

New Architecture, Old Agendas: Perspectives on Social Research in Rural Communities Neighbouring the Kruger National Park

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Abstract: *This article presents a summary of views expressed by individual local people and community 'representatives' on the issue of social research, prior to, during and after the Indaba on Social Research and Protected Areas: Towards Equitable Best Practice and Community Empowerment, held at Skukuza, KNP, from 29 March to 3 April 2005 (the 'Indaba'). Views emerged through a process of 'engagement' between people from communities neighbouring the KNP and social researchers. This article focuses on three key issues discussed namely, 'feedback', 'benefits' and local control over research. What emerges is that local people are unhappy about the general lack of feedback by researchers. They question the skewed distribution of benefits from research and assert the need to review the way in which research is practiced. Community representatives, those elected by local people into Kruger National Park Neighbours' fora (akin to tribunes), further argue for a*

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degree of local control over research as a measure to reduce the 'negative' impacts of research on communities. Social researchers, however, express a concern about what local control might mean for the academic freedom of researchers, independence of research and the plight of the less influential members of communities. We argue that research ethics and funding arrangements must be understandable and agreeable with local interests, and that, as far as possible, research must justify its relevance to local concerns. The ultimate test for engagement is the degree to which commitment to local people's interests becomes a driving force bridging broader conservation and development concerns. Engagement should not be just about using social researchers to pull communities into the project of conservationists and their desire to save animals and plants, and big businesses that reap financially from conservation. Communities must come to the discussion not as raw materials for conservation, but as players whose own interests and feelings matter and need attention if a protected area is to mean anything.

Keywords: community, representative participation, engagement, social research, ethics, equitable best practice, control, power, feedback, benefits

INTRODUCTION

THIS ARTICLE PRESENTS a summary of views on social research expressed by individual local people and community representatives prior to, during and after the *Indaba on Social Research and Protected Areas: Towards Equitable Best Practice and Community Empowerment*, held at Skukuza, Kruger National Park (KNP) from 29 March to 3 April 2005 (the 'Indaba'). Views on the various issues raised converge and diverge. The resonance and dissonance of views reflects the inherent diversity within and between local communities, as well as tensions between researchers and the researched. The methodological design used in eliciting views was structured to enable researchers to capture views from ordinary members of communities, whose voices are often not heard, and from representatives of communities, who are mandated to speak on behalf of their communities. The diversity of views raises questions about local and academic perspectives on what 'community' means, about the challenges associated with 'representation', and about the point at which diverse views can realistically be seen as converging to form a single 'community voice'. These questions present challenges for researchers tasked with compiling views from local communities. The action-research by which these researchers facilitated the engagement process in itself presents difficulties, particularly with regard to the researchers' own biases and accountabilities during both the engagement process and the routine research activities within local communities. Owing to these challenges, this article's presentation of local people's views is interlaced with reflections by researchers on issues raised. However, the reflections do not occlude what the people said, but

merely attempt to make those voices more audible and to interpret their content to intellectual discourse.

Following close on the heels of failure by ‘participatory’ Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) approaches to yield tangible reductions of poverty and insecurity in rural communities located in neighbourhoods of protected areas, the shift towards Transboundary Natural Resource Management (TBNRM) has raised concerns about implications of this development for relationships between local ‘communities’ and protected areas (Dzingirai 2004). Part of the concern is about possible reversal of local people’s gains in rights over natural resources, and how this might negatively impact on visions of making protected areas function both as core conservation areas and as socio-economic development engines for their multi-use hinterlands. Among conservationist circles, however, concern also revolves around the sustainability of protected areas amid rural settings characterised by pervasive poverty and unfulfilled expectations (King et al. this volume). In light of this uncertainty, there is an emerging architecture that views social research as potentially playing a key role in mediating relationships between rural people and protected area management.

A key strategy for the emerging architecture is to promote dialogue or ‘engagement’ between social researchers, conservationists and local ‘communities’ (Büscher and Wolmer, this volume). This engagement, a term which is at once suggestive of a military ‘battle’ as much as the ‘promise to marry’, is emerging against a background of prevailing views in these communities that research practice has often fallen short of local expectations. The new discourse has therefore become directed towards crafting research protocols or ‘guidelines’ that are acceptable to research sectors and local communities.

The discourse is largely engineered from outside these impoverished communities, with social researchers playing a key role in facilitating the drawing up of the ‘rules of engagement’. Within communities neighbouring the KNP in South Africa, however, there has interestingly emerged a local sub-discourse that not only resonates with views of external agencies, but also captures remarkably the language of previous institutionalised natural resources management initiatives. People have ‘helped themselves’ to this language and used it to insist on taking control over social research and sharing in its benefits. Perceived benefits range from the knowledge and data generated by research, through the skills, funds and external networks that researchers bring, to the employment and training opportunities that research activity might entail. These benefits could be used to enhance local capacity to organise, plan and implement development initiatives that respond to livelihoods and entrepreneurial needs and aspirations of the poor and non-poor within communities. Communities have realised that social research can become an important component of the basket of resources required to enhance local development and livelihoods.

Although the term 'new architecture' in the title refers primarily to the structure of dialogue that is emerging between social researchers and rural communities neighbouring the KNP in South Africa, it might also apply to similar settings elsewhere in Africa. This dialogue is impelled by interests of stakeholders such as conservationists, donors, governments and tourism agencies. The Indaba termed the dialogue an 'engagement'. Essentially, the relationship between social researchers and local communities can become either a contestation, an alliance, or a blend of both, depending on how the interests or 'agendas' of the two parties are aligned or maligned. Outcomes of engagement will be influenced by perceptions of how each party pursues its interests and objectives—i.e. 'agendas'—in relation to interests of the others. The extent to which each party is perceived to shift away from the traditional pursuit of self-interest towards accommodating the interests of others will be critical.

