

Research Article

Towards a Community-Based Integrated Institutional Framework for Ecotourism Management: The Case of the Masebe Nature Reserve, Limpopo Province of South Africa

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Since it was first adopted in the 1980s, the Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) approach has played a significant role in environmental management. This paper argues that for the CBNRM approach to be relevant, functional, and sustainable, it has to be based on existing local institutional (authority) structures, which may have to be adapted, and it may even require new institutions to be created to comply with the requirements of sustainable nature conservation. The main aim of this paper is to propose a CBNRM model based on existing local community (authority) structures and to investigate its usefulness in an African setting. The Langa Ndebele chiefdom in the Limpopo Province of South Africa serves as a case study because it displays all the features necessary to explore the possible application of the proposed CBNRM model. Data was gathered by means of field research which involved detailed interviews and discussions with functionaries of the relevant institutions at grassroots level. Specific recommendations relating to the use of the model are made.

1. Introduction

Nature conservation in Africa was introduced under rule. It has long been characterised by a protected area model, also referred to as “fortress conservation.” After African countries acquired independence in the 1960s, this model of fenced reserves continued to be used and was accepted as the dominant model by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). However, this protected area model led to a separation between local communities and nature, because it often implied that people had to be moved, usually to their detriment. Communities seldom received any benefits from these reserves or these processes, nor were communities compensated for damage caused by wild animals that came from the reserves. Moreover, they had no access to these reserves and therefore could not collect basic necessities, such as firewood or grass for thatching. In many reserves, poaching is common ([1], pages 2–4, 106, [2], pages 162–163, [3], page 147, [4], page 209).

General discontent among communities with regard to the practice of fenced reserves has led to a growing

realisation that there is an urgent need to revise the protected areas model, which completely excludes local communities from participation in policy- and decision-making, as well as from the planning and management of such areas. Increasing pressure from human rights and justice-oriented activists who question the moral basis for expropriation and exclusion in the name of biodiversity conservation has also contributed to this revision ([2], page 163). Hence, from the late 1970s onwards, the AWF began to argue that if communities could benefit economically from wildlife, they would also be more inclined to conserve it. However, in that era communities held the status of beneficiaries only—they were not included in any policy- or decision-making or planning in respect of nature conservation ([4], page 109).

In the 1980s there was a shift toward more active local involvement in nature conservation by giving local communities a substantial stake in conservation, because there was some realisation that mere revenue-sharing between protected areas and adjacent surrounding communities had failed to change the attitudes and behaviour of communities to wildlife and nature conservation. One way to achieve real

change and raise people's standard of living would be to involve communities in managing natural resources. This approach towards nature conservation culminated in the development and adoption of the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) model in southern Africa ([4], pages 109–111, [5], page 1943, [6], page 21).

CBNRM is based principally on institutional reforms that decentralise authority over land and natural resources to local communities. In Africa, it has become the dominant development discourse for environmental management processes [6–8]. Nelson and Agrawal ([9], page 558) conclude that in “the absence of such reforms, the incentives for local groups of people to collectively invest in natural resource management are unlikely to exist or emerge.” This strategy implies that local communities must have direct control over the use and benefits of natural resources in protected areas by managing them in a sustainable way. Without significant direct benefits, community members tend to have little interest in conservation and may therefore actively seek to reduce or eliminate wildlife populations and habitats that affect their livelihood practices. CBNRM also assumes that conservation can be improved by increasing the level of local benefits derived from the natural resources to be conserved. Furthermore, CBNRM is also more democratic than state control, involving and empowering people at grassroots level ([2], page 163, [5], pages 1945–1946, [8], pages 283–284, [9], page 558, [10], pages 94–95, [11], page 14).

Despite the moral high ground of its objectives in terms of people's rights over land and natural resources, CBNRM has been criticized for failing to achieve its objectives, with regard to both communities and natural resources [7–9, 12, 13]. Weak leadership which culminates in internal conflict among community members and between institutions, corruption regarding the distribution of benefits, unequal participation, lack of official recognition, and inadequate income alternatives are some of the problems experienced in CBNRM projects [5, 14, 15]. Blaikie ([5], page 1946) cautions that the “creation or the adaptation of an existing community-based institution can be seen as no more than an institutional disturbance of existing local relations and thus an opportunity for the powerful to rent-seek, as it can be used to protect or reinforce archaic and regressive forms of governance (e.g., chieftaincy and patriarchy), and its benefits can be captured by elites.”

However, despite such criticism, CBNRM continues to play a significant role in environmental management. For instance, Mbaiwa's [10] research clearly demonstrates that CBNRM contributes substantially to improving livelihoods and conservations in the Okavango Delta of Botswana, so that it is unreasonable to generalise and conclude that CBNRM is not delivering the projected outcomes.

