance on the market—reflect a broader change in the political and economic landscape. The rise of CBNRM has coincided with the third wave of democratization and the adoption of neoliberal economic policies worldwide.³² Democratization has produced substantial, but uneven political transformations in many sub-Saharan African countries (See Bratton 1998; Bratton & Van de Walle 1997; Fomunyoh 2001; van de Walle 2002).³³ Forty one of forty eight African states held competitive multiparty elections between 1989 and 2000 (van de Walle 2003). South Africa's democratization has involved the formal deracialization of the polity and the establishment of substantial constraints on government action, reflected in the Bill of Rights. Democratization has strengthened

participation-based arguments for CBNRM while simultaneously undermining the rationale for directing resources towards conservation, an area perceived to benefit only a small minority. In South Africa, democratization has led to the deracialization of protected area policies and impelled efforts to transform SANParks' internal management and relationship with communities; these efforts have met with mixed success (Cock & Fig 2002; Turner & Meer 2001). Postapartheid legislation also has enabled some of the individuals and communities displaced by conservation to seek redress.

Most African governments have adopted and partially implemented a set of policies intended to stabilize and liberalize the economy (see van de Walle 2001). South Africa adopted neoliberal economic policies in 1996 with the adoption of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy.³⁴ These policies, promoted by international financial institutions and largely adopted in the context of economic crisis, have included measures to cut government expenditures, privatize parastatal organizations, and reduce state intervention in markets. Many scholars argue the government's commitment to liberal economic policies has limited redistribution and restructuring efforts in South Africa (Nattrass & Seekings 2001; Schneider 2000). For example, the willing buyer willing seller approach to land reform allowed white land owners to refuse to sell and/or set very high prices for their land, while adherence to fiscal constraints limited the funds available for land reform (Hall 2004; Rugege 2004). In most economic sectors, markets are much freer than they have been in the past. During apartheid, white businesses benefited from direct and indirect subsidies, including restricted competition and low-wage black labor supplied by people with few alternatives. New entrants to these markets are competing against the beneficiaries of these policies, but current government support for business ventures is more narrowly targeted and seeks to conform to free-market principles.

Economic liberalization also affects protected areas directly. In South Africa as elsewhere, most state and provincial parks have not been financially self-supporting. The profits from Kruger National Park helped to subsidize other parks, as did state funds. While state subsidies for protected areas in Africa often have been severely inadequate, African states did subsidize protected areas for several decades. With liberalization, government subsidies for the operational costs of state protected areas have been reduced or eliminated. Liberalization

also affects community-owned areas. Firstly, African governments are less willing to fund conservation efforts of any sort. Revenue constraints make it less likely that government-funded protected areas will devote substantial resources to CBNRM or other community engagement efforts, which may be seen as a distraction from conservation. Secondly, governments have begun to formally introduce market incentives into state protected areas. Marketization of these protected areas has included the privatization of some operations (such as food concessions and lodge management) as well as increased efforts to make these areas self financing. While tourism generates substantial revenue and foreign exchange, much of the revenue generated by nature tourism in protected areas has gone into private hands, benefiting the state only indirectly. As protected areas have been asked to cover their own costs, state protected areas have become much more active participants in the market for nature tourism. Many of these areas are well-known, partially subsidized, and extremely attractive to private interests.

The coincidence of liberalization and CBNRM may put the interests of CBNRM initiatives and state protected areas into conflict as each competes for a growing but still limited number of nature tourists. It may be difficult for CBNRM efforts to win this competition for tourists and investors. When given the option of investing in a state protected area or a CBNRM, many investors are likely to choose the state area because...?. The Makuleke experience demonstrates that there is reason for concerns. Shortly after the Makuleke CPA issued its call for private sector development proposals, SANParks announced that several sites in Kruger National Park were available to commercial tender (Mahony & Van Zyl 2001; Spenceley 2003). Several of the parties that had expressed interest in the Makuleke Region then withdrew their bids. Although the Makuleke still received a few proposals, and eventually was able to reach agreements with two private partners, the competition with SANParks clearly reduced the Makuleke CPA's choice of partners and its negotiating leverage. It is unclear whether SANParks' timing was deliberate—officials are informed of Makuleke plans through the Joint Management Board—or inadvertent, but it is likely that similar situations will arise in other CBNRM tourism initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to historicize community-based natural resource management and to place its tourism-based development promises in a broader political economic context. Analysis of the Makuleke case suggests that relying on conservation-based tourism for development is a risky strategy. While tourism has substantial promise, community-based initiatives may not be well-positioned to compete against state-supported protected areas and private ventures. In closing, I suggest two considerations in moving forward.