As Southern Africa continues in its shift towards TBNRM, conservationists might increasingly influence the dialogue. Conservationists occupy the space beyond the periphery of researcher–community relations, and have historically had exclusionist, acrimonious and/or unequal interactions with neighbouring black communities (Harries 1984; Carruthers 1995; Tapela and Omara-Ojunga 1999, Tapela 2002). Their use of militarist methods, such as buffer zones and armed patrols, to achieve conservation objectives has given way to more pacifist methods, largely as a result of the earlier shift towards participatory approaches, such as CBNRM. While social researchers and communities continue to 'engage' and craft acceptable protocols for their relationships, it is worth noting that the most critical test for the emerging architecture will be the extent to which conservationists, as well as the agencies backing them, demonstrate an unquestionable commitment to the interests of people living close to protected areas.

The article also examines the process through which various local voices have been cast as 'community voices' that social researchers will engage within developing guidelines for 'equitable best practice' and 'community empowerment'. The article starts with these voices defining what they mean when they speak and act as and for 'the community', then discusses how these meanings are expressed in engagement with social researchers. From the conversations it emerges that 'community' silences various overlapping, competing, complementary and conflicting individual and group voices from being heard and their interests from being considered in the making of policies.

This problem of 'silencing' is not new; in the 1980s–1990s, 'community participation' in CBNRM did not involve everybody in the community. Today 'engagement' must confront the danger of continuing the same or causing similar problems that CBNRM inherited from 'community development'. For that reason, when 'community' is made the starting point of any policies or guidelines, it must be asked what actors are involved, the ways and forms of involvement, and within what political structures. Engagement must ensure that conversations between social researchers and communities are held

within a structure of ‘downward accountability’. By this we mean that even those voices that have been silenced can now have power to make community representatives account for their actions. We argue that research ethics and funding arrangements must be understandable and agreeable with community interests, and that, as far as possible, research must justify its relevance to local concerns. The ultimate test for engagement is the degree to which commitment to local people’s interests becomes a driving force bridging broader conservation and development concerns. Engagement should not be about using social researchers to pull communities into the projects of conservationists and their desire to save animals and plants, and the big businesses that reap financially from conservation. Communities must come to the discussion not as raw materials for conservation, but as players whose own interests and feelings matter and need attention if the protected area is to mean anything.

ENGAGING ‘COMMUNITY’

Difficulties emerge when ‘community’ is made the starting point of any policy, guideline, development project or engagement process. This is because the definition of community is problematic. The concept has several meanings (Warburton 1998) and is not a homogenous entity, but is diverse (Chambers 1997). Welbourn (1991 cited in Chambers 1997) identifies four major axes of difference that can be seen in a community. These are age, gender, ethnic or social group and poverty. Others include differences in capability and disability, education, livelihood strategy and types of assets, among others (Chambers 1997). Community therefore has power-distributing cleavages involving internal social differentiation, competing political structures and different vested interests in resources (Hasler 1995). These pose difficulties in defining ‘community objectives’, ‘community needs’, ‘community perceptions’ and indeed ‘community participation’. Community is also dynamic both in space and in time, and encompasses, in varying degrees under various circumstances, spatial, social, cultural and economic aspects (Warburton 1998). Hence, power plays exist within communities around the Kruger Park, but this is something, we argue, should be worked with(in), not against.

We recognise the diversity and dynamism inherent within ‘community’. We also consider that, notwithstanding its diversity and dynamism, a shared background of spatial, social, cultural and economic dimensions partially defines community. Although we acknowledge therefore that community might basically be ‘that web of personal relationships, group networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour that develops against the backdrop of the physical neighbourhood and its socio-economic situation’ (Flecknoe and McLellan 1994: 4 in Warburton 1998: 15), we also insist that people from the communities are themselves better placed to define the meanings of what they consider their communities to be. Our persistence in using the word ‘community’ is therefore not coming from the imposition of academics and technocrats that

Mavhunga and Dressler (this volume) have criticised, but comes mainly from the multiple views of local people themselves. What do they call themselves and what do they want to be called, to be engaged as? From Makuleke, which is one of the two communities surveyed prior to the Indaba, the following views were expressed at a workshop attended by elected representatives of various community institutional structures, including the Community Development Forum, Communal Property Association, Farmers' Association, and Women's and Youth organisations. While workshop participants represented a wide range of class interests and levels of affluence and education, there was consensus on perceived meanings of community. Other views on community are from elected members of the seven community fora along the western boundary of the KNP. These fora, which include Lubambiswani, Phalaborwa, Hlanganani, Mahlambandlovu, Ntirhiswano, Sukumani-Nkomazi and Makuya, consist of elected members who represent interests of approximately one-hundred and eighty (180) communities in dialogue with the KNP.

Voices from Makuleke

Community is sharing tradition, culture and values. It is the shared consciousness of ancestors. It is cohesion and the existence of respect between the young and old and among members of various groups [e.g. age, gender and other social groups].

Community perpetuates despite day-to-day conflicts.

Exclusion happens when a member deliberately excludes him/herself by seriously working against or undermining cohesion. Outsiders are NOT excluded, but welcome. However, 'community' is clearly bounded, and not an open access system.

Although we accept other people [into our community], they must adhere to our customs.

We [the Makuleke] appreciate the role of research and promote our cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems.

We accept that the *clear* meanings of what 'the community' stands for in the eyes of the Makuleke are not entirely free from academic and technicist influences, as Mavhunga and Dressler (this volume) have pointed out. Again, we are making this point from the concerns raised by one participant during the Makuleke post-Indaba workshop (see Figure 1):

How do you resolve the contradiction of a member who excludes himself, but continues not only to live within the community but also to exercise

power over the less powerful members of the section of the community under his authority?

This question refers specifically to ongoing tensions between a headman of one of the three Makuleke villages and the rest of the people who recognise the paramountcy of Chief Makuleke. However, taken in context of the voiced link between exclusion and ‘working against or undermining cohesion’, there are questions: Who is excluded from the engagement process? Who are researchers actually engaging with? Those involved in developing guidelines for best practice will have to bear these questions in mind.

Views from Lubambiswani Forum

We are predominantly black and historically disadvantaged. We share the same challenges and advantages, and share the same beliefs and customs.

Views from Phalaborwa Forum

Community refers to a group of people with clearly defined cultures, traditions, customs, beliefs and interests. Phalaborwa community, however, is diverse.

