



“Elephants are eating our
money”:
A critical ethnography of
development practice in
Maputaland, South Africa.

Ilana Van Wyk

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“ELEPHANTS ARE EATING OUR MONEY”:
A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE
IN MAPUTALAND, SOUTH AFRICA.

By

Ilana Van Wyk

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Supervisor: Prof. I. A. Niehaus

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree: Master of Arts (Anthropology) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Ilana van Wyk

Date

Abstract

Thesis title: “Elephants are eating our money”: A critical ethnography of development practice in Maputaland, South Africa.

By

Ilana van Wyk

Supervisor: Prof. I. A. Niehaus

Department: Anthropology and Archaeology

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Development is often described as a means of eliminating global poverty and raising standards of living or as a tool to perpetuate unequal global power relationships but seldom as the site of ethnographic study. This dissertation provides an anthropological study of the impact that a large-scale government-initiated development project had on people, social processes, land use strategies and power relationships in Maputaland.

During the colonial and apartheid eras, large tracts of land in Maputaland were set aside for nature conservation. In the process, local people lost their land and access to the natural resources it contained. Nature conservation became a highly politicised and violent form of state intervention. Despite the introduction of a land restitution process in the post-apartheid era, nature conservation areas continue to expand. The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative’s (LSDI) eco-tourism development focus and the declaration of a World Heritage Site in Maputaland legitimised existing nature conservation areas and paved the way for the declaration of more of these areas. Successful land claimants could not move

back onto their land, but they were given shares in the eco-tourism businesses that were planned on their land. This condition established an intimate tie between local people and the eco-tourism development plans for the region.

In the marketing of Maputaland as a tourist destination, developers constructed an essentialist ethnic identity for its inhabitants. The ethnic branding of local people as Zulu was most visible in the craft industry. As such, the LSDI built a multitude of craft markets next to the newly constructed transport routes and “developed” craft producers to make “better” crafts. In the process, the LSDI gained greater control over the crafters and their means of self-representation. The development initiative also forced the craft industry to become increasingly rationalised to cater to the supposed expectations of tourists. This process had unexpected and negative consequences for both producers and consumers.

The insistence on ethnically defined groups of claimants in the land restitution process, and the developers’ ethnic branding of Maputaland, legitimated the renewed claims of traditional local authorities to political power and economic resources. By laying claim to being the “true” representatives of the “tribal” groups that the developers wanted to target, these men ensured their exclusive access to lucrative consultation jobs. Outside the Tribal Authority structures, numerous men remained unemployed as the local labour market “feminised”.

While powerful men served as ethnic representatives and helped plan development in the region, most projects were actually targeted at women. These projects were premised on a Western construction of women as being economically and socially dependent on men. Such assumptions blinded developers to the social and economic autonomy that local women enjoyed. Through the long absence of men, these women had established a gift economy based on female networks. Women were more dependent on other women than they were on men for their economic survival. In the implementation of development projects however,

local men gained control of local women's labour and capital resources. Development projects also corroded female networks.

The relationships between developers and local people, Tribal Authorities and the people whom they represented, and between men and women, were not simply characterised by domination, subordination or by complicity. Even in the context of the large-scale LSDI development project, people found numerous ways to create and defend autonomous spaces.

Key Words: Development, Maputaland, Land claims, Craft markets, Chieftaincy, Rationalisation, Resistance, Eco-tourism, Gender, Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative

Samevatting

Die ontwikkelingspraktyk word in sommige geleedere geprys as 'n oplossing vir wêreldwye armoede terwyl kritici ontwikkeling afskiet as 'n wapen wat ongelyke internasionale magsverhoudings ondersteun. Ontwikkeling is selde die onderwerp van etnografiese studie. Hierdie verhandeling verskaf 'n antropologiese studie van die impak wat 'n grootskaalse staatsgeïnisieerde ontwikkelingsprojek gehad het op mense, sosiale prosesse, grondgebruik strategieë en magsverhoudings in Maputaland.