This paper argues that in order to achieve the desired outcomes, the existing models must be constantly adjusted and revitalised. Hence, it is suggested that community-based institutional systems of authority aimed at nature resource management cannot continue in their present form. In Africa, traditional institutions (of authority) are characterized by hereditary leadership and appointed functionaries, which implies, *inter alia*, that some form of representative

government has to be introduced at community level to facilitate the process of democratisation. Hence, this paper argues that the CBNRM approach can offer an institutional framework for communities to manage their natural resources in a sustainable way, but that, in order to be relevant, functional and sustainable, community-based planning and management of nature conservation should use existing local authority structures as the basis for management and adapt them to comply with the requirements of effective nature conservation. In this regard, Hartman et al.'s ([16], pages 7, 55, 57, Annexure A) comment that the indigenous authority system has remained largely intact in Africa and is still an essential part of the social, economic, and political fabric of societies should be given serious consideration. Thus far, efforts to replace indigenous institutions (authorities) by representative local governments in Africa have failed, and there is an increasing tendency to acknowledge and reinstate indigenous authorities for the purposes of decentralised local government all over the continent.

Importantly, research has shown that existing indigenous institutions have, in various ways, been prevented from functioning as vehicles for development and nature conservation, but have the potential to be remodeled into such institutions (cf. [1], pages 111, 105, [17]). This situation continues to prevail, particularly in the case of South Africa, where the indigenous authority system has survived with minor changes despite the process of cultural change to which indigenous people have been subjected and the fact that they have been under the administrative control of white authorities for decades. Attempts to “transform” the system by the previous government by renaming it “Bantu authorities” in terms of the legislation designed to underpin the Bantustan system did not have much impact, for example, among the Langa Ndebele, at meetings of the Bantu authority all the members of the former traditional council were usually present. In fact, the indigenous authority system in South Africa is so strong that it is recognised in terms of Section 211 of the Constitution of South Africa ([18], page 121).

If communities are not involved in the active management of their natural resources, they tend to use such resources destructively, from the perspective of principles of conservation and sustainability. By contrast, if communities are involved in conservation, the benefits they receive can act as incentives for them to become good stewards of resources [19–24].

Apart from the political reasons given for the importance of community involvement in nature conservation, there is yet another important reason. From an anthropological perspective, Boonzaaier ([25], page 57) emphasises that the planning and management of natural resources in protected areas are inseparable from people's worldview and concomitant values, because values inform people's choices about what they consider “useful” or “valuable” resources, which in turn determines and guides their behavior (cf. [6] page 24, [23], page 49, [24], page 92).

The main aim of this paper is therefore to propose a model that is based on existing local community authority structures. The model is designed to address most of the issues raised above, such as the direct control over

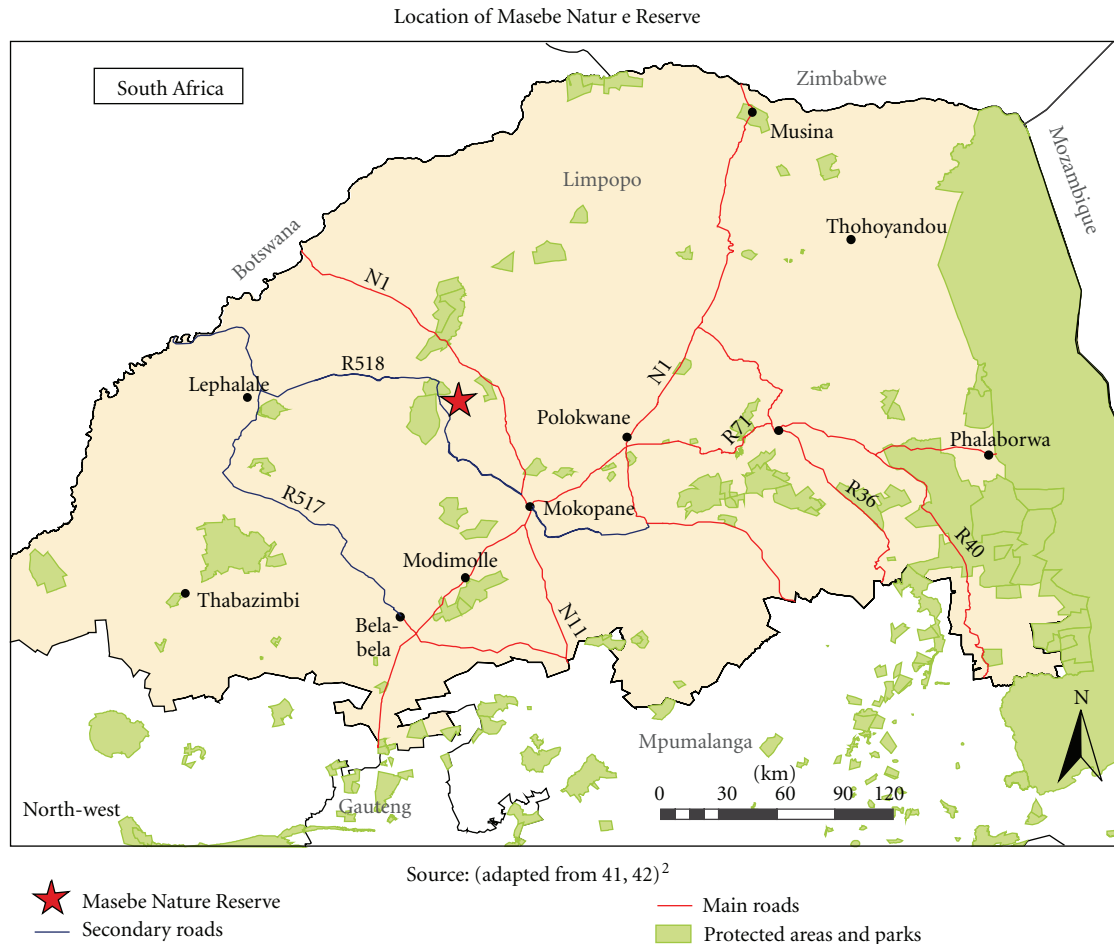


FIGURE 1: Location of Masebe Nature Reserve, source: adapted from [41, 42].

the management of natural resources, weak leadership, lack of communication, transparency and equal representation as part of the process of democratisation which involves the empowering of people at grassroots level. The model was applied to a case study.