It is worth noting that Phalaborwa is primarily a mining town, and the above-mentioned Phalaborwa community lives within the mine and its hinterland. The historical migrancy of South African mine labour has, among other factors, created a diverse congregation of people who share the same space but not necessarily the same culture or beliefs.

Views from Hlanganani and Mahlambandlovu Forums

We are a forum which strives for compensation for damage caused by DCAs (problem animals). We create jobs with a sustainability focus for our people.

Respondents from these neighbourhoods insist on defining the communities they represent in terms of ‘fora’ that were established to manage local people’s relations with the Kruger Park. Their definition deliberately refrains from going beyond what the representatives perceive to be their ‘mandate’. They therefore confine ‘community’ to roles and responsibilities of fora, thereby excluding any broader perspectives held by the local people they represent. For designers of the engagement process, this raises the question: Is representation by fora the most effective means of engaging with communities living close to protected areas? In retrospect, it seems evident that the approach used in engaging with all key stakeholder institutions in the Makuleke community, despite its own limitations, is more appropriate. Nonetheless, we also note that in all other stages of the engagement process, the Hlanganani and Mahlambandlovu forum representatives vocalise broader research-related

issues pertaining specifically to communities within which they live, and incidentally to the larger fora. They surmount therefore the constraints imposed on them by mandates from the grouped constituencies they represent. This in itself raises further questions: At what point does a representative stop speaking on behalf of her/his broader 'forum' community and start speaking on behalf of her/his immediate local community or indeed on behalf of herself/himself? To whom is a representative ultimately accountable?

Difficulties associated with concepts of community and representation cannot be resolved through this engagement process. However, understanding and working within these languages of self-description is the starting point of any meaningful 'engagement', because it brings to surface the importance of languages and protocols of address that respect others.

ENGAGING EACH OTHER

This article portrays the various meanings of 'engagement' by describing the processes and conversations that have taken place between the community, social researchers and conservationists. The high point of engagement was the Indaba on Social Research and Protected Areas, held at Skukuza (KNP) from 29 March to 3 April 2005. Among other things, the Indaba explored:

- How local people can achieve greater participation and ownership of social research and research processes;
- Responsibilities and best practice for social researchers who collect and interpret such information; and
- The potential benefits of collaborative approaches between social researchers, local people and conservation officials.

To facilitate dialogue between social researchers and local people, the Indaba Project Implementation Team (PIT) initiated a process of discussions in the form of a series of meetings building up to the Indaba (Table 1). These consultations continued after—particularly taking account of what came out of—the Indaba.

Prior to the Indaba, a group of researchers and resource persons from within and outside the southern African region got together to craft ways and means of establishing 'talking points'. They drew up lists of questions, which the PIT and researchers based in South Africa took to the communities to seek individual views on social research. These research teams went into two of the communities along the western KNP boundary namely, Makuleke and Seville B. The former has been subject to intensive research since 1995, when the community lodged a land claim against the KNP and the erstwhile National Parks Board (now the South African National Parks Board—SANParks). Research in Makuleke was linked to an on-going livelihoods research and a 10-year longitudinal study by one PIT researcher.

After this 'spade-work', research results were initially processed by PIT and locally based researchers in workshops within selected communities, and follow-up interviews were immediately conducted to clarify some of the emerging issues. Further analysis of research results was done at a workshop held at the Wits Rural Facility with representatives of a broader range of rural communities along the western boundary of the KNP. Researchers and community representatives brainstormed issues raised by individual local people. Due to the diversity of languages spoken by participants, the workshop was conducted mainly in indigenous languages, such as *XiTsonga*, *SePedi* and *SiNdebele*, which most participants were variously proficient in. There were translations into English where necessary. Discussions were lively and all participants freely expressed their views. Key outputs of this pre-Indaba stage were the clarification of issues and their contexts, a consensus that many of the issues emerging from community research were shared by rural communities along the park boundary, and identification of additional burning issues affecting communities along the southern park boundary. Outputs of the community research process formed the basis for engagement between local communities and social researchers at the Indaba.

Parallel to the pre-Indaba community research process, the Makuleke research team explored possibilities of a pilot community website project. The objective was to demonstrate how information technology (IT) could be used to manage community information resources in more effective ways. This objective was premised on the opinions held by the Makuleke people that social researchers give very little feedback or benefits to local people, that although the community seems over-researched there is still a need for research that addresses interests of local people, and that there is a need for mechanisms to reduce research fatigue within the community. The research team considered that community websites could be a useful tool for facilitating feedback and dialogue between local people and researchers, information dissemination within and among local communities, and information sharing among researchers located in various parts of the world. Such a website could also help to reduce research fatigue due to numerous researchers visiting communities and asking the same questions repetitively. Towards the pilot website project, the Makuleke research team compiled an exploratory database containing information on past and current research, documented individual and collective histories, and gathered local news and updates on community development. This information was captured in a pilot community website, whose utility was demonstrated to local community representatives at the pre-Indaba workshop held at the Wits Rural Facility.

During the Indaba, engagement between social researchers and rural communities included a wider range of researchers based within South Africa, the southern African region and far beyond. Some brought valuable insights on indigenous rights movements from Papua New Guinea, on the aborigines in Australia, and Native Americans in the US. All discussions were conducted in

the English language. Although this enabled a greater number of researchers to engage with community representatives, the downside was that fewer community representatives felt comfortable enough to express themselves in English to the large gathering. Consequently, what emerged was a ‘representation of representatives’ by the few community representatives who were confident in addressing the audience in English. This, and the view by community representatives that important issues such as that discussed at the Indaba required the involvement of all rather than a few communities along the KNP boundary, led to a resolution that further engagement should take place after the Indaba. The post-Indaba phase therefore involved a wider range of community representatives from all the forums (community groupings) along the western margins of the Kruger Park. Two workshops were conducted at the local level (Figures 1 and 2).

