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Can governance resolve environmental conflicts? A Maputaland case study

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Historically, there have been environmental conflicts between conservation authorities and local communities. The declaration of nature reserves often resulted in forced removals and negative perceptions of conservation. The new municipal governance system of South Africa is intended to overcome political problems of the apartheid era. But can it resolve environmental conflict? Examples of environmental conflicts are presented and appear to be complicated by new post-apartheid governance system. The case of Mabibi is presented to show how plans for development could take account of past history and community needs. Recommendations to enhance 'humanistic conservation' and empower local communities are provided.

Key words: Environmental governance, conflict resolution, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Research philosophy

The environment is a space altered by humans, whose natural (fauna, flora and morphology) and social (residents and housing) components, in dynamic interaction, are often destabilised. The environment can be 'endangered' by a human (e.g. a polluting industry or clearing a forest) or physical ('natural' catastrophe) action. Thus, one speaks of 'environmental problems'. This dynamic definition of the environment implies that the researcher must take a position on the genuine seriousness and long-term implications of the destabilisation that is created. We have chosen, in the South African context, an 'eco-social' position on the environment (Brown, 2002). For us, improving the individual's health and the surrounding community's well-being (reduction in poverty) is of equal priority to the strict preservation of 'nature' (Biehl, 1995; Guyot, 2003; Thompson, 2002). Social progress and environmental sustainability can be associated under certain conditions. These conditions are rarely united (Bond, 2002; Eden, 2000) but our recommendations will try to go beyond this contradiction.

Diverse groups of stakeholders, more or less organised in shifting coalitions, position themselves differently on precise and spatially localised environmental questions. The environment, as defined above, thus implies that conflicts will exist over the use of the landscape. Since the environment is a spatial dynamic, and conflicts between stakeholders cover processes that are not spatially defined (by coalitions and strategies), one can validate the concept of environmental conflict as a methodological tool for the joint study of space and stakeholder influence. This has been done in South Africa by Davion (1996), Bond (2002), Clarke (2002), Dovers, et al. (2002), Guyot (2003); and elsewhere by Dahl (1993), Wong (1996), Collinson (1996), Eden (2000), and Dietz (2002). In the field, it allows a process for compelling stakeholders to take a stand both on problematic environmental questions and on the attitude and rights of other stakeholders.

Environmental conflicts and governance

Ten years ago, apartheid was replaced by a new democratic government. The Maputaland region, formerly coveted by Afrikaners 'seeking access to the ocean' faced with the British hold on the area, is now increasingly under ANC[1] influence to reinforce its territorial

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[1]African National Congress, modernist party with an urban electoral base.

power over the rural lands favouring the IFP[2]. However, the colonial interests (of Whites[3]) remain a reality in a spatial framework that is still very inert (Afra 1990; Cord 1991; Bond 2004).

Maputaland is characterized by an environmental logic that makes preserving the environment a means to reserve the enjoyment of the area for a few wealthy individuals (tourists). Since apartheid's end, new political strategies linked to a new governance system accompany this logic. Tourist development comes to the aid of the strictly environmentalist logic to try to create jobs and thus redistribute profits to the historically disadvantaged local (Black) populations (McIntosh, 1995). This paper is a reflection on the significance of the new post-apartheid governance system (Tapscott, 1997) in the light of a legacy of major and ongoing environmental conflicts. Our theoretical framework moves away from spatially-confined conservation parks, and considers the possibility of 'soft' nature reserves, within which people's needs may be met through sustainable land-use practices (Brown, 2002). Alternative livelihoods would need to be found to ensure prosperity. To guide this process, in-depth studies of local governance are needed. In this context, research was conducted in coastal villages near South Africa's border with Mozambique.

This paper is made up of three parts:

1. an historical review that highlights the apartheid legacy in terms of environmental conflicts
2. a reflection on the new governance system
3. a discussion about the necessary resolution of conflicts to promote sustainable development.