First, communities participating in CBNRM frequently face an extremely restricted set of options. The effects of economic liberalization reach beyond protected areas, and these changes may diminish community members' livelihood alternatives. Liberalization measures often have included reduction in government payrolls and reduced spending on social programs and development. Additionally, the formal labor market has shrunk in many African countries. These changes may mean that previous livelihood strategies no longer ensure survival. While remittances from migrants working in South African mines and factories supported many poor rural Southern African households in the past, a shift towards capital-intensive agriculture, mining, and manufacturing has reduced the need for labor (Cassim, Onyango, Skosana & Seventer n.d.; Makgetla 2004; Natrass & Seekings 2001; Tapela & Omara-Ojunga 1999). In this context, securing guaranteed employment from tourism venture partners may provide substantial benefits.

For those communities that can alter land status, careful consideration of the opportunity costs—or forgone opportunities—posed by conservation is warranted (Emerton 2001). The value of these forgone opportunities depends on the specific characteristics of the area that would be used for nature tourism—such as its agricultural or mining potential—and prospects for success in other ventures. For example, a South African community deciding between a nature tourism venture and a commercial farming business would need to consider land quality, capacity to compete with established capital-intensive white-owned commercial farms and the government's focus on 'emerging black farmers' who already have substantial capital (See Hall 2004; Jacobs 2003).³⁵ Because of the high levels of poverty in rural South African communities, most ventures are likely to involve working with an ex-

ternal partner (E. Nel & Binns 2000).³⁶ In all cases, actors should explicitly consider the challenges and opportunities generated by nature tourism.

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

NOTES

¹ Department of Political Science, University of California at Berkeley (rlturner@berkeley.edu). The author would like to thank the members of the Makuleke community, SANParks staff, and Friends of the Makuleke who shared their views with her.

² Protected areas are places in which the state or the owner has imposed restrictions on the use of land and other natural resources to advance conservation.

³ Human geographers have demonstrated that the “local” is a product of interactions at multiple scales. I use extra-local here to refer to actors and dynamics beyond the formal territorial boundaries of the “community” involved in CBNRM, such as national government agencies, foreign donors, and private

tourism ventures. Extralocal processes include conservation management fashions, global tourism trends, democratization, and economic liberalization.

⁴ Community interviews included a mix of leaders—customary authorities, elected officials, and officials of local organizations—, elders, and young people. To protect informants' confidentiality, I do not identify the individuals interviewed by name.

⁵ Archives consulted include those of the Makuleke Communal Property Association, the Department of Land Affairs/ Land Claims Commission, South African National Parks and Kruger National Park.

⁶ On December 12, 2001, 1 US dollar = 11.0849 South African Rand.

⁷ By sectoral attributes, I mean such characteristics as the nature of commodity (tourism is an experiential good), the production and consumption process, and the market structure (Shafer, 1994).

⁸ My discussion of Makuleke history draws primarily from Harries (1987) and that of Kruger Park draws from Carruthers (1995).

⁹ The Transvaal Republic was one of four colonies united to create the modern South African state in 1910.

¹⁰ The cordon sanitaire was an area heavily patrolled by the South African government in an attempt to control movement across borders.

¹¹ By the end of August 2004, the land reform programs had transferred roughly 3,500,000 million hectares, or about 4 percent of South Africa's commercial agricultural land (*Umhlaba Wethu: a quarterly bulletin tracking land reform In South Africa*, 2004). The distribution of land in South Africa remains highly unequal. Land reform in South Africa is a highly contentious issue, and the government's approach has been criticized by many academics and civil society organizations (Greenberg, 2004; Hall, 2004; Program on Land and Agrarian Studies. University of the Western Cape, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). Since 2001, the level of social mobilization around land issues has increased, and some groups have occupied land. To my knowledge, the Makuleke did not use extralegal tactics to pursue their land claim. While the government has taken steps to improve the speed of redistribution, it has not revised its basic approach.

¹² The terms of the settlement are established in the "The Main Agreement Relating to the Makuleke Land Claim (as amended 11-13 December 1998)", which was incorporated into the Order of the Land Claims Court. Throughout the paper, this agreement is referred to as the "Restitution Agreement."

¹³ Contractual parks are part of the national parks system, but they remain under private ownership. A contract between the state and the owner sets the terms of park access and control. The Restitution Agreement allows either party to request the exclusion of the Makuleke Region from Kruger Park after 20 years on 5 years written notice.

¹⁴ While most of the community members interviewed in 2002 expressed similar sentiments, some community elders who remembered living in the Makuleke region expressed a strong desire to return.

¹⁵ The Court Judgment states, "The restrictive conditions of title which the parties have agreed should be imposed were material in convincing the Court that it was appropriate to order restoration in this matter" (Section 17).