Tydens die koloniale- en apartheidseras is groot stukke grond in Maputaland opsy gesit vir natuurbewaring. In die proses het plaaslike mense toegang tot natuurlike hulpbronne en hul grond verloor. Natuurbewaring het 'n hoogs gepolitiseerde en gewelddadige vorm van staatsinmenging geword. Ten spyte van die grondhervormingsbeleid in die nuwe Suid-Afrika, hou natuurbewaringsgebiede in Maputaland aan om uit te brei. Die Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) se eko-toerisme ontwikkelingsfokus en die verklaring van 'n *World Heritage Site* in Maputaland het die bestaande natuurbewaringsgebiede gelegitimiseer en het die weg gebaan vir die verklaring van meer bewaringsgebiede. Suksesvolle grondeisers kon nie hul grond beset nie en is aandele gegee in die eko-toerisme besighede wat op hulle grond beplan is. Hierdie stand van sake het 'n intieme band gesmee tussen plaaslike mense en die eko-toerisme ontwikkelingsplanne vir die area.

In die bemarking van Maputaland as 'n toeriste-aantreklikheid het ontwikkelaars 'n essensialistiese etniese identiteit vir plaaslike mense geskep. Die konstruksie van plaaslike mense as Zulu was mees sigbaar in die crafts bedryf. Ontwikkelaars het 'n magdom vlooiemarkte gebou en vele produseerders opgelei om 'beter' crafts te vervaardig. In die proses het die LSDI meer kontrole oor die craft produseerders en hul uitdrukkingswyses verkry. Verder het die strewe om aan toeriste se verwagtings te voldoen, die plaaslike crafts bedryf

gedwing om te rasionaliseer. Hierdie proses het onverwagte en negatiewe gevolge ingehou vir beide produseerders en verbruikers.

Die klem op etnies-gedefinieerde groepe in die grondeis proses en die ontwikkelaars se etniese bemerking van die area het die hernude aansprake van "Tribal Authorities" tot politieke mag en ekonomiese hulpbronne ondersteun. Deur aanspraak te maak daarop dat hulle die "ware" verteenwoordigers van die etniese groepe was wat die ontwikkelaars wou ontwikkel, het hierdie mans verseker dat hulle eksklusiewe toegang verkry het tot winsgewende konsultasie-werk. Buite die "Tribal Authority" strukture het menigte mans werkloos gebly terwyl die plaaslike arbeidsmark toenemend aan vrouens werk verskaf het.

Terwyl gesagdraende mans as etniese verteenwoordigers gedien het en help beplan het aan ontwikkeling, het die meerderheid ontwikkelingsprojekte in Maputaland vrouens geteiken. Hierdie projekte was egter gebaseer op 'n westerse konstruksie van vrouens as sosiaal en ekonomies afhanklik van mans. Sulke aannames het ontwikkelaars blind gemaak vir die sosiale en ekonomiese outonomie wat plaaslike vrouens wel geniet het. Hierdie vrouens het in die afwesigheid van mans 'n geskenk-ekonomie, gebaseer op netwerke van vrouens, geskep. Dit het hulle meer ekonomies afhanklik van ander vrouens as van mans gemaak. Die implementering van ontwikkelingsprojekte het egter aan plaaslike mans kontrole gegee oor vrouens se kapitaal en arbeid. Ontwikkelingsprojekte het ook vrouens se netwerke laat verbrokkel.

Die verhoudings tussen ontwikkelaars en plaaslike mense, Tribal Authorities en die mense wat hulle verteenwoordig het, en tussen mans en vrouens was nie gewoon gekenmerk deur dominasie, onderdanigheid of sameswering nie. Selfs in die konteks van die grootskaalse LSDI ontwikkelingsprojek het mense verskeie maniere gevind om outonome spasies te skep en te verdedig.