The paper ends with a conclusion which presents our main recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study refers to that developed by the French anthropologist Olivier de Sardan (1998). We used a qualitative approach based on interviews with representative and significant stakeholders and on arena observations. Some interviewees preferred to stay anonymous. Therefore this paper will refer to interviewees only by their positions.

Three levels of stakeholders are involved in environmental conflicts: national, provincial and municipal (or local). While the local level will obviously be dealt with as a priority in the discussion as it is a case study based around one community, relationships between and potential conflicts with the two other levels of stakeholders are also central to the paper. At this stage it is important to define these stakeholders who fall mainly into two categories. First, decision-making actors (political, technical and economic for each sector) and secondly, regulating actors (e.g. associations and citizens). Classifying traditional leaders in this two-fold division proved problematic, and they have been given a

further category of stakeholder with their own strategies and dynamics.

One could ask why there is no concordance between the discourse of stakeholders and what they put into practice (e.g. the logic of stakeholders and the logic of their choices). The difference between 'words and practice' also has to do with the relationships between technical decision-making power (which mainly involves White South Africans): mastering skills; conserving acquired advantages; the elected political power (which mainly involves Black South Africans); and the transformation.

Interviews took place via the intermediary of a local translator for the Zulu-speaking stakeholders between December 2000 and May 2003. Open-ended questionnaires were administered mainly in 1999 within the political and demarcation contexts of the transition era (Govender, 2001), and again in 2000 and 2001 within the context of the new demarcation (Jury et al., 2003). In total, 70 questionnaires were administered to community members and five to local conservation department staff. Longer interviews tackling issues in more depth were conducted in parallel with a sub-sample of stakeholders.

STUDY AREA

Maputaland extends from 26° to 27°S along the eastern coast of South Africa and southern Mozambique (Figure 1). It lies north of the St. Lucia Estuary and contrasts with the more developed southern coast of KwaZulu Natal. Physical constraints (e.g. subtropical humid climate, endemic diseases such as malaria and tick bite fever, and natural wetlands, lakes and dunes that make access difficult) inhibit development. Except in swamp forest zones, the sandy soils are naturally acidic and low in key minerals.

Maize and peanuts are the major subsistence crops in the area (Bulfoni, 2002). The remainder of the human diet comprises seafood and resources extracted from the dune forests. While it is rich in certain resources, this area is poor by socio-economic standards (Bruton, 1980; Mountain, 1990). 89% of the Maputaland population has an income less than R 18,000 (≈US$ 2,500 in 2004) per year compared to 43% for Durban (Guyot, 2002). This level of poverty is attributable to low productivity and little infrastructure.

The coastal belt of Maputaland is attractive and has great potential for tourism development (Figures 2 and 3). It is characterised by five different ecosystems. The coastline comprises sandy beaches and a near-shore zone of coral reefs including more than 30 species of tropical fish (Jury et al., 2003). The coastal strip of 70 - 120 m high sand dunes is covered by a canopy of tropical to subtropical trees containing some rare species (Govender, 2001). Grasslands are found just a short distance inland, interspersed by freshwater lakes, some rich in fish. Swamp forests occur adjacent to the lake system. The black population has traditionally settled in the grasslands near wetlands that provide water and act as vegetable gardens. The dune forest has been used traditionally for firewood and the sea has provided marine resources, particularly fish and mussels. Recent development has meant an increasing number of settlements

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[2] Inkatha Freedom Party, Zulu traditionalist party with a shrinking rural electoral base.

