

**RURAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
IN TOURISM-BASED DEVELOPMENTS:
THE CASE OF THE MBILA COMMUNITY
IN MAPUTALAND, KWAZULU-NATAL**

By:

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**Rural community participation
in tourism-based developments:
The case of the Mbila community
in Maputaland, KwaZulu-Natal**

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ABSTRACT

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: Rural Community Participation in Tourism-Based Developments: The Case of the Mbila Community: Sodwana Bay National Park, KwaZulu-Natal

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STUDY LEADER: Prof. G. D. H. Wilson

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DEGREE: Magister Scientiae in Environment and Society

Rural community participation in tourism-based developments in and around protected areas has emerged as a major trend in the Developing world during the last three decades. The basic design of rural community participation in tourism-based developments involves the empowerment of rural communities to participate in such a way in the planning and management of these developments that they have a greater level of control on the effects that these developments have on them and on their environment. The motivation behind the popularity of the approach towards participatory development stems from the dissatisfaction with the centrally driven, top-down type of development that originated during the previous century and out of a desire to purposefully involve rural communities to the extent where they can effectively and sustainably develop and manage their resources.

The research of this study presents an analysis of the participation of the Mbila community of the Sodwana Bay National Park in the tourism-based developments of the region. The literature in the study revealed that the principal fundamentals of rural community participation in tourism-based developments reside in the empowerment of the community to be able to involve themselves sufficiently in the tourism-based developments of their region. The focus of the research was therefore on determining the quality of the empowerment that the Mbila community enjoy and on the subsequent levels of control that this empowerment provides them with. The research results

revealed however, that although the community seems to be sufficiently empowered to legally participate in the tourism-based developments of their area, they are still not involved to the degree that this participation generates meaningful changes to their overall livelihood.

The reasons for these low levels of participation include aspects such as the harshness of the physical environment and the subsequent limited development opportunities in the area; the prevalence of insufficient levels of education and training; difficulties experienced in the communication between some of the institutions and the presence of certain forms of restrictive legislation. The study argues that satisfactory levels of participation can only be achieved if these difficulties are overcome to the extent where they permit community participation that achieves the enhancement of the quality of life for the Mbila community.

SAMEVATTING

TITEL VAN VERHANDELING: Deelname van Landelike Gemeenskappe aan Toerisme-gebaseerde Ontwikkelings: 'n Gevallestudie van die Mbila-gemeenskap, Sodwanabaai Nasionale Park, KwaZulu-Natal

Die deelname van landelike gemeenskappe aan toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings in en om bewaringsareas, het oor die afgelope drie dekades as 'n belangrike tendens in die Ontwikkelende wêreld ontluik. Die basiese beginsel waarop sodanige deelname van landelike gemeenskappe berus, is die bemagtiging van landelike gemeenskappe om aan die beplanning en bestuur van toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings deel te neem en sodoende meer beheer uit te oefen oor die uitwerking van sodanige ontwikkelings op die gemeenskap en sy omgewing. Die gewildheid van hierdie benadering tot deelnemende ontwikkeling spruit uit grootskaalse ontevredenheid met die sentraal beheerde ontwikkeling wat van regeringsvlak af afgedwing word, en uit die behoefte om landelike gemeenskappe doelgerig by die ontwikkeling te betrek, tot op die punt waar die gemeenskappe self hul hulpbronne op 'n effektiewe en volhoubare wyse kan ontgin en bestuur.

Hierdie studie bied 'n analise van die Mabila-gemeenskap van Sodwanabaai Nasionale Park se betrokkenheid by toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings in die omgewing. Die literatuurstudie het daarop gelei dat die grondslag van ware gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid lê in die bemagtiging van 'n Gemeenskap om voldoende betrokke te raak by toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings in hulle omgewing. Gevolglik was die navorsing daarop gerig om die omvang van bemagtiging van die Mabila-gemeenskap vas te stel en die mate van beheer wat hulle kan uitoefen, te bepaal. Uit die navorsingsresultate het dit egter geblyk dat, alhoewel die gemeenskap voldoende bemagtig is om aan toerisme gebaseerde ontwikkelings deel te neem, hulle steeds nie betrek word tot die vlak waar hulle betrokkenheid tot betekenisvolle veranderings aan hulle lewensomstandighede kan lei nie.

Die oorsake van die lae betrokkenheidsvlakke kan onder meer gevind word in die ongenaakbare fisiese omgewing en gepaardgaande beperkte ontwikkelings moontlikhede, die ontoereikende onderrig en opleiding wat die omgewing die gemeenskap bied, onvoldoende kommunikasie tussen sommige van die instansies en die aanwesigheid van beperkende wetgewing. Die studie voer aan dat bevredigende vlakke van gemeenskapsdeelname slegs bereik kan word indien hierdie struikelblokke in so 'n mate oorwin kan word dat gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid moontlik is wat die lewenskwaliteit van die mense van die Mabila gemeenskap sal verhoog.