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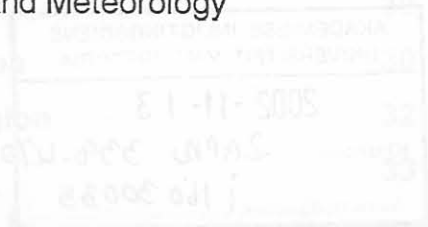
SERVICE DELIVERY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE RURAL MUNICIPALITIES OF THE WESTERN HIGHVELD REGION OF MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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ANC	African National Congress
BL	Black Liberation Movement
CCF	Coloured People's Congress
DBSA	Developed Bank of South Africa
DP	Democratic Party
IC	Institutional Credit
LDD	Land Development Objective
LGPF	Local Government Negotiation Forum
ML	Municipal Labour
PA	Provincial Administration
PWV	Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging
RDC	Reconstruction and Development Committee
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSC	Regional Services Council
SACP	South African Communist Party
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SANCO	South African National Civic Association
TBVC	Transkei-Butha Buthe-Venda-Ciskei
TEC	Transitional Executive Council
TLC	Transitional Local Council
TMG	Transitional Metropolitan Council
TPA	Transvaal Provincial Administration
UDF	United Democratic Front

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BLA	Black Local Authorities Act
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs
GGP	Gross Geographic Product
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
LDO	Land Development Objective
LGNF	Local Government Negotiation Forum
LGTA	Local Government Transition Act
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PWV	Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging
RDC	Reconstruction and Development Committee
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSC	Regional Services Council
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UDF	United Democratic Front

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Keywords: care-partnership, development, local government, community, health, development projects, Transitional Local Councils, traditional leaders, poverty, poverty, post-apartheid.

ABSTRACT

The rural communities of the Western Highveld Region find themselves in a historically disadvantaged and neglected hinterland. This peripheral situation is marked by poverty, destitution and above all, lack of basic services. Water, roads, health services, electricity, proper sanitation, transport infrastructure and several other services are rare commodities. Service provision is the Constitutional responsibility of municipal structures. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was adopted by the democratically elected South African government in 1994 as the national development tool with the aim of redressing discrepancies and developmental inequalities created by the apartheid past. Local government structures known as the Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) were established across the country and are legally charged with the mandate to implement the RDP. This study empirically investigates the Western Highveld Region within the core-periphery development model. It claims that the spatial essence of the Region is a product of historical, social construction manifested through colonialism, apartheid rule and resistance against these historical realities. Community needs, expectations, availability of development projects, community satisfaction and community's levels of participation in development matters are investigated. The role of rural municipalities as legitimate local government structures is addressed against the background of a new discourse of developmental local government. The national development policy, the RDP, has been placed at the arm's length by local councils and communities. As a tool for socio-political and economic transformation the new government expects the RDP to create a climate responsive to change. The fundamental point of contention is whether the Region benefits from the new dispensation in terms of service provision. There are indications that lack of resources on the side of the municipalities, ineffective communication between municipalities and their communities, and to some extent, the snail's pace of delivery of services are hindrances towards acceptable delivery and community satisfaction.

Keywords: *core-periphery; development; local government; community participation; development projects; Transitional Local Councils; traditional leaders; community needs; poverty; post-apartheid.*