[3] Use of apartheid-era 'racial' categories (Blacks, Whites, etc) does not imply support for the philosophy that presided over this classification.
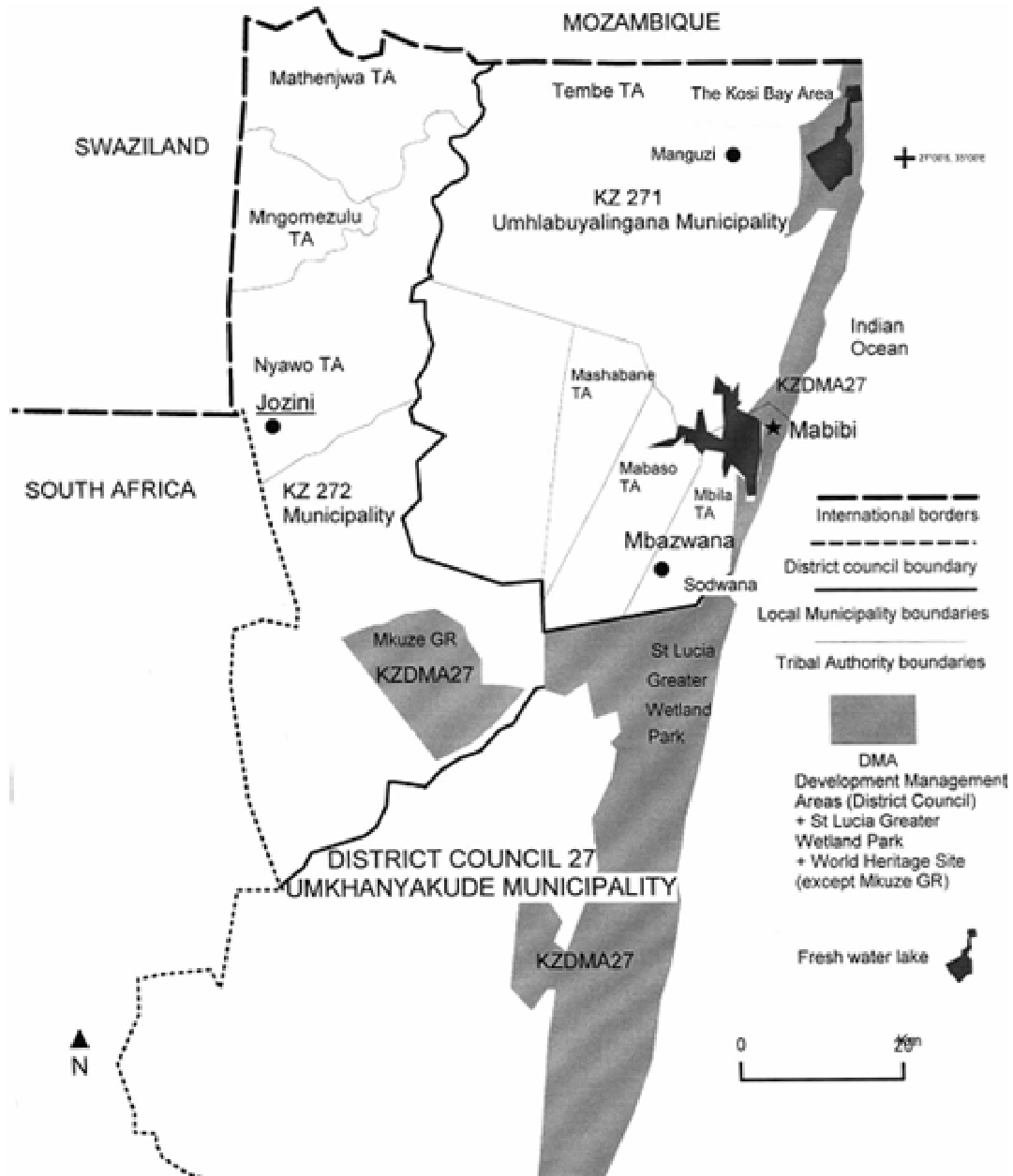
Figure 1. Political demarcation of Maputaland. Source: Local Government KZN, Demarcation Board.

Figure 2. Typical wetland landscape in Maputaland.

Figure 3. Maputaland coastline near Mabibi.

near the beach (Guyot, 2002). The landscape scenery, year-round warm climate (12 - 24°C winter; 21 - 30°C summer) and offshore water (23 - 26°C) are assets that provide a tourist-friendly environment.