The first was held with representatives of Makuleke community-based organisations (CBOs). The approach adopted by the research team was to foreground voices of local people through creating ample space for participants to express themselves in their preferred language, in this case *XiTsonga*. Proceedings were vibrant and both men and women actively participated in discussions. The externally based PIT researcher observed, however, that a threat to outcomes of the discussion was the fact that the workshop was attended by adherents to one of the two main political factions involved in a local power struggle, and excluded supporters of the other. Workshop participants responded by taking a resolution to urgently address internal differences, on the basis that this step was prerequisite to community engagement with externally based researchers.

Figure 1

Makuleke post-Indaba workshop: participants in a break-away session



Figure 2

Main post-Indaba workshop: representatives of community forums in plenary



The second workshop involved representatives of six of the seven forums bordering the KNP. Due to the greater diversity of indigenous languages, proceedings were conducted in English but with a fair amount of translation into indigenous languages where necessary. The use of English did not appear to pose any major difficulty, as all participants were proficient and confident in speaking the English language within this particular audience. The more critical question, however, was whether ‘community participation by representation’ was the most effective means of taking the discourse forward. Illiteracy in communities bordering the KNP has been observed to be prevalent, and while representation of communities by the more formally educated members affords ease of communication among various ethnic groups and with outsiders, it also carries the risk of the more learned putting their self- or constituency interests ahead of the less educated. That is not to discount, however, the value of instances where the educated act as visionaries and in downwardly accountable ways.

Because workshops were facilitated by a mix of externally based and locally based researchers, a second question revolved around implications of the diversity of researcher interests and accountability on outcomes of the engagement process. Notwithstanding these questions, a key output of this workshop was a consensus among forum representatives to co-author with researchers a journal publication and a position paper on Guidelines for Equitable Best Practice and Community Empowerment. The latter would be the basis for further engagement with various stakeholders, including academic and applied research institutions, ethics committees and funding organisations. The second output of the workshop was a resolution that forum representatives should further engage directly with researchers in an international

tele-seminar. This seminar was held on 28 June 2006, and included representatives of all the forums along the western margins of the KNP, representing approximately one hundred and eighty (180) rural communities.

ISSUES RAISED DURING THE PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT

This section presents a summary of issues raised by individual local people and community representatives prior to, during and after the Indaba. It will be noted that there are both concordant and contradictory views on the issues captured. While dissonance can be ascribed to the diversity of views among local people, it is also due to observed differences between some individuals and community leadership or representation. The methodological design of the process deliberately sought to bring out voices of the vocal and the silenced. By capturing the diversity of views, this article provides useful insights for the drawing up of guidelines that are sensitive to different views on research within communities.

Issues raised and discussed during progressive stages of the engagement process are outlined in Table 1. These issues can be classed into broad and overlapping categories namely, feedback, benefits, relevance, local control over research, local research protocol, policy impacts, ownership of knowledge, power dynamics, illiteracy, concept of 'community' and joint publication. The first six were considered priority issues by most local people involved in all stages of the engagement process. While researchers largely concurred with this view, they also flagged issues of power, 'community' and joint publication, and raised concerns over the issue of control of research by local communities. Focus is on three categories namely, feedback, benefits and local control over research.

Feedback

Local people state that most researchers do not give feedback on their research findings, despite promises to do so. They concede that a few researchers do give feedback to community leadership or responsible authorities at the local level. However, such information rarely filters down to the majority of rural households. This reinforces the view by local people that researchers do not give feedback. Community representatives concur with researchers in that there is a need for rural communities to develop institutional mechanisms for effective local dissemination of research findings.

Although feedback through oral presentations of findings is preferred, many local people understand the difficulties that some researchers face in attempting to give feedback in person. They are aware that South African-based researchers with inadequate funding and international researchers from the more distant places, for example, have genuine logistical constraints. The general view by local people, however, is that all researchers should make an

Table 1
Summary of issues raised in successive stages of the engagement process

Stage	Issues raised	Notes on methods used	Actors
1. Pre-Indaba Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of feedback from researchers -Benefits from social research -Unfulfilled expectations -Relevance and sensitivity of research to local people's concerns 	<p>Empirical approach.</p> <p>Case study sites: Makuleke and Seville Communities. Random sampling of individual local perceptions using a questionnaire, followed by in-depth interviews with selected respondents. In Makuleke, data collection linked to ongoing livelihoods research and based on a 10-year longitudinal study. Workshop structure.</p> <p>Presentation by social researchers of findings from pre-Indaba survey of local perceptions.</p> <p>Discussion of findings, mainly by community representatives</p> <p>Presentation of issues raised in community-level research and workshops prior to Indaba, break-away sessions for in-depth processing of issues, report back in plenary, with active engagement between community representatives and social researchers.</p> <p>Workshop structure.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of objectives of the workshop. 2. A recap of issues raised prior to and during the Indaba. 3. Responses by workshop participants, based on individual and organisational 	<p>Social researchers and Individual members of Makuleke and Seville communities representing a cross-section of interests, not simply elite interests</p> <p>Social-researchers, Community representatives</p>
2. Pre-Indaba brainstorming sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of feedback from researchers -Benefits from social research -Unfulfilled expectations -Relevance and sensitivity of research to local people's concerns -Problem of over and under researched communities -Community control over social research 		
3. Indaba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of feedback from researchers -Unfulfilled expectations -Relevance and sensitivity of research to local people's concerns -Problem of over and under researched communities -Community control over social research -Power dynamics 		
4. Post-Indaba: Makuleke Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of feedback from researchers -Unfulfilled expectations -Benefits from social research -Relevance and sensitivity of research to local people's concerns -Research fatigue within the community -Community control over social research -Revival of Makuleke research protocol 		<p>'Representatives' of Makuleke CBOs and Royal Family, Official 'Community Representative'</p> <p>Social Researchers</p>

