

Online Supplementary Material

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Narratives for conservation and development of the Wild Coast and Transkei

The case study area falls within two broad overlapping regions: The Wild Coast and the former Transkei homeland (see Figure 1). We briefly outline a set of narratives about these regions about multiple (sometimes interacting) environmental and social problems including biodiversity decline, land degradation and poverty, and how the meanings associated with the two regions are enrolled in these narratives. We then describe how win-win conservation and development interventions in this region, such as the one studied in the accompanying article, draw on the presentation and definition of these problems.

1. The homeland of the amaXhosa

The former Transkei homeland was one of the Bantustan administrative areas created by the Apartheid government under the policy of separate development. These homeland areas were set aside for black or native South Africans as ‘autonomous’ states on the basis of ‘ethnic’ homogeneity¹. The Transkei was one of two Bantustan areas designated to *isiXhosa*-speaking people. In the new democracy, the broad area, also known as *emaXhoseni*, continues to be an area of cultural belonging for *isiXhosa* speaking groups. The cultural importance of nature in place in this region is encoded in the view of forests as *ihlathi lesiXhosa*: as sacred spaces where the ancestors reside and a source of medicinal plants and resources and widely valued by *isiXhosa* speakers in the Eastern Cape (Cocks et al. 2012; Dold and Cocks 2012). The idea of the Transkei homeland as a place of subsistence agriculture² persists today despite a marked decline in cropping and livestock ownership (Andrew 1992; Ainslie 2005; Hebinck and Lent 2007). The legacy of separate development under Apartheid including the neglect of infrastructural and economic development in the Bantustans means that the former Transkei is still portrayed as a place of poverty and underdevelopment (Bank and Minkley 2005, Simukunda and Kraai 2009).

¹ This political process of racial segregation incorporated people of disparate ‘tribal’ communities into designated ethnicities, and these ethnicities were further entrenched as an organizing principle throughout the Apartheid era (Vail 1989; Marks and Trapido 2014).

² See Ntsebeza and Hall (2007) for a description of how colonialism and the Apartheid system undermined African agriculture and lead to the current dualism in the South African agricultural economy of subsistence farming in communal areas and white commercial farming.

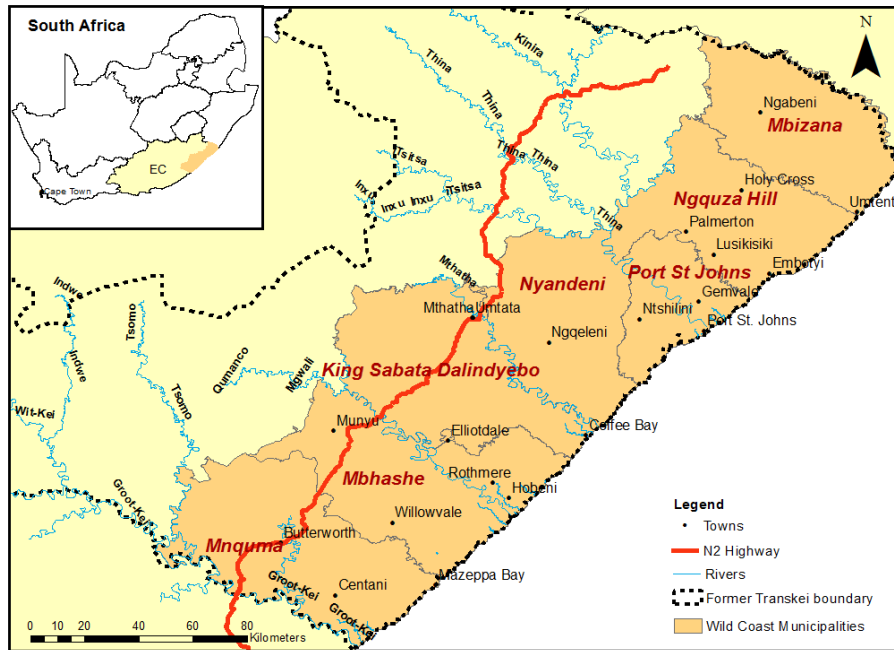


Figure 1: Map of the Wild Coast and Transkei.