The social history evolved from Bantu people migrating from the northeast over 3,000 years ago. Since the 1500s, Portuguese mariners have traded with coastal communities, particularly in bays offering protection from the often stormy seas. During which time Zulu and Tsonga tribes lived in proximity, alternatively engaging in industrious activities or territorial disputes. Eventually the border tribe known as Tembe came to dominate the area in the 1700s from Maputo Bay to Lake St. Lucia and from the Lubombo Mountains to the Indian Ocean. During the 1800s, the Tembe were subjugated by the Zulu to the south and developed a tributary relation (Felgate, 1982). Later Portuguese, English and Dutch colonial interests collided, dividing these border populations (Els and Kloppers, 2002).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FAVOURABLE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT

How Mabibi was included in a nature reserve

The Mabibi community next to Lake Sibaya is undeveloped and tourism facilities are basic (Govender, 2001). It seems that the area was undeveloped in the early 20th century. This resulted in preservation of the culture and subsistence lifestyle. Before the creation of the KwaZulu Homeland, this part of the Natal was administered by the provincial body. In 1952 the area north of St. Lucia was proclaimed the Coastal Forest Reserve, including the dune forest close to the Mabibi community.

In the 1960's governance was given to the Tribal Authority. The Tribal Authority consists of a Chief (Inkhosi) who delegates power, with the consent of the people, to an "Induna". The latter is in charge of a ward (within the boundaries of the Tribal Authority). For Mabibi the situation was unique in that the land was co-managed by both Tembe and Mbila tribal authorities (at Manguzi and Mbazwane, respectively). After 1976, the area north of Sodwana Bay, including Mbazwana was integrated into the KwaZulu Homeland and considered a 'self governing territory'. The level of development in Maputaland suggests that development there was a low priority of the Inkhata Freedom Party government at Ulundi, perhaps due to the presence of a Tsonga population (not only Zulu). The area was managed with dual purposes, as army bases for the former white government (during the civil war in Mozambique) and for conservation.

In the 1980's, the KwaZulu government realised that it would be good in terms of 'self government autonomy' to have control of the conservation areas, and also useful to proclaim new parks (Tembe, 1984; Kosi Bay, 1989). So, control of the Coastal Forest Reserve was passed from

the Natal Parks Board to the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources in 1988. There was no consultation between the KBNR and communities on the use of the natural resources within the conservation area. This resulted in conflicts and the level of development did not improve just the name and authority changed.

Environmental conflicts

From the interviews carried out with community members and conservation staff, there was no indication that any of the conservation measures implemented had any positive impacts on community development. Of all the people interviewed within the community, 90% felt that restrictions on the use of land for planting crops impeded community development. With the strict land use controls implemented by the conservation agency (e.g. the official regulations banning the collection and use of natural resources from the dune forest, restrictions on cutting incema grass used to make crafts to once per year in May), the community has been adversely affected since food production has been reduced. This has resulted in families moving out of the community to search for work in urban centres. In some homesteads, only the father - traditionally the breadwinner - has left home to seek employment in urban areas, but in other cases this has resulted in the breakdown of family units. Most people (95%) interviewed felt that the conservation measures implemented at Mabibi – such as the erection of fences, controls on access, official regulations regarding the use of dune forest resources - needed to be reviewed to take the local community's needs into account. By placing restrictions on land-use, building of farm fences and preventing them from killing wild animals which destroy their crops, they are unable to sustain their household food requirements. Controls in the name of conservation that have been implemented on the harvesting of plants for medicinal purposes have also been a controversial issue. Most members (75%) interviewed indicated that certain indigenous plants such as *Phyllanthos* spp (which is used for its antibacterial and antiviral actions) and *Phoenix reclinata* (which is used to treat patients with pleurisy) (Govender, 2001) are required for medical purposes. Collection restrictions have resulted in community members illegally collecting these plants from the coastal forests.