2. Study Area

The area of the Langa Ndebele chiefdom in the Waterberg region of the Limpopo Province where the Masebe Nature Reserve is situated was a suitable region to conduct the research necessary to explore and develop a model for community-based natural resource management. The proposed model addresses almost all the issues mentioned above in order to ensure sustainable nature conservation.

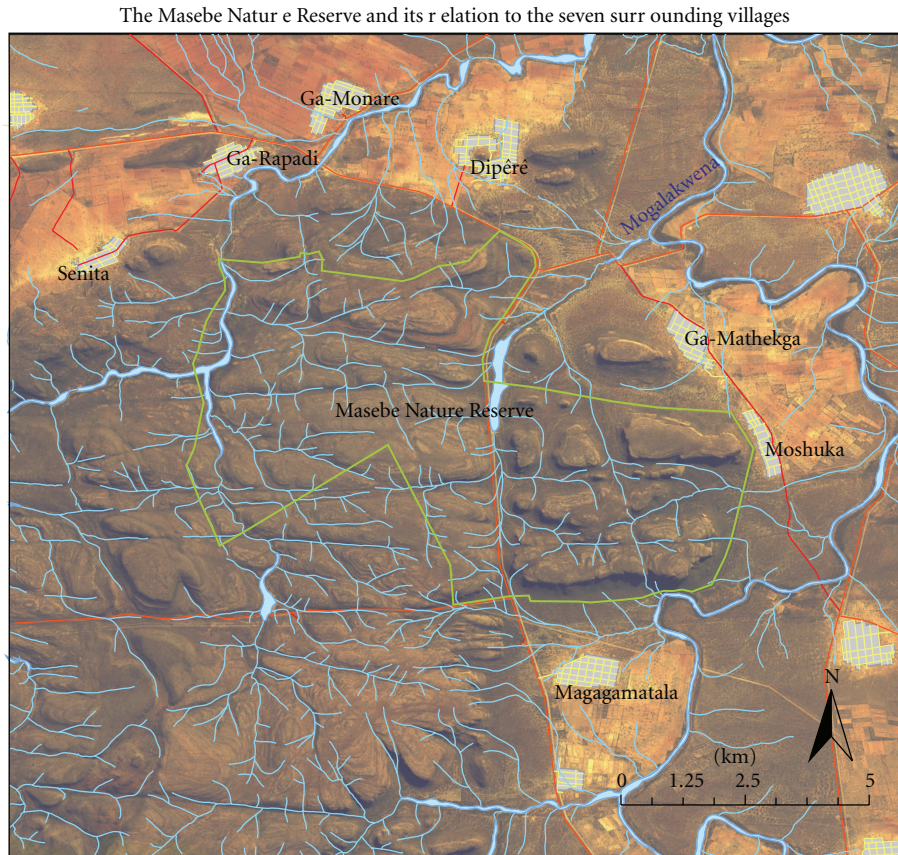
The Masebe Nature Reserve consists of an area of government trust land of 4541 hectares and lies in an area that falls into the Langa Ndebele chiefdom of Chief Philip Bakenberg. The area is situated about 95 km from Mokopane, 24 km from Marken, and 130 km from Polokwane (see Figure 1).

Seven villages, each under the leadership of a village headman, surround the Reserve. The Reserve was established in accordance with a resolution of 17 February 1984 when the Langa Ndebele chief, his councilors, 48 village headmen,

who constituted the Bakenberg Tribal Authority (now called the Bakenberg Traditional Council), and 500 members of the Langa tribal community agreed to develop 4451 hectares of trust land as a nature reserve. Until that date, that tract of land had been used for communal grazing for the stock owners of the seven villages, Mashuka, Ga-Mathekga, Dipèrè, Ga-Monare, Rapadi, Senita, and Skrikfontein/Magagamatala (see Figure 2).

The primary rationale for establishing the Masebe Nature Reserve was protecting several unique features. The Reserve is characterized by impressive sandstone formations that form part of the Waterberg mountain range, a wide variety of indigenous trees, as well as a wide variety of antelope. Rock paintings have been found on the sandstone under overhanging cliffs in the mountains. A number of archaeological and historical sites contribute to the Reserve's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

The agreement negotiated with the Bakenberg Tribal Authority in 1984 entailed the use of the Reserve for environmental education, the introduction and utilisation of game and ecotourism, with the objectives of generating income and providing job opportunities for village residents. The Reserve would also serve as a communal resource area, where access to and the collection of renewable resources



Source: (adapted from 43, 44) ³

FIGURE 2: The Masebe Nature Reserve and its relation to the seven surrounding villages, source: adapted from [43, 44].

such as thatch and firewood would be allowed “on a controlled basis” [26]. Today, the Masebe Nature Reserve forms part of the greater Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, which has been awarded international status and was registered with UNESCO in March 2001. The primary reason for the inclusion of the Langa Ndebele in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve was to enable the tribal community to become a stakeholder in the development and conservation of the Waterberg Biosphere. Because it forms part of the Langa Ndebele chiefdom, the Masebe Nature Reserve was expected to play a pivotal role in promoting the overall objective of the Waterberg biosphere, namely, to integrate the conservation of the natural resources of the Waterberg with the economic development of local villages. The intention was to achieve this objective by creating more opportunities for decision-making and planning by means of institutional development and community empowerment ([27], page 168).