¹⁶ In 1997, approximately 78 percent of households earned less than R1500 (~\$135) per month, and a large number of households depended on low-wage employment in Kruger Park (Reid, 2001). On average, there were eight people per household.

¹⁷ Parks officials, who cannot be considered neutral, frequently asserted in interviews that the Makuleke were being used.

¹⁸ Several Friends of Makuleke expressed this view in interviews. Also see Steenkamp (2001).

¹⁹ The Act provides legal recognition to communal land and allows for the transfer of title from the state to communities and individuals, but also facilitates continued control of communal lands by traditional councils (Rugege, 2004). This act went through at least ten drafts and nearly a decade of debate before its passage. Because land administration by traditional councils may inhibit women's access to land, it is likely that the Act will be subject to constitutional challenge.

²⁰ While some observers of the Makuleke community in the period prior to the resolution of the land claim and shortly thereafter depict the community as unified, others saw conflict and tension (Poonan, 2002; Reid, 2001; Steenkamp & Urh, 2000).

²¹ As of 2002, the majority of funds remained unspent while the CPA established a separate trust to receive and manage funds. Some money had been allocated for transport for the chief and community projects.

²² Studies assessing the opportunity costs of protected areas have found that there are substantial costs to local communities, relative to their income, which weigh most heavily on the poorest members of the community. (Emerton, 1999a, 1999b; Ferraro, 2002; Norton-Griffiths & Southey, 1995).

²³ This approach seems most likely to meet with success in cases where the affected party was not subjected to coercion. For many groups subject to forced removal, financial compensation without restoration may be unacceptable.

²⁴ Supporters include the Department of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology; Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism; Department of Labor; Department of Public Works; Maputo Corridor Company; the German Agency for Technical Co-Operation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit; and the Ford Foundation,

²⁵ The wide range reflects different assumptions about the relative importance of wildlife tourism.

²⁶ These estimates are based on total lodge capacity of 200 guests, paying high prices, an 8 percent levy on turnover, and 50 percent occupancy. Each lodge would employ 30 full-time workers. Compare to Oldham, Creemers, and Rebeck (2000).

²⁷ Press releases and news coverage provide too few details for a thorough assessment of this agreement, the Wilderness Safaris managing director stated that the Makuleke would receive a percentage of turnover, rather than a flat rental fee, community members would receive training and employment (up to 200 jobs), and some scholarships would be provided. (http://www.aboutravel.co.za/FRONTEND/A_SCRIPTS/article.asp?pkIArticleID=2592&pkIIssueID=322)

²⁸ Like “nature,” racial categories also are the product of social and historical processes; The interplay between race and nature in tourist sites deserves closer attention (For some points of departure, see Dunn, 2004; Moore et al., 2003).

²⁹ Wells (1996) estimates that whites constituted 69 percent of domestic tourists in South Africa in 1992. The proportion of non-white South African tourists is expected to rise substantially. The majority of extra-regional tourists to Africa are from Europe. Regional tourism comprises a plurality of non-domestic tourists, but there are few good statistics on the characteristics of those tourists.

³⁰ While most CBNRM communities are deeply embedded in extra-local relationships, CBNRM initiatives have been heavily shaped by states and non-governmental organizations. Institutional ties with the private, for profit actors that dominate tourism are likely to be weak.

³¹ In South Africa, the relationship to the land over which animals travel is crucial as the law does not permit ownership of wildlife.

³² In the democratization literature, the “first wave” of democratization began in the 19th century as many countries transitioned from oligarchic régimes to democratic ones in which a large proportion of the adult population could vote. The “second wave” took place after the Second World War as a large number of countries in Europe and throughout the world formally adopted democracy. The “third wave” is said to have begun in the mid-1970s as a number of authoritarian régimes broke down and were replaced by democracies in southern Europe, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

³³ Countries with large nature tourism sectors—such as South Africa, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe—have a mixed record on democratization.

³⁴ Some scholars see South Africa’s path as somewhat divergent because state leaders had greater choice about whether to adopt adjustment and liberalization policies (See Fairfield, 2002; Habib & Padayachee, 2000).

³⁵ Norton-Griffiths and Southey (1995) used data regarding land potential and returns to farming in livestock production in Kenya to assess the opportunity costs of conservation. Norton-Griffiths and Southey (1995) used data regarding land potential and returns to farming in livestock production in Kenya to assess the opportunity costs of conservation; several protected areas were in high potential areas. Additionally, unemployment among rural Kenyans was low. They found that the opportunity costs of conservation in this context, taking nature tourism into account, were substantial.

³⁶ There is a growing literature that provides ideas for structuring partnerships in ways that maximize community benefit (See, for example, Mayson, 2003; Nicanor, 2001; Spenceley & Seif, 2003).

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