Although there are no restrictions on the amount of fish or mussels that can be harvested for daily household consumption, restrictions have been placed on harvesting and fishing for commercial purposes. Both conservation staff and community members were against the suggestion that fishing permits should be introduced to the area. They felt that these permits would not encourage tourists to visit the camps, and that they would also result in local people being excluded from fishing since they will not be able to afford the permits. With its new World Heritage Status, the area will be forced to adopt fishing restrictions

in the near future.

A high proportion (75%) of the people interviewed from within the community has a negative perception about the conservation agency, although they understand the need for conservation in the context of attracting tourists to the area. When members of the community were questioned about the erection of fences around the marine reserve[4], the vast majority (95%) stated it would prevent them having access to the beach where they fish and harvest mussels and would restrict the movement of their cattle.

IS POST-APARTHEID GOVERNANCE SYSTEM A TOOL TO RESOLVE ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT?

The new governance system post-2000

In 2000, the coastal plain between Mozambique (north) and Mapelane (south) was recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. 'It is time to implement the dream of one nature reserve from the Mozambican border to the St. Lucia estuary' said one commentator at the time. A new national authority was proclaimed for the management of the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park (GSLWP). This national authority was legally established to manage the GSLWP and take responsibility for conserving its World Heritage Status (Government Notice 4477 Government Gazette No. 21778, vol. 425, Pretoria, 2000). The park is an 'anchor' project of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, with KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (the conservation agency) and the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority. New development is included within the context of this park called the 'Coastal Forest Reserve'. The Mabibi community is located within the World Heritage Site between Lake Sibaya and the Indian Ocean. The question therefore is: who is benefiting from this development?

With local elections in South Africa (December 2000), the Municipal Demarcation Board changed all the areas of local government to improve service delivery and 'redistribute' wealth.

A third level of local government is reserved for the less densely populated areas and the conservation areas: the Development Management Area (DMA) which is directly managed by the District Council. One representative is elected as councillor in the District Council. Mabibi is now included in a DMA (DC 27). The ownership of the land is still traditionally the property of the Tembe Tribal Authority, and the Induna is still a part of the Mbila Tribal Authority. Fortunately, the two Tribal Authorities are now integrated in the same Municipality, KZ 271, 'Umhlabuyalingana'. The situation for Mabibi involves operating within a 'multi-governance' concept. What are the direct consequences for the improvement of life? Clearly there are needs for development as formal

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[4] Maputaland Marine Reserve was declared as a national protected area in 1979 following the St Lucia Marine Reserve.

Table 1. The new governance framework.

Authority level	Governance body	Financial ability to drive development	Legitimacy
International	UNESCO	No development responsibility, but has a regulatory capacity with regard to the natural preservation of the site	International recognition
National	Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (GSLWP)	General management of the new park in collaboration with KZNW on the conservation side, the Provincial Minister of Economic Affairs and Tourism, and LSDI on the development side.	National government (ANC) agencies, No direct election from the people.
	Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI)	High financial capacity. Infrastructure development agency plus leader in joint-venture eco-tourism projects	
Provincial	KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (KZNW), former KZNNCS.	Low financial capacity but new local involvement respecting new IUCN principles.	
Comparison between territories inside and outside the protected area.			
Regional: inside the GSLWP	District Management Area	Low financial capacity (no base build on rates or levies)	Elected municipal council (currently Inkhata Freedom Party - IFP)
Regional: outside the GSLWP	District Council 27		
Local: inside the GSLWP	Kwazulu-Natal Wildlife local board (Kosi Bay - Coastal Forest Reserve)	Some financial capacity with the collection of community levies on tourism	Board of representative stakeholders
Local: outside the GSLWP	Local Municipality (KZ 271)	Low financial capacity (no base built on rates or levies)	Elected municipal council (currently Inkhata Freedom Party - IFP)
Tribal authority for the area			
Local traditional: Tribal Authority Management	Tembe Tribal Authority (land ownership and management): different Indunas per community directed by Inkhosi Tembe.	Few land rental rates	Legitimacy is a sensitive issue: either a high traditional legitimacy or a non-democratic autocracy