Although it was not necessary to resettle any people, the fencing of the area has led to general discontent among the residents in the seven surrounding villages. The most important effect of the fencing of Masebe Nature Reserve has been that the people have been deprived of some of their grazing. In addition, the fence prevents women from collecting thatch and firewood in the area, and traditional practitioners no longer have unimpeded access to a variety of medicinal plants found in the Reserve. The fence also cuts off

direct access to ancestral graves, which are important places of veneration and sacrifice for these communities. The fencing of the Reserve has also led to a high incidence of poaching in the Masebe Nature Reserve ([25], pages 59–62).

Another important reason for residents’ discontent is the fact that they do not receive or experience any financial benefits from the Masebe Nature Reserve. This discontent serves as further justification for introducing CBNRM, adjusted and adapted in such a way that it addresses the particular problems and interests of the Langa Ndebele in general, and of the seven villages surrounding the Reserve in particular. This approach is in line with Mbaiwa’s ([10], page 94) remark that “CBNRM assumes that, once rural communities participate in natural resource utilization and derive economic benefits, it will cultivate a spirit of ownership, and the development of positive attitudes towards resource use will ultimately lead them to natural resources in a sustainable way” (cf. also [11], page 14).

3. Method of Investigation

In order to obtain insight into the management of the Reserve, participants were interviewed and their perceptions and opinions were illuminated by means of individual and group discussions. Selected techniques of the Participant Action Research (PAR) approach were followed, because

this approach focuses on the involvement and participation of all role-players and the people affected by a particular research project to achieve solutions for problems or to pursue jointly set objectives. This approach relies heavily on local knowledge and on the perspectives of the participants (interviewees) regarding the research objective in the context of their own situation and environment. Local knowledge and perspectives are experience-based, so that they represent unique knowledge and insight into the participants' culture and problems. Because this approach involves a joint effort between the researcher and the community, the study can best be described as the collective generation of knowledge, rather than as mere data collection. The research results in action, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life of the communities concerned ([28], page 545, [29], pages 408–412). A variety of techniques can be used in the PAR approach, such as surveys, participant observation, qualitative in-depth interviews, focus groups, storytelling, and drama (cultural theatre) ([29], page 419).

The PAR approach enabled the exploration of unique local knowledge and the insights of the Langa community members in the seven villages surrounding the Masebe Nature Reserve on nature reserve management issues in the context of their own particular cultural and natural environment, in line with the approaches suggested by Collins ([30], page 102) and Babbie and Mouton ([31], page 320).

The interviews were conducted in the context of focus group discussions. Hence, as a first step in this study, collective interviews were conducted with the seven village headmen during March 2009. Particular attention was paid to the composition and functioning of institutions at all levels of authority in the Langa Ndebele chiefdom. This enabled the researcher to identify strengths and weaknesses in the system and, more particularly, the management of the Masebe Nature Reserve.

Thereafter, from March 2009 until the end of May 2009, group discussions were held with all the residents of the seven villages surrounding the Masebe Nature Reserve who attended the meetings, on a voluntary basis. These village groups included men and women, young and older people. People were encouraged to express their views about the Masebe Nature Reserve in general terms. Their initial response was to raise their grievances rather than to point out any positive issues. Consequently, they were then requested to comment on any positive aspects, if they could think of any. Thereafter they were interviewed with particular emphasis on the way that they perceived the Masebe Nature Reserve to be managed. These interviews enabled the researcher to identify and gain insight into the problems and weaknesses in the management system—not only in respect of Masebe Nature Reserve, but also of the Langa Ndebele chiefdom as a whole.

The insight gained from these interviews enabled the development of a management model that provides for adaptation and integration of the existing authority structures for the purposes of sustained natural resource management. This model is based on one developed by the author and colleagues as part of a project that examined the development of traditional authorities among rural communities (cf. [16]).

In accordance with the PAR approach, in 2010, the model was then thoroughly discussed with the chief and some of his councillors, as well as with the headmen of the villages surrounding the Masebe Nature Reserve. Subsequently, the model was adapted in line with the outcomes of these discussions.

4. Local Institutional Capacity

4.1. Traditional Authority System. It has already been mentioned above that the Masebe Nature Reserve is situated in the sphere of authority of the Langa Ndebele chiefdom of Chief Philip Bakenberg. The chieftainship is hereditary. The chief is assisted by his private council (which consists of male members of the royal family), and also by his traditional council (which consists of members of the royal family and the village headmen). He has to perform a number of duties, including land management and justice (judicature). In executing these duties, the chief is supported by the village headmen (*mantona*) that he appoints. The Masebe Nature Reserve is surrounded by seven of these villages, each under the leadership of an appointed village headman (*ntona*). Since 1994, the area has also become part of the Bakenberg Local Authority, which is not a traditional authority system (cf. [27], page 173). According to the Chairman of the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee, each of the villages has about 1000 inhabitants, whose main economic activities are subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry.