Kernwoorde: Ontwikkeling, Maputaland, Grondeise, vlooiemarkte, Kapteinskap,

Rasionalisering, Teenstand, Eko-toerisme, Gender, Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative

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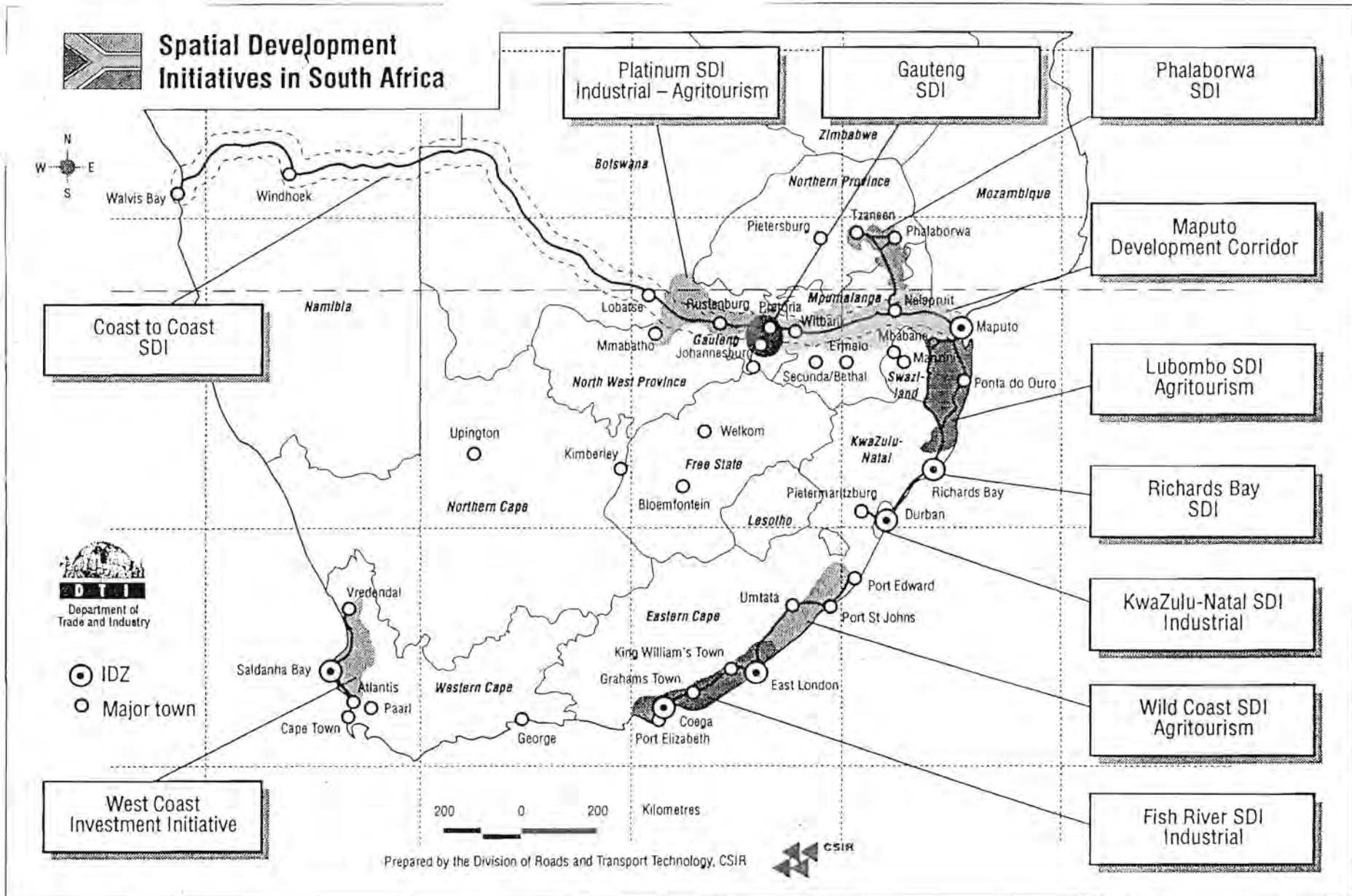
List of Acronyms

AFRA	Association for Rural Advancement
ANC	African National Congress
CINDEK	Centre of Indigenous Knowledge
Contralesa	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
CORD	Centre for Community Organisation Research and Development
CPA	Communal Property Associations
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Commission
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KZN Wildlife	Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
LSDI	Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NNC	Natal Native Congress
PTO	Permission To Occupy Permit
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SAPPI	South African Paper and Pulp Industries
SDI	Spatial Development Initiative
TELCOM	Telecommunication South Africa
UDF	United Democratic Front



Map 1: Fieldwork Site





Map 2: The Spatial Development Initiatives in South Africa