employment in the area is at a low level. Out of 289 adults in 58 households, only 33% are working. Surveys found that 75% of the local people had a negative perception of nature conservation, although they understand the need to attract tourists to the area. Yet, little progress has occurred because the structures of local government are new. In order to see the positive impacts on development, these new structures need to develop their own infrastructure and finances (Barnes and Morris, 1997). Although the two tribal authorities fall within the same municipality, the main consequence is an increase in the number of political levels for decision making. This 'multi-tiered governance' can make co-operation difficult when it comes to local development projects (Table 1).

Excluded are the two main stakeholders; the residents

and the tourists, who are part of the governance sphere. The residents have powers through elections and popular protest. The tourists represent an important source of financial inputs. The full division of powers and functions between these different levels and bodies is still evolving. In the interviews, we noticed confusion amongst the local stakeholders concerning the boundaries of these new councils, about the actual existence of the DMA, and about the effective division of powers and functions. This confusion is not conducive to managing the existing conflicts (Guyot, 2002).

Current policy is to attract foreign tourists and international developers to the area. Yet surveys indicate that over 75% of tourists to the area are from within South Africa (Jury et al., 2003). Unfortunately consultation between people and institutions at national and local levels, especially for residents, is poor (Interview with legal opponents of LSDI, Durban 30-08-2001). This poor level of consultation could be a source of future conflict between local residents and the authorities as new developments will not be accepted or properly used if the community is not part of the decision making process. One can argue that Tsonga–Zulu culture attaches high value to the formal consultation process (Felgate, 1982). Even if it is just to be informed on externally driven development initiatives. For example, our surveys revealed that the majority of residents were un-informed on the objectives of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) and of the consequences of being declared a World Heritage Status (interviews with Mabibi people, 21-12-2001).

On a more positive note, locally-based development boards have been created from key stakeholders. One such board is being implemented for the Coastal Forest Reserve, which is part of the larger Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park (GSLWP). As elsewhere in Maputaland, the LSDI created some conflict and has only recently begun to resolve it through community liaison.

The new post-apartheid governance system complicates environmental conflicts. But a real participation process can minimize them (Crowfoot and Wondolleck, 1990; Maharaj, 1999).

THE NECESSARY RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Whilst much of the above complex political history results from a transition from colonial to democratic systems, the future implementation of the new system rests with the next generation. It was thought to be useful to obtain ideas from the children of Mabibi in this regard. Pupils from grades 4 and 7 of the Mabibi primary school were asked to draw a map of Mabibi. The Indian Ocean, Lake Sibaya and certain wetlands were illustrated, demonstrating the importance of natural resources to their lives. The Mabibi tourist camp appeared in most of the drawings as

well as the church, their home, the clinic, water pumps and cropping fields (Hatesse, 2003). However, shops were never drawn. This indicates a lack of economic activity in the area. Commercial activities are absent within the community and would need to be developed to bring social improvement.

New challenges for development

The Mabibi people remain traditional in their culture and have been little affected by the processes of Westernisation and Modernisation. Of the alternatives for development, agriculture may be socially advantageous in the short-term, whilst the promotion of the nature reserve may prove the most beneficial for cumulative prosperity in the long-term. The present agricultural land use is unsustainable as field extensions are eroding valuable habitat for the natural ecosystem.

According to surveys, tourists visit Mabibi for snorkeling in the coral reefs and strolling the beach (Govender et al., 2004). Greater recreational activities and points of interaction around Mabibi, such as a craft market and a new small eco-tourism lodge (Tonga Beach), would lead to increased prosperity. By our estimate, worker revenue from the newly built lodge will more than double community income from 20 jobs. The spreading of human activity should follow a pattern that would minimise impacts and keep sensitive areas (coastal forests and wetlands) free of human use and commercial development. The new authorities in charge of development have to promote consultation within the community. The time for exclusion is over (Vaughan and Xaba, 1996; Keulder, 1998; Tapscott, 1997).