4.2. The Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee. The Masebe Nature Reserve is managed by the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee, which is not a traditional institution. The Committee consists of the village headmen of the seven villages which surround the Reserve, two elected members from each village, the Reserve Manager, the Manager of the Camp established by the government during the apartheid era, members of the provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and members of the local authority. This composition implies that the seven surrounding villages are strongly represented on the Management Committee, since the majority of this Committee's members (21 in total) are residents of the seven surrounding villages ([25], page 58, [27], page 173).

4.3. Institutional Deficiencies. Research by Boonzaaier [25] reveals that proper coordination does not occur between the different levels of the authority structures in respect of the Reserve management. Firstly, the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee is represented at the traditional council of the chief by only one village headman, whose capability has been questioned by the members of the Management Committee, as he has not been able to resolve problems that have arisen between the Management Committee on the one hand and the chief and some of his councillors on the other. This situation is indicative of a lack of effective communication between the Management Committee and the chief and his councillors, resulting in misunderstandings and a lack of mutual trust. Secondly, there is also discontent within the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee,

which manifests itself in the failure of some village headmen to attend the Committee meetings regularly. Consequently, decisions taken by the Management Committee are not communicated to village residents properly, which in turn has a negative effect on the way in which resources are managed (cf. also [27], pages 173, 174).

Some members of the seven surrounding villages feel that Masebe belongs to the seven surrounding villages and the wider Langa Ndebele community, but others argue that it should belong to the seven villages only and that the chief and the rest of the tribal community of the Langa Ndebele have no claim to it. In fact, as indicated above, the Masebe Nature Reserve is situated on trust land, so that it should be regarded as a government-owned reserve, and does not actually belong to either the villages or the Langa Ndebele.

To complicate matters, there is no proper communication between government and the seven villages surrounding the Reserve. The seven village headmen ascribed this situation to irregular meetings of the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee. They claim that government decisions are conveyed to the Camp Manager and Reserve Manager only and that the Management Committee is never informed or consulted. As a result, the link between the village headmen and the Camp and Reserve Managers is described as poor [25]. As Boonzaaier [25] and Boonzaaier and Wilson [27] explain, this situation is neither conducive to the management of the Reserve nor to any change in people's attitudes towards nature conservation. In this respect, a warning by Leach et al. ([32], page 229) that harmony between communities and the environment "require[s] either the recovery and rebuilding of traditional, collective resource management institutions, or their replacement with new ones; for instance by the community management plans and village environmental committees so often associated with CBNRM" is particularly relevant.

Attempts at government interventions to implement community-based conservation (as in the case of the Masebe Nature Reserve) are examples of directed influence on local-level conservation, as they regulate the interactions of humans with one another and with nature. Hence, government institutions are the primary mechanisms to facilitate particular outcomes and actions. However, strategic actors (which include government, as is particularly the case in respect of the Masebe Nature Reserve) may attempt to bypass the constraints of existing institutions and create new institutions that satisfy their interests (cf. [17, 21]).

Boonzaaier's [25] research also reveals that locals are not much interested in the conservation of wildlife as such, but want to accrue tangible benefits from the Reserve. The fact that they are not benefiting from the Reserve is undoubtedly the single most important reason why they express discontent about the Reserve. In this respect, the words of Van der Duim ([11], page 14) come to mind—he points out that "revenue sharing programmes can play an important role in improving local attitudes towards conservation" (cf. also [10], page 95).

There are differences in the attitudes of different groups in the villages. Differences and discontent emerge, for instance, as a gender issue (women want firewood and

thatch), an occupational issue (traditional healers need particular medicinal plants available only in the Reserve; cattle owners require more grazing, especially in times of drought), an economic issue (there is poaching in the absence of the provision of venison as initially agreed upon), an age issue (some young men see the Masebe Nature Reserve as a good development because it will attract tourists and the income received could benefit the surrounding villages, as opposed to the elderly who point out the Reserve does not give them free access to ancestral graves), and a value issue (aesthetic versus utility values) ([25], pages 59, 60, 61, 62, cf. also [33], page 18).

For the sake of perspective, it is important to note that when actors do not share goals for the conservation of resources and are not equally powerful, as in the case of Masebe Nature Reserve, their perceptions and performance in respect of conservation goals have the potential to reshape existing institutions or, in the absence of appropriate institutions, to create new ones ([32], page 129, [12]). Hence, it is particularly important that the composition of institutions at grassroots level, as in the case of the Langa Ndebele (which includes the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee), is renegotiated by the actors and reshaped/adapted in order to develop effective management to the benefit of the surrounding villages and the simultaneous conservation of the Reserve. Hence, this paper proposes a management system that could serve as a model for negotiation. It is important to note that the proposed management system can also apply to communities where the voices and concerns of women and/or other marginalized subgroups are repressed or ignored.

4.4. Communal Institutional Approaches. Communal institutional approaches require the collective management of common shared resources. In practice, however, collective management is mostly superficial, in the sense that the composition of management systems usually reflects only notional participation, while decisionmaking, planning, and implementation are still dictated from above. Murphree ([17], page 209) contends that this is a serious gap which applies to "large parts of the African landscape", adding that "(g)overnments have not effectively penetrated downward into this landscape with their bureaucratic structures, their incursions into it being prescriptive, unenforceable and frequently appropriate."