<p>5 Post-Indaba: Main Workshop at Southern African Wildlife College, Acornhoek</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Power dynamics -Definition of Makuleke 'community' -Need for introspective engagement prior to engagement with external researchers -Joint Publication: 'Writing the Future Together' -Lack of feedback from researchers—What means of verification do research institutions use, and what are community roles in verification processes? -Poor communication by researchers at onset and completion of research—accountability issues -Unfulfilled expectations -Relevance and sensitivity of research to local people's concerns -Benefits from social research—short-term vs sustainable benefits -Poor community entry skills—need for clear protocols for researchers -Problem of over and under researched communities—need for more equitable spatial distribution of research and better management of research, e.g. using an electronic database -Threats by 'irresponsible' research to social cohesion -What are the ethics that govern research? -Misinterpretation of findings by researchers – How do communities counter such shortcomings? -Community control over social research -Formation of a research committee tasked with local-level management of research in communities bordering the KNP -Influence of researchers by (big) business -Illiteracy in rural communities -Lack of motivation to engage with researchers in some communities -Understandings of 'community' -Need for introspective engagement prior to engagement with external researchers -Joint Publication: 'Writing the Future Together' -Further engagement through a TPARI teleseminar 	<p>tional (CBO) experiences with social research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Flagging of issues for discussion in break-away sessions 5. Break away group reports <p>Resolutions on the way forward. Workshop structure.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of objectives of the workshop. 2. A recap of issues raised prior to and during the Indaba. 3. Responses by workshop participants, based on local experiences with social research. 4. Tasks in break-away sessions included identification, discussion and prioritisation of key issues of concern, and defining understandings of 'community' 5. Group reports and discussion between researchers and community representatives. 6. Resolutions on the way forward. <p>'Representatives' of five Community Forums along western boundary of KNP, Makuleke CBOs, and Royal Family, Makuleke Community Representative, social researchers</p>
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effort to mail their research reports to local communities or to alert local people to articles they disseminate in various media or forums.

Both individual local people and community representatives suggest the use of internet to make electronic reports available. Although this suggestion is countered by the prevailing lack of access to IT by many rural communities, some people in these communities express optimism that since young people are increasingly exposed to electronic media, their roles in community information resource management will increase. We consider that IT has significant potential to ensure feedback to and disseminate information about communities. However, the option also carries the risk that electronic media can itself become a gatekeeping tool. Information contained in web pages might reflect the standards and interests of some while excluding those of others. Despite current limitations imposed by the 'digital divide' on the extent of IT access in many impoverished rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, the suggestion should be given serious consideration in the drawing up of guidelines for best practice. With the burgeoning of initiatives to bridge the digital divide in parts of the sub-continent, there is a possibility that an increasing number of communities will have IT access.

On the basis of observations that some researchers misrepresent findings, local people raise the questions, 'What means of verification are used by research institutions to ascertain accuracy of research reports?' and 'What are community roles in the verification process?' The view from the community level is that local people should be afforded the opportunity to respond to research reports. Our view is that questions around verification of research findings point not only to a desire by local people to engage more actively with social research, but also to a recognition of their right to accurate documentation of their lives and interests.

Local people see 'accountability' as constituting an important aspect of understanding why researchers often do not give feedback. The fact that researchers are answerable to research institutions, universities, government, big business, funding organisations and other powerful bodies is seen by local people as a major factor influencing the extent to which researchers consider themselves obliged to give feedback to local people (see section on 'An example of local views on feedback and accountability' below). Ironically, this issue also compels us researchers involved in these 'engagements' through action-research to confront difficulties posed by our own accountabilities as we facilitate the process. We ask: Are we and can we be equally accountable to local communities, our affiliate institutions and ourselves? Are we 'honest brokers' for the engagement process? The fact that our team is drawn from a diverse set of backgrounds, interests and personal preferences is in itself a challenge to our achieving a consensus on some of the issues raised. A similar challenge will possibly arise when the engagement process moves to the envisaged multi-stakeholder workshops aimed at drawing up guidelines for best practice.

An Example of Local Views on Feedback and Accountability

In representing their constituency interests, members of the Phalaborwa Forum state, ‘Currently there is ongoing research on the side-effects of sulphur emissions in Phalaborwa [a mining town located on the western boundary of the KNP]. This research is for mining development and not academic purposes, and involves big companies such as PLC, Foskor, SASOL and others. Black communities under Chief Mabushane are the most affected as they live in the windward side of the emissions. The groundwater used by the same communities is also affected. Because no feedback was given to black communities after similar research was conducted during the apartheid years, we do not trust that feedback will be given to us this time around. We also think that since the researchers are paid by the mines, they say what the mines want them to say, and do not bother giving feedback to affected communities. Although contaminants end up in the Selati River, which flows into the KNP, we are not aware of any discussions between mine and KNP management over the ongoing research.’

Benefits

A key question for the ongoing engagement has been: ‘What value does research add to local people’s lives?’ Pre-Indaba sessions revealed that individual local people, community representatives and social researchers generally consider that research should generate ‘meaningful’ benefits for local people. Communities broadly define such benefits in terms of contributions to local socio-economic development, employment creation, gaining access to resources such as land and water, documentation of community data for posterity and feelings of well being from knowing that ‘somebody cares’. The desire by local people for research to generate benefits is almost invariably tempered with observations that researchers often do not give feedback or are more accountable to external agencies than to people in communities. The feelings and innuendos accompanying many of these observations range from resignation to anger and indignation. Since benefits from research are evidently a burning issue for communities, and since the issue generated significant interest among researchers when it was raised at the Indaba, we sought to elicit during the post-Indaba phase clearer understandings of what local people and community representatives consider to be meaningful benefits.

Insights obtained reveal that communities, through their representatives, perceive benefits from research in complex ways. They distinguish between short- and long-term benefits. Many consider that both types are desired. Short-term benefits are largely associated with the temporary employment of local research assistants. In communities characterised by high rates of unemployment and poverty, such employment can constitute the critical difference between vulnerability and security, and is therefore in intense demand. Com-

munity representatives assert that benefits from temporary employment can be enhanced by ensuring that remuneration of research assistants is in line with regulations governing wage labour (see statement by Participant V in section on 'Excerpt from a local-level discussion on benefits from research' below).