At present the GSLWP Authority, with funds from the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, are the development agency and their mandate is to promote eco-tourism around Mabibi's beach and lake. To facilitate this, it was deemed useful to bring together the Mabibi community and other stakeholders to discuss development actions that would provide community benefit, promote eco-tourism, and ensure conservation of the area. Any such actions would need to respect the governance framework as well as the area's status as a World Heritage site. Development here should seek to:

1. Improve the community's social conditions by offering job opportunities, qualified training and educational programmes.
2. Facilitate co-operation between the various stakeholders interested in development.
3. Assist the "Induna" and his council to understand the importance of conservation.
4. Avoid further field extension of subsistence agriculture into wetlands.
5. Develop accommodation and recreational facilities for tourists and prevent their concentration in one area.

Figure 4. Consultative workshop at Mabibi.

6. Respect the local culture and be environmentally friendly.
7. Improve the area's accessibility.

Twenty-four stakeholders, including the GSLWP Authority, KZN Wildlife Services, Umhlabuyalingana Municipality (KZ 271), Umkhanyakude Municipality (KZDMA 27), and tribal councilors of the Mabibi community, met for a workshop facilitated by the researchers (Figure 4). At this consultation, the relevance of the World Heritage site status for the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park Authority and Mabibi itself was discussed. This designation is meant to be an encouragement for the government to attribute more importance to the site and to remind local communities of the great significance these areas have for them and the rest of the world. The designation may also provide a marketing boost for tourism. With this in mind, the workshop respondents identified the following needs for development, in order of priority thus:

1. Improved road to Mbazwana.
2. Shop/market/ community hall to sell products.
3. More job opportunities (eco-tourism).
4. Water supplies and electricity.

Road access: According to the GSLWP Authority, the upgrading of the road between Mabibi and Mbazwana on the eastern side of Lake Sibaya depends on the availability of investment. This road is considered a secondary road and was not an initial priority for development. Funds available from the government for the development of the Umhlabuyalingana Municipality are currently being used for construction of the new road connecting Hluhluwe with Ponta do Ouro in Mozambique. However, the first phase of development of this road should start soon since the Tonga Lodge is up and running. The upgrading of this road is considered as the number one priority for the community, although better access to Mabibi could lead to higher traffic and crime in the area. Once built, the local government should cover the cost of maintenance of the road. Agreement has been achieved and the municipality is now waiting for funds.

Community market: Currently, the community members sell their products at Mbazwana, approximately one hour's drive to the south of Mabibi. Only one-quarter of local people can afford the cost of a weekly trip. The researchers proposed a central location for a market next to the school. This was accepted by the "Induna" and his council as the best place for the community market. An existing shop could be rehabilitated at a low cost. People from the community suggested that competition for stall space should be circumvented.

Market stalls are everywhere in KZN. Many markets have been created in tourist areas that are not fully utilized e.g. Mngobokazi, Mbazwana and Manguzi. The development of Tonga Lodge at Mabibi will impact favourably on the local economy as more tourists visit and more goods are required.

Eco-tourism development: Bringing valuable and low-density tourism development to this area is one of the goals of the LSDI. However, private investors interested in development are few due to the bureaucracy (land is given on a 15 year leasehold) and parallel tribal governance. Tonga Lodge consists of a number of wooden structures in the foredune forest, and is seen as an opportunity for a valuable, low-density tourist development. It commenced operation in 2004, and will increase pedestrian traffic to the beach. Hence care should be taken to mitigate possible impacts.