In the case of the Masebe Nature Reserve, nature conservation in the Reserve has become the responsibility of the provincial government (including all policy-making, planning and the implementation of tourist ventures). Although locals are represented on the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee, the residents of the seven surrounding villages receive only limited benefits from tourism and hunting ([25], pages 62, 63).

As mentioned above, some village headmen (*mantona*) who are members of the Management Committee are reluctant to attend meetings, which may be interpreted as an indication of the degree of interest (or lack thereof) by locals to become involved as a direct result of the top-down approach hitherto used in the management of the Reserve.

If village leaders do not become involved, it is unrealistic to expect ordinary villagers to be involved. In the interviews, villagers expressed their dissatisfaction with government's top-down approach which neither recognises them nor involves them in any decisionmaking.

Elsewhere in the world, there has been growing recognition of the importance of understanding the needs and perspectives of local people, of interactive communication, and of strengthening local institutional capacity [6, 9, 12, 34]. Although in the case of Masebe Nature Reserve cognizance has been taken of these trends, much still has to be done to achieve the desired results, as the participation of community members can at best be described as passive. Passive participation approaches are characterised by central decisionmaking and control, dominated by foreign and national technocrats, whilst the participation of local communities is limited to labour or the provision of information. The whole process of development, decisionmaking, and management of the Masebe Nature Reserve is a case study in this respect [25].

5. Proposed Management Model

The proposed model is expected to promote the provision made in the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (41 of 2003) of the South African government [35] for the transfer of natural resource management to traditional leaders and traditional councils. Despite the provision of the act, no responsibilities in this respect have been assigned to any traditional leader or institution.

The model proposed here for consideration has been discussed with the Langa Ndebele in accordance with the principles of the PAR approach, as explained above. However, no decision has been taken in respect of any possible adjustments to the model, its acceptance as an appropriate alternative to the existing institutions or its possible implementation by the traditional council. The model has also been discussed informally with officials in the Limpopo department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, with the undertaking to submit the current article formally to the Department once it has been published. Assessing the potential cost implications of implementing the proposal falls beyond the scope of this paper, but it is recommended that future research is done on such implications.

The model makes provision for the establishment of a Rural Local Government which consists of a decision-making (legislative/authority) component and an administrative component. In the process, an opportunity is created for the democratisation of the traditional institutions of authority and effective environmental management, taking into account local perceptions. It implies that a deliberate effort is made to build up from existing institutions and practices to support a locally appropriate, equitable, and sustainable community-based natural resource management system (cf. [36]).

At *central local level*, it is proposed that the authority component is headed by the chief (community leader) or his plenipotentiary and consists of seven portfolios. At least one appointed and one elected person each from component,

A and B, should serve on every portfolio. The members of Component A are appointed by the chief/community leader in consultation with his personal advisors (the ruling family), (most African traditional leaders are male, although a few exceptions do exist, as in the case of the Balobedu people of the Rain queen, Modjadji) while for Component B an equal number of members would be elected by the adult residents of all settlements in the proclaimed area of jurisdiction (Figure 3).

The provision for a plenipotentiary and elected officials at the central level is an attempt to prevent leadership weakness and to democratise the institution, while respecting the traditional practice of appointed members.

It is proposed that a Director heads local administration (Administration and Development), appointed by the Rural Local Authority in consultation with the Civil Service Commission (in the case of South Africa). Although provision is made for seven departments (equal to the number of portfolios at the regional level), it is possible to combine two or more of these departments at a local level. The staff of the local portfolios can be drawn from those at regional level. The number of posts will depend on the size of the population and the area to be administered.

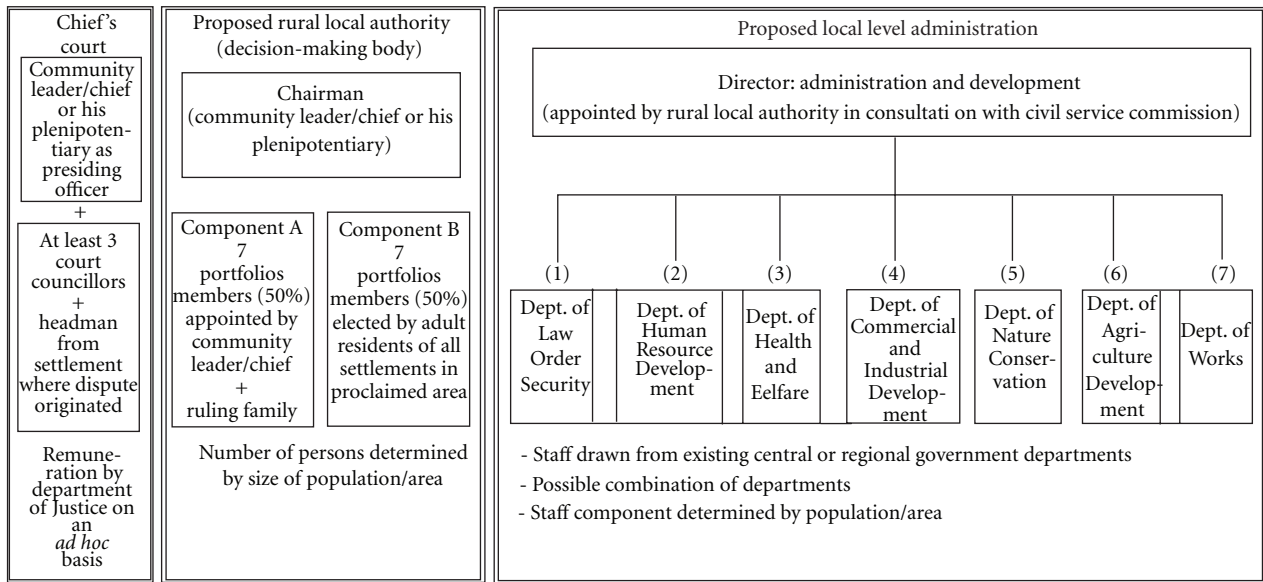
The development of an administrative and development component, composed of different departments, is a new addition to the traditional system. Traditional institutions (councils) had no executive functions (in South Africa). Traditionally, chiefs are rulers and the village/ward headmen who composed the traditional council actually only served the chief in an advisory capacity. They have never been executive functionaries within the tribal community. Decisions taken by the traditional councils had to be executed by the tribal community members ([16], page 30, [18], page 118).