SAMEVATTING

Die plattelandse gemeenskap van die Westelike Hoëveldstreek bevind hulself in 'n histories minderbevoorregte en afgeskepte hinterland. Hierdie perifere toestand word gekenmerk deur armoede, geïsoleerdheid en belangrikste, 'n tekort aan basiese dienste. Verder is die dienstevoorsiening van water, paaie, gesondheid, kragvoorsiening, behoorlike sanitasie, vervoer en verskeie ander dienste nie voldoende nie. Die voorsiening van hierdie dienste is die konstitusionele verantwoordelikheid van munisipale strukture. Die Heropbou- en Ontwikkelingsprogram (HOP) is die nasionale ontwikkelingsarm waardeur die Suid-Afrikaanse regering hul ten doel gestel het om die wanverhoudings en ongelykmatighede van die voormalige apartheidsbeleid aan te spreek. Plaaslike regeringstrukture, bekend as Plaaslike Oorgangsrade, is landwyd gestig en het regmatig die mandaat om die HOP uit te voer. Hierdie studie ondersoek empiries die Westelike Hoëveldstreek binne die kern-perifere ontwikkelingsmodel. As hipotese word gestel dat die ruimtelike bestaan van die streek 'n produk is van 'n histories-sosiale ontwikkeling wat gemanifesteer word deur kolonialisme, apartheid en gevolglik 'n weerstand teen hierdie historiese werklikhede. Vervolgens word daar ook gefokus op gemeenskapsbehoefte en verwagtinge, die beskikbaarheid van ontwikkelingsprojekte, gemeenskapstevredenheid en die vlak van gemeenskapsdeelname in ontwikkelingsverband. Die nasionale ontwikkelingsbeleid en die Heropbou- en Ontwikkelingsprogram (HOP), is binne bereik van die plaaslike rade en gemeenskappe geplaas. Die fundamentele verwagting is of die streek wel baat vind by die nuwe bedeling in terme van dienslewering. Daar is egter aanduidings dat 'n tekort aan munisipale hulpbronne swak kommunikasie tussen munisipaliteite en gemeenskappe, en tot 'n sekere mate, die slakkegang waarteen dienste gelewer word, struikelblokke is tot doeltreffende dienslewering en kommunikasietevredenheid.

Sleutelwoorde: kern-periferie; ontwikkeling; plaaslike regering; gemeenskapsdeelname; ontwikkelingsprojekte; Plaaslike Oorgangsrade; tradisionele leiers; gemeenskapsbehoefte; armoede; post-apartheid.

PREFACE

The genesis of this study follows the spirit of my Honours research project that reflected on the plight of the craftswomen of Matjhirini, a village in the Western Region of Mpumalanga Province. These women spend their time creating a variety of bead artifacts. Somehow they manage to survive on the meager earnings they derive from their artwork. What one learnt from these women, was the dedication, energy and joy they displayed in their work. The rhythmic needle bead-picking, as they worked, seemed to symbolise an onward march that would some day afford them a sustainable livelihood in one of the harshest space – the rural villages of South Africa.

Having worked with these women, almost like a tiny spark that causes wild fire, a strong desire to continue exploring the human landscape of other rural communities was kindled. This was reinforced as I drove together with my study leader along the Marble Hall-Pretoria road. As we passed through the dingy tin villages along the road, we were both struck by the unfolding human drama that reflects both the past carvings of apartheid and the present birth pangs of a new world. Vendors with their sales, wheelbarrows and donkey-carts carrying water cannisters, women carrying firewood on their heads and children on their backs, a string of commuter buses carrying workers to and from work and many other sights, alluded to the human experience of the South African peripheral areas. We both agreed that should one embark on some further study, one could attempt to conduct a study that would reflect on the entire Western Highveld Region, which is a myriad of different economic and socio-cultural landscapes.