Excerpt from a Local-Level Discussion on Benefits from Research

Participant U: *'We need to avoid extractive research and the use of local people as tools who are used to interpret [local languages] but with no understanding of the background and purpose of research.'*

Participant V: *'Incentives [remuneration] for research assistants are too low. Research should impart marketable skills, and wages of assistants have to be in line with policies of the country, for example the Labour Relations Act.'*

Participant W: *'What does 'marketable skills' mean?'*

Participant X: *'Carrying of luggage for a researcher is NOT a marketable skill. However, if a researcher uses GPS or maps, he should teach local researchers how to use these so that they can use the skills gained for further work.'*

Participant Y: *'Skills development is also a question of love. If they [local researchers or research assistants] love the job, they will take the initiative to learn new skills...Although we recognize that low literacy levels undermine the development of local skills, we must recognize that some people can improve beyond their levels of literacy and should be given a chance.'*

Participant Z: *'I agree. A good example is that of Mr Mhlongo, who had twenty-five years of experience with conservation but no formal education. Mr Mhlongo co-produced the Londolozi video, but remains unacknowledged. It is evident that his illiteracy resulted in his losing out on benefits that were rightly his.'*

NB: The foregoing views were expressed by members of KNP-Neighbours fora at the main post-Indaba workshop held at the South African Wildlife College on 25 November 2005.

Community views on long-term benefits are more varied. Some voices strongly assert that social research practice needs to move beyond short-term employment of local research assistants as interpreters, guides or luggage bearers towards imparting marketable life skills, such as data analysis, research report writing, use of research technology such as GPS and identification of training opportunities (see statements by Participants U, V, W and X in the section above). Other voices link the issue of long-term benefits to the is-

sue of 'relevance' of research, and argue that the more sustainable benefits are those relating to local capacities to manage knowledge generated by research and to mobilise this knowledge towards effectively addressing local needs and objectives.

Communities also perceive long-term benefits in terms of the policy impacts of research. Reiteration of the question: 'How far has social research impacted on SANParks policy on compensation for losses of lives, livestock, crops and other assets?' by local communities affected by 'problem animals' from the KNP illustrates this point. Given that the loss of one asset can place a significant strain on coping mechanisms within the often pervasively poor households in these communities, local people consider research that addresses real local concerns and succeeds in achieving desired policy impacts to be clearly of long-term benefit. Responses by researchers to the question asked revolve around the dilemmas they face in attempting to influence policy makers and practitioners. Post-Indaba discussions between community representatives and researchers facilitating the engagement process (some of who have also contributed to this article) revolve around the question: 'Where do we begin to influence policy? What are the critical entry points in local, provincial and national government policy processes?' Our view, as action-researchers, is that the insistence by some funding agencies that researchers should engage with policy makers and practitioners contributes to the design of projects that respond to policy issues. This enhances the usefulness of research activity. We also recognise that not all research lends itself to policy engagement, and suggest that guidelines for best practice should be flexible enough to accommodate the range of research interests.

Community representatives state that communities do not always perceive benefits from research in material or monetary terms. For example, acknowledgement for work done is itself considered an important benefit, as the case of Mr Mhlongo shows (see statement by Participant Z in the section above). This example resonates with the desire by community representatives to be acknowledged by name in a proposed journal paper to be co-authored with researchers (see page 83 of this article). Owing to technical difficulties surrounding 'co-authorship', the paper has been commuted into this article. In the follow-up discussions about this particular issue, community representatives iterated their view that it was more important to get the message out to stakeholders than for their names to appear on the cover page. We therefore conceded to the change of plan and, instead, acknowledged contributions by all community representatives and researchers (see page 86 of this article).

During the main post-Indaba workshop, some community representatives conflated their views on acknowledgement with the disclosure of respondent identities. Recognising the potential danger associated with this, we (researchers facilitating the post-Indaba process) responded that while acknowledgement is important and desirable, ethics governing research practice

require that researchers should not expose respondents to undue negative impacts that might arise as a result of research. Often, this means that researchers are bound to protecting the privacy of their respondents. We also mentioned that a number of individual local people interviewed prior to the Indaba stressed the need for privacy. Their reasons mainly revolved around fear of reprisals or victimisation when their contradictory or unpalatable views became known to community leaders. They also feared exposure to crime, jealousy or witchcraft when confidential information about their incomes or material assets became public knowledge. Presented with these views, some community representatives were non-committal in their responses, while others alluded to the existence of 'negative' people within their communities, who oppose anything that community leadership says or does. Our view is that such dissonance reflects the reality of social and political dynamics inherent in any given local community (Mearns et al. 1998). In light of this, we consider that existing requirements by research ethics for researchers to protect the privacy of respondents is an indispensable instrument for eliciting honest views from both the vocal and the voiceless within communities.

The issue of benefit sharing was raised by individual local people during pre-Indaba interviews and by community representatives in post-Indaba discussions. We observed, however, some dissonance in the perspectives of individual local people and community representatives, on the one hand, and among community representatives, on the other hand. One community representative asked, 'What is the manner of sharing benefits? Is it [i.e. the relationship between researchers and communities] a partnership or not?' Post-Indaba discussions among community representatives were unable to conclusively answer this question. Nonetheless, indications are that the representatives are aware of unequal benefits accruing to researchers and local people, and that the former often derive greater benefits from research than their local assistants or the communities they investigate. Pre-Indaba research findings show that individual local people are aware of the same inequalities. However, they also voice their perceptions on inequalities in the manner in which benefits from research and other development, resource management, employment and entrepreneurial initiatives are distributed within communities. These perceptions seem to vary according to social differentiation and individual notions of self (see section on 'Examples of Makuleke views on benefits from research' below). Women, particularly elderly women, express views that they do not benefit from research or that they only benefit indirectly through their progeny. These views contrast with the views of men, also depending on age, for example (see section below). While the need for both individual and collective benefits is widely expressed, indications are that many local people often perceive individual benefits as being more tangible for individual persons and households than the former.

Examples of Makuleke Views on Benefits from Research

Asked whether there is a need to change the way research has been conducted, some of the responses given by individual respondents to in-depth interviews were as follows:

- i. Unemployed male youth, formally educated to high school level: 'Good things happen anyway, so there is no need to change the manner in which research is done'.
- ii. Middle-aged woman, formally educated to primary school level: 'Research does not affect me'.
- iii. Elderly woman (in her fifties), formally educated to primary school: 'Even if things change [due to research], nothing changes for me...'
- iv. Elderly woman pensioner: 'Although I might personally not get any benefits from research since I am old, I believe that my children and their children will be able to get employment and other benefits. I will therefore gain through my progeny...'