In the case of judiciary matters, it is proposed that the status quo is retained. Accordingly, provision is made for a court consisting of the community leader/chief or his plenipotentiary as presiding judge, and at least three court councillors appointed by the community leader/chief in consultation with the ruling family. The headman of a village/ward where a dispute originates must be present at hearings in this court. Remuneration of members of this court would be determined by the Department of Justice. The court acts as both an appeal court and a court of first recourse as determined by the Department of Justice.

At *village level*, no legislative body or administrative machinery is foreseen. In order to facilitate development at grassroots level within the area of jurisdiction of a Rural Local Authority, it is proposed that provision is made for informal Village Advisory Committees. Such committees may be composed of at least seven persons elected by the particular village, with the village headman as an *ex officio* member. It is proposed that the responsibilities of the different members of the committee are divided in accordance with the respective portfolios proposed at local central community level. A chairperson is elected from and by the members of the committee (see Figure 4).

The Village Advisory Committee advises both the Rural Local Authority and the local level administrative personnel on matters pertaining to the development and

Proposed rural central local government



(cf. [16])

FIGURE 3: Proposed rural central local government, (cf. [16]).

Proposed system at village level

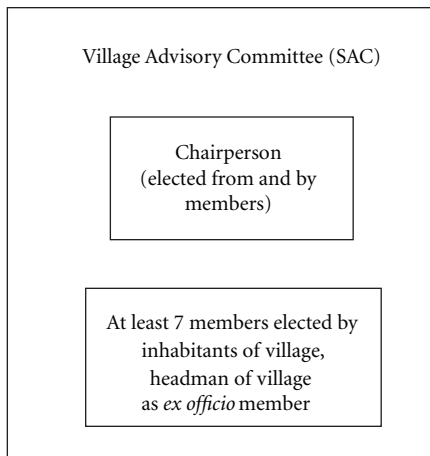


FIGURE 4: Proposed system at village level.

administration of the village concerned. Depending on the needs of the village, the committee may request the presence of particular members of the Rural Local Authority and/or relevant administrative personnel at its meetings. For this purpose, the establishment of portfolio committees should be considered. It is proposed that a portfolio committee consists of two members at a central community level, the village headman, plus the member of the Village Advisory Committee responsible for the particular portfolio function and another member. One of the latter two members must be female in order to represent women's views. The chairperson should be elected from among and by the members of these committees. It is envisaged that the respective regional

government departments would be represented on these committees (cf. [16], page 65).

In the case of the development and management of conservation areas, it is clear that a portfolio needs to be created for nature conservation at a central local community level, composed of the two persons (one appointed member of Component A and one elected member of Component B), that a portfolio function for nature conservation held by one person should be created at village level for each of the relevant villages, and that a Nature Conservation Committee must be established comprised of these persons plus an additional two members per village (one of which is a woman), as well as officials representing external institutions. It is further proposed that at least one regional government representative and at least one expert on nature conservation supplement the members of this committee (see Figure 5).

The provision made for a woman to act as one of the members of the Village Advisory Committee and the portfolio committee should be seen as part of the democratisation and empowerment process. It is also an attempt to make membership of these institutions at local grassroots level as representative and as transparent as possible (cf. [6], page 19, [11], page 14). The provision made for an expert on the subject matter is a considered attempt to empower the committee in the sense that it provides an opportunity to supplement local knowledge with scientific knowledge. The provision for officials from external institutions, as well as regional governmental representation on this committee is necessitated by the fact that a reserve, such as the Masebe Nature Reserve, may be situated on trust land (government-owned land). This linkage has to be respected in terms of the institutional arrangements. In this regard, Van der Duim ([11], page 12) remarks that land "(t)enure is...a key element in determining the performances of various

Proposed system for nature conservation at local level

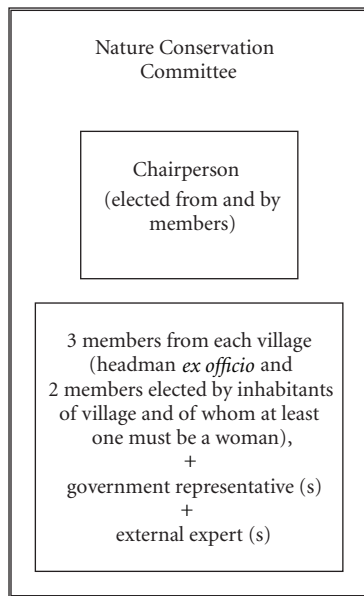


FIGURE 5: Proposed system for nature conservation at local level.

actors in institutional arrangements of conservation initiatives.”