2. Land degradation and resource mismanagement in the (former) homelands

Many authors have referred to a degradation narrative that is often applied to the former homelands. In the past the homelands have been described as overstocked and overpopulated (Bundy 1979), and this has been generalized across geographically diverse areas (Hajdu 2009). This narrative tends to attribute degradation to mismanagement and bad agricultural practices such as overstocking of rangelands, and portrays local people as in dire need, or as ignorant (Hajdu 2009, Palmer and Bennett 2013). This idea of land degradation in the former homelands has most notably been used to motivate the Betterment schemes of the 1960s. The Tomlinson Commission report of 1955 highlighted the impacts of overcrowding and communal grazing practices on land degradation in the Bantustan areas to motivate this villagization project. Three million people in the homeland areas were moved from their scattered homesteads to villages to facilitate more ‘efficient’ land-use, and to increase soil conservation (De Wet 1995) but people subjected to these schemes, were resentful of the negative social, economic and ecological effects this implementation caused (De Wet 1995, Hebinck and Lent 2007).

This degradation narrative in South Africa mirrors a broader African degradation discourse with colonial origins, of the generalized degradation of the environment by the local incompetence of land management of poor resource-dependent local people (Maddox 2002; Hajdu 2009). These firmly held beliefs tend to linger in policy, and public opinion, despite many studies that have challenged these beliefs (e.g. Fairhead and Leach 1995; Rohde et al. 2006; Stringer and Reed 2007). In the South African democracy, this is felt in how small scale agriculture in the former homelands is still neglected in favour of large scale commercial agriculture, worsened by the separation of land and agriculture in government ministries (Hall 2009).

3. The Wild Coast as a threatened hotspot for biodiversity and ecotourism

The Wild Coast region is often presented as an area of high biodiversity and endemism (it is part of Pondo-Albany-Thicket biodiversity hotspot) and has been prioritized by the National Biodiversity Spatial Assessment as a national biodiversity priority area (e.g. DWAF 2004). The Wild Coast is portrayed as isolated with a rugged coastline and natural beauty, and this European-centric branding is accompanied by adventure tourism, and hotels and trading posts. A major concern in this region is biodiversity loss, with a particular focus on the destruction and vulnerability of coastal and scarp forest (Kepe 2008, Berliner 2011, DEDEAT 2012). The high percentage of forest loss in the last 30 years is attributed to increased population, land use pressure, clearing for agriculture and decline in powers of traditional authorities (Berliner 2011). There is also concern about the increase in woody vegetation in the area – with many researchers paying attention to increasing cover of *Acacia* in areas where there has been a lot of field abandonment by small-scale local farmers (Chalmers and Fabricius 2007; De Klerk 2007; Berliner 2011; Shackleton et al. 2013). This is linked to degradation narratives of bush encroachment (O'Connor et al. 2014), and the invasion of alien invasive plants into disturbed areas (Van Wilgen et al. 2014; Jevon and Shackleton 2015).

4. Interventions for combined problems of poverty and biodiversity degradation

These representations of degradation of biodiversity have framed fierce top-down conservation efforts in southern Africa. The dominant narrative of conservation in southern Africa through the 20th century has been fortress conservation: the protection of wilderness areas that excluded local peoples' access and consumptive use (Brockington 2002; Büscher and Whande 2007). In South Africa, state-led conservation efforts included forced removals of people to create parks. In the Transkei, as elsewhere, concern about degradation due to poverty, led the government to seize indigenous forests in the early 1900s (Tropp 2003).

The emergence of a global discourse of community based management (Hulme and Murphree 2001; Fabricius 2004) resonated through conservation in southern Africa in the 1990s. Conservationists began to recognize historical injustices where local people had been excluded from conservation land. This recognition made 'fences and fines' approaches morally untenable, especially in the new South African democracy (Büscher and Dressler 2007). Conservation interventions adopted ideas of co-management and sustainable use of resources, on the assumption that local people are more likely to support interventions if they are involved and derive benefit from conservation (Kepe 2001a; Kepe et al. 2004).

In parallel the development discourse about the need to redress the injustices of the Apartheid system, has been influential in this region. In South Africa broadly, there has been a focus on investments and profits for impoverished communities in the vicinity of protected areas (Büscher and Dressler 2007, 2012). One very strong narrative in this respect is that of ecotourism which is viewed as a win-win strategy for both conservation and development (Simukunda and Kraai. 2009). On the Wild Coast specifically, this focus on ecotourism as development was transmitted and reinforced through the declaration of the area as a priority area under the democratic government's national Spatial Development Initiatives. Both the

underdevelopment and the natural beauty of the area motivated investment in ecotourism in order for rural people to benefit from employment opportunities, partnerships with investors, income from leasing (Hulme and Murphree 2001; Fabricius 2004) land, capacity building and improved infrastructure (Kepe 2001b). In this view, protected areas remain an attractor for ecotourism.

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