Some among community representatives consider that the responsibility for generating benefits from research should be shared between researchers and local people (see the fifth statement in the section on page 76). This contrasts with the view commonly held by local individuals and community representatives that the onus is on researchers.

Local Control over Research

The intention to exercise local control over research, strongly expressed by community representatives, raises the concern among social researchers about what this might mean for the academic freedom of researchers and independence of research. In a post-Indaba international tele-seminar, one researcher observed that if one substitutes the word 'journalist' for 'researcher', one may find that there are different political connotations and that in democratic society journalists are often allowed greater latitude than scholars. Although the notion of control generates a sense of foreboding about the freedom to carry out research and the possible compromise of research credibility, among other issues, our view is that it is important to gain insights on the context in which the issue of local control has emerged.

Community representatives hold very strong views about the premise of social research practice on unequal relations between researchers and case study communities. They ask the following questions:

- Who is researched and why are they researched?
- Who owns research?/Who owns the knowledge generated through research?

- Who controls research?/What mechanisms do they use to ensure that there is a balance between over-researched and under-researched communities?

Among academics and technocrats, these questions might be viewed as naïve or simplistic. However, there is a much more complicated but unstated subtext that is nuanced within the context and vernacular of local people, namely, that of unequal power relations between researchers and case study communities. Our interpretation is that the questions indicate awareness by communities that unequal power relations and the net export of local knowledge by researchers is largely due to a vacuum in institutional frameworks for strengthening local people's capacities to claim rights to their knowledge resources.

Community representatives argue that if an important motive of social research is to enhance local people's well being, capabilities, equity, livelihoods and sustainability, then researchers and their affiliate institutions should consider local people's calls for a more equitable spread of research among various rural communities. We affirm that some communities, such as the Makuleke, have been subject to intensive research and consequently experience research fatigue, while others have experienced less research or hardly ever been researched. This creates tensions among communities, particularly with regard to the perceived unequal distribution of benefits from research. For that reason, concerns about mechanisms to ensure a balance between over-researched and under-researched communities are real. However, we also deduce that local suspicions about undeclared motives or 'the hidden hand' of research underpin questions why communities are researched. Researchers often select study sites on the basis of a variety of reasons, including policy relevance, significance to disciplinary interests and the high profile of issues. For the sake of transparency, we suggest that guidelines for best practice should advise, among other things, that researchers consider expressing in their proposals or requests to communities the reasons for their selecting particular study sites.

The issue of local control over research is strongly vocalised by some of the community representatives. They argue, on the basis that cohesion within a community is an important heritage, that it is essential to preserve community cohesion through ensuring that information that is publicised about a community does not create divisions. To achieve this, community representatives put forward a number of suggestions, among them the suggestion that researchers should be directed to respondents who will give balanced views about issues within a community, and that communities should select research assistants for external researchers. These suggestions are based on views by community representatives that:

- Research is often extractive, and it is necessary for communities to ensure that benefits are mutual;

- Some researchers disseminate ‘inaccurate information’ about communities;
- Due to the ‘power associated with high-profile research’, some communities are ‘starved of research while others are over-researched;’
- Some researchers ‘go into politics [i.e. interfere in local politics or push externally driven political agendas] but local people do not want politics;’
- Other researchers ‘come with negative attitudes and try to pump their attitudes into people—and people hate that’;
- Some researchers do not give fair payment to local research assistants;
- Because there is no ‘proper’ research protocol, researchers simply come into communities and duplicate previous research. ‘Is it possible for researchers to adopt particular communities to ensure continuity in the compilation of data instead of a ‘chain of faces’?’
- Researchers often do not acknowledge their information sources

The insistence on local control by community representatives contrasts with views by individual respondents to pre-Indaba research questionnaires and interviews. Some of these respondents allude to problematic power dynamics within communities, and therefore express a preference for independent rather than locally controlled research. They state that the freedom of researchers is essential in eliciting people’s honest views, and that this is particularly important for the less powerful and influential, whose views and interests are often marginalised in community meetings. They also express suspicions about the integrity of processes of selecting locally based research assistants, who are felt to be loyal to the more powerful leaders. Our interpretation is that these views point to the possibility that, in contexts where there is contestation within communities, local control over social research might be used to direct research towards serving interests of the more powerful constituencies, thereby compromising interests of both research and less influential and marginalised community members.

The discussion among community representatives on the issue of control is tempered with cautionary introspective questions:

- ‘Who will be in charge of this local control?’
- ‘How do we exercise control where research is funded by companies who argue that jobs are being created?’ [Our interpretation of this question, to those not familiar with the South African context, is that this particular representative is concerned that calls for local people to insist on the accountability and transparency of research might easily be outweighed by perceptions within communities that big business can satisfy the hunger for employment.]
- ‘Picture someone conducting research on us, sitting in an office in Johannesburg, perhaps using questionnaires. How do we control such research in terms of protocol?’

- ‘What are ‘research ethics’, and should we not perhaps be understanding these ethics rather than stating what researchers should be doing or not?’

What finally emerges among community representatives is a consensus that efforts to control research should not hinder researchers from conducting credible research. For that reason, control mechanisms are seen as centring on the development of local research protocols that complement the protocols and ethics of the research fraternity without absolutely conceding the right of communities to control access and use of their space, time and knowledge resources.

Some Key Resolutions Emerging from Indaba-Related Workshops

A key output of all workshops related to the Indaba is a consensus among community representatives that prior to the onset of new research, social researchers must submit their research proposals to communities. Such proposals would give a clear indication of the duration of research and when researchers expect to give feedback on their findings; benefits, in terms of remuneration and skills development, that will accrue to local researchers and research assistants; the institutional affiliation of researchers (backed up by documents such as formal letters of introduction), to enable communities to follow up on unfulfilled promises, give feedback or to communicate their views on unsatisfactory research practice. Among other things, the envisaged guidelines are intended to ensure that researchers are obligated, through mechanisms such as Memoranda of Understanding, to bring back research reports in hard copy and/or electronic format. Conversely, such mechanisms would require relevant community-based structures, such as Research Committees or Research Task Teams, to disseminate these reports to the broader local community.