Building on the work of Barrow and Murphree [37], Graham et al. [38] and Spenceley [39], Van der Duim ([11], 12-13) distinguishes seven categories into which institutional arrangements can be classified. According to this classification, the conservation arrangement in the Masebe Nature Reserve falls into the category where the State owns the land but the community manages the resources. However, it should be noted that the Langa Ndebele community, and in particular the Masebe Nature Reserve Management Committee, does not fully control the Reserve’s management. The proposed model is an attempt to improve this situation.

The proposed management model provides improved communication and coordination in respect of nature conservation. The composition of the proposed portfolio committee for Nature Conservation makes provision for the creation or accommodation of conservation values on which policymaking, planning, and management will have to be based. Hence, it is foreseen that the proposed model will be supported by environmental education programmes. In this respect, work such as that done by the Lapalala Wilderness School [40] “to develop and encourage a passion and commitment to conserve nature and ecological processes” among school children has to be commended. Thus research on the role that environmental education plays on the cultural perceptions of nature conservation has become urgent in order to support the proposed model (if it is introduced). In this regard, Hinz ([1], page 105) aptly remarks that “the integration of conservancies into the structure of traditional authorities accommodates customary resource management practices and norms into the administration of conservancies. It also creates (or re-activates) conservation

values on which the developments of conservancies will be able to rely.”

6. Guiding Perspectives

A community-based management model implies a negotiated model. Any attempts to manage conservancies without the participation of the community must be avoided, as they will be contested in the local context, their limits will be tested, and their intended meanings will be transformed by the communities whose actions they are supposed to change [21].

A negotiated model should therefore be regarded as an attempt to link conservation goals and effective resource management with the search for social justice for historically marginalized peoples—currently a void in community-based natural resource management programmes (cf. [36]). A negotiated model should also be in line with the definition given by Adams and Hulme (quoted by Murphree [17], page 204) for “community conservation” as “those principles and practices that argue that conservation goals should be pursued by strategies that emphasise the role of local residents in decision-making about natural resources.”

Hence, if a model for natural resource management is proposed, it should be regarded as an attempt to submit a few ideas and principles as points of departure to be considered when natural resource management options are negotiated with people at grassroots level. According to Hartman et al. ([16], 57-58), Murphree [17], and Boonzaaier and Wilson ([27], pages 177-178), the following principles should be considered.

- (i) Community-based institutional (authority) structures must be integrated with adapted regional and local level governments in order to involve people at grassroots level in both the administration and the decision-making and development processes (including nature conservation).
- (ii) An administratively, economically, and socially viable structure which ties in with the present and a possible future dispensation should be used as a point of departure for the development of community-based institutions (authorities) as rural local governments.
- (iii) The establishment of portfolio committees/institutions must be structurally linked to community-based institutional (authority) structures at a local central level, which include both decision-making components and executive (administrative) components to make provision for the coordinated functioning of portfolio committees.
- (iv) Conservation areas are economic assets which should be managed according to sound economic principles. This implies that appropriate training that also takes rural people’s perceptions of wildlife and nature conservation into account must be provided to ensure that the proposed adapted community institutions are able to manage conservation areas in a sustainable way.

- (v) Community-based institutions as decision-making bodies must, in adapted form, be provided with the financial means and administrative personnel to facilitate sound local government in rural areas.

7. Conclusion

The establishment of institutions based on a traditional authority system can enable role-players at a community (grassroots) level to introduce management systems that will consider their worldview and concomitant values. This provides a basis for confidence about how local knowledge can be obtained and applied in sustainable nature conservation and sustainable utilisation of natural resources (cf. [6], page 20).

The establishment of adapted institutions of local authority should not be looked at in isolation. Local institutions can only be composed and local interactions can only be understood in the context of larger social forces. As Murphree ([17], page 205) explains, community approaches only make sense when “communal approaches and state management are understood as complementary rather than mutually exclusive alternatives” and when “communal regimes are integrated into national systems of conservation planning and implementation” (cf. also [11]).

However, it would be naïve to assume that negotiation occurs on a level playing field. Different institutions (and different social actors) have very different capacities to voice and stake their claims. State officials and community representatives operate in asymmetric organisational structures. For community actors to acquire some leverage in their negotiations with state officials, they have to organise themselves into larger collectives that can bridge the gap between the local and the regional or national interest. It could be argued that all negotiation processes reflect prevailing power relations—the proposed community-based management model could mitigate such conflict, facilitate participation between communities and authorities at all levels and, eventually, benefit nature conservation.

It is submitted that the principles and points of departure set out above on a proposed model for CBNRM are applicable not only to the Langa Ndebele, but also to all communities which are settled adjacent to protected areas and whose daily livelihood is affected by such areas.

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