The number of tourists visiting the Mabibi Camp is increasing. Currently, the camp is managed by the Conservation Services, but the recent restructuring induced by the creation of the GSLWP Authority has changed the situation. The camp will be taken over by a private investor. While some upgrading of the camp is expected, it will still remain a low-cost camping area. This would prevent it from being reserved for a rich minority of tourists; although the cost might increase slightly.

Governance framework: This was probably the most sensitive subject discussed during the consultation. The strategy is that everyone should work together; the GSLWP Authority, Conservation Services, the municipallities, the community and the tribal authorities. It was noted that the municipalities are unable to generate funds for on-going maintenance activities and infrastructure delivery (McIntosh, 1995). All revenue currently resides with the national and provincial governments. This must be rectified in a way that ensures accountability. The mayor of the Umhlabuyalingana Municipality (KZ271) informed the "Induna" and the Community Council that proposed actions for community development could be part of an Integrated Development Plan. Our on-going research will investigate activities to help draw together the tribal council and municipal government.

Environmental education: Developing a programme for environmental education at Mabibi would help to protect the area from further degradation by the community. Considering that education is an important step in sustainable development, a Zulu researcher from our project conducted a brief programme of activities with the children from the primary school at Mabibi, following consultations with the principal and teachers in 2003 (Dlamini, 2003). The children were given a few lessons and taken on a field trip to the local wetlands. This activity will be repeated annually at Mabibi and elsewhere. Thereafter the student's environmental awareness will be evaluated.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Eco-tourism development in Mabibi has started and the associated spin-offs will benefit the community by offering jobs and a higher market potential for agricultural products and crafts. However, tourism development should be controlled to ensure protection of the local culture and the environment. Road improvements between Mabibi and Mbazwana and the development of a community market are two projects that need to be pursued in the short term.

One way of promoting sustainability is to develop a standardised system that recognises the status of an assembly of 'indigenous' homesteads where eco-tourism service provision is a viable alternative to subsistence

agriculture.

Two-thirds of land within a certain radius should be set aside for ecological functioning, scenic value and eco-tourism activities.

Dwellings should be made of traditional material and arranged in traditional fashion – however water and electricity supplies can be of modern standard.

The governance framework is complex and the need for strong partnerships between the community and the municipalities have been understood. Community projects included in the Integrated Development Plan should become a reality. New forms of co-operation need to be created between the Park Authority, tourist developers and residents in order to create a sustainable future for the area and to maximise benefits from any form of development to the community. The new governance framework should address these issues. Co-operation could be achieved if the division of powers and functions are clear to all stakeholders, and if every level of governance has sufficient budget to deliver their services and respect the laws. In reality, however, the different tiers do not work effectively (Guyot, 2002).

The question of legitimacy of traditional leaders and their possible participation within the local government also remains unresolved (Tapscott, 1997; Guyot, 2004). It is suggested that the tribal authority become a judiciary at the municipal level. This would help slot them into the decision making process, whilst reserving executive authority for the local government.

It is believed that unsustainable development stems from putting the conflicting interests of people first before the environment. If we revise development planning to answer the questions… 'What will the ecology sustain from a social perspective? or, What aspects of the environment are social assets for the future ?' … then the various stakeholders can achieve a greater common ground, and come up with regional strategies to put various development nodes in context. The next step is to formulate implementation plans within the context of effective local governance. This can only occur if a percentage of national revenue is shifted to the local level on the basis of land ownership and taxes thereon, and tribal authorities become part of the newly democratic municipal governments. Then conservation authorities can manage efficiently in a more streamlined system. These changes will require further negotiation; however an urgency exists owing to the high rate of joblessness. An awareness of the potential long-term benefits of eco-tourism is needed, such that communities act to reduce impacts associated with the subsistence lifestyle. It is hoped that an emerging democratic culture will sustain a growing intersection between conservation and development, in a part of South Africa that surely deserves both.

This work represents a first step in the investigation of the relations between stakeholders in the Maputaland region. On-going research is needed to analyse the impacts

of new local government in the development process and to resolve potential conflicts.

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