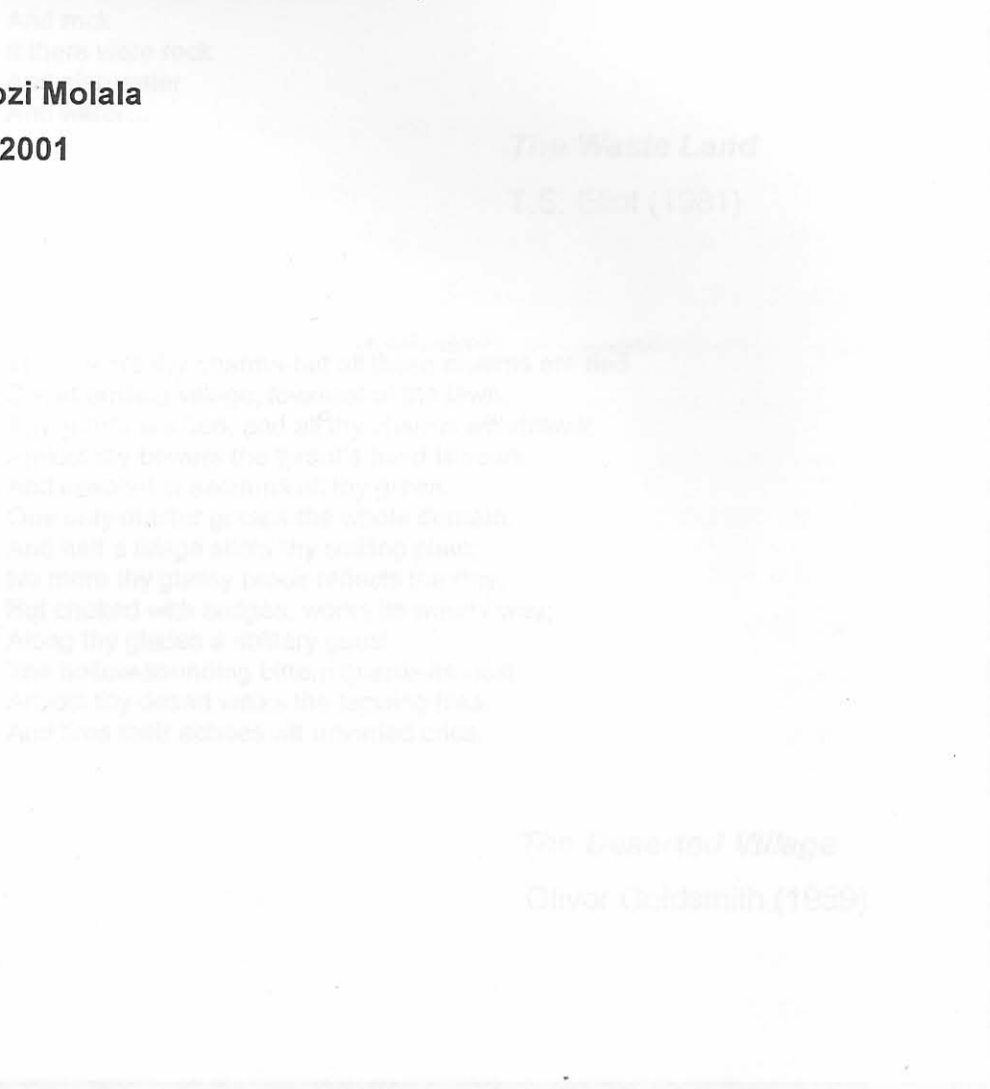
This study is therefore a product of a humanistic desire, a deliberate and conscious effort to understand the human landscape of the Western Highveld Region. The Region's diverse cultural wealth, the human suffering, the historical resilience of its people, stand as less audited and documented realities of the Region. As a resident of the Region, one cannot escape the emotional engagement that engendered this study and indeed as a human geographer, the human tragedy of this rural hinterland, remains a serious indictment. Poverty, lack of roads, inadequate schools, poor health facilities and lack of clean running water stand as an irresistible prosecution against all human geographers who solicit the science and practice of Human Geography. As

a social scientist, a human geographer should seek to research and pledge solidarity with the *human endeavour*.

The dawning of the South African democracy at the twilight of the second millennium, poses a greater challenge for researchers in general, and human geographers in particular as more information is required to carry South Africa into the third millennium. This view is supported by Rogerson (1992:92), who asserts that: *"considering the scope of their discipline, [human] geographers should engage themselves beyond their parochial research agendas and become involved in development and reach out programmes, they need to respond to the challenges of transformation if they are committed to a just South African society ..."*. For those who dare to traverse the untamed terrain, time has come!

Steve Mzilozi Molala

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If there were water we should stop and drink
 Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
 Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
 If there were only water amongst the rock
 Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
 Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
 There is not even silence in the mountains
 But dry sterile thunder without rain
 There is not even solitude in the mountains
 But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
 From doors of mudracked houses
 If there were water

And rock
 If there were rock
 And also water
 And water...

The Waste Land

T.S. Eliot (1981)

These were thy charms-but all these charms are fled
 Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
 Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
 Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
 And desolation saddens all thy green:
 One only master grasps the whole domain,
 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain;
 No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
 But choked with sedges, works its weedy way;
 Along thy glades a solitary guest,
 The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
 Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
 And tires their echoes wit unvaried cries.

The Deserted Village

Oliver Goldsmith (1959)