In order to ensure that research benefits are sustainable, community representatives agree that there is a need to build local capacities to archive knowledge generated by research and to use research reports to resolve local problems and address needs and objectives. With regard to the latter, the common view is that communities should be able to identify critical entry points for engaging with local government which, in terms of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, has the legal responsibility to coordinate development plans, budgets and activities within their jurisdictions.

It is worth noting that the process of engagement has to date involved elected representatives of local communities as well as researchers. For the process to be complete, involvement of key stakeholders such as universities, funders and others in ongoing engagement will be critical.

CHARTING THE FUTURE

Three key projects were drawn up for future follow-up as a way of clarifying and drawing up a road map for the future of conservation and development.

Writing Together, Making Our Voices Heard: Proposed Joint Publication

Community representatives expressed their interest in a proposed joint publication of a paper to be co-authored by researchers and local communities. This interest is based on the belief that such a paper could contribute to ensuring that local people's concerns are taken on board in the development of guidelines on equitable best practice and community empowerment for social research within contexts of trans-boundary protected areas. Owing to technical difficulties regarding 'co-authorship', the paper has been commuted into this article and contributions by all community representatives and researchers are acknowledged. Community representatives accept this turn of events on the basis that they find it more important to get the message from communities out to stakeholders as soon as possible so that the process of developing guidelines can begin.

Towards Further Engagement: Tele-Seminar

A resolution of the main post-Indaba community workshop was that there should be a tele-seminar in which researchers and community representatives could further interrogate issues and reach a consensus on the way forward. This was fulfilled on 28 June 2006. Of the seventy-seven (77) participants, fifty-two (52) came from the communities. A key output of the tele-seminar was the consensus among communities that the draft article on proceedings of the engagement process basically captures issues raised and the content of discussions accurately. This endorsement forms the basis for preparations for further engagement to translate issues raised in the tele-seminar, in this article and in a draft Guidelines for Equitable Best Practice into tangible policy decisions.

Unfinished Engagement: Burning Issues

Issues that were discussed at the June 2006 tele-seminar and flagged for attention remain largely unresolved and yet are important to the engagement process and its outcomes. Towards further engagement, it is useful to disassemble some contexts within which issues around feedback, benefits and local control have emerged as 'burning issues'.

The willingness of communities to engage on an equal and beneficial footing with researchers must be understood as a struggle over the power of knowledge. Having lost natural resources through colonialism and apartheid,

black communities would be hard-done by the loss of their knowledge through extractive research. For this reason, community attempts to claim control and benefits from research is in every respect a political one. Admittedly, some of this pressure for control is coming from outside these impoverished communities, for example, through social researchers and human rights activists who see through the injustices of past and present natural resource and research management. What is also clear, however, is that local people have not been passive subjects of social research. Rather, they have selectively assimilated the values, logic, concepts and language used by social researchers and in the process, realised that social research is more to the point a critical tool for rural upliftment, security and survival. As such, skills gained from experiences with social research have created a vantage entry point from which communities loudly express opinions that are in agreement with like-thinking outsiders. This emerging partnership of engagement creates a space for talking together, involving the professional career interests of social researchers, on the one hand, and the struggles for equitable share of research and natural resource benefits among communities, on the other.

As Mavhunga and Dressler (this volume) caution, focusing on the local level, the political nature of the agenda to claim control and benefits from research should not strike us as unusual, but as very consistent with the ways in which local community constructs are maintained. The challenge for engagement is not about the presence of 'a political agenda' *as such*, but the implications of unequal political power relations on the interests of the less powerful people within communities. The argument that local control over research is needed to ensure that research does not undermine cohesion seems to embrace a collective interest (cohesion is 'an important community heritage'). Yet it equally holds that the means of protecting such heritage brings to the surface some undertones of a desire among some within communities to maintain certain things as they are. If the value of community cohesion is such that the heritage has to be maintained at all costs, then we need to collectively appraise the implications of 'representative participation' on the interests of the less powerful and more vulnerable people within these communities.

To some extent, the insistence by community representatives on greater feedback, benefits and local control over research can be seen as a claim to perceived 'entitlements' (Sen 1999). Knowledge can be viewed in terms of 'endowments' or 'rights and resources that people have' (Gasper 1993 in Mearns et al. 1998). According to one community representative, knowledge is the rallying point for researchers and communities. Through access to knowledge and related resources generated by research, and through 'legitimate effective command' (according to Mearns et al. 1998) over research, local people envisage mobilising their knowledge endowments to enhance their capabilities and achieve well being. Due to differences and power dynamics within communities, certain people, particularly the poor and the less influential, may not be able to claim entitlements from research or to mobilise their

knowledge for self-upliftment. Engagement should be therefore be forceful enough to guard against endorsing guidelines that reinforce the 'voicelessness' of such people, and yet powerful enough to ensure that all local views that enhance values such as equity are not only taken on board, but also foregrounded in the crafting of best practice for social research. This is a big challenge for engagement, because the right to represent 'everybody' will always be claimed by the more dominant local constituency interests.

As engagement unfolds, both the research fraternity and communities should place before the other what they consider to be the 'proper way' or ethics of handling knowledge, the search for such knowledge (research), and its fruits. The strength of the community lies in its knowledge; that of the social researcher lies in opening up opportunities to make this knowledge change individual community members in their lifetime or in the lifetime of their children. The ultimate test for engagement, then, will be the degree to which commitment to local people's interests is a driving force for the broader discourse, rather than harnessing them to the yoke to pull the heavy load of external conservationist, business, academic, and other interests in protected area management.

CONCLUSION

Indications are that there is a convergence between social researchers and local people living adjacent to the KNP on the need to ensure that research is conducted in ways that are acceptable both to rural communities and to research communities. There remains, however, a need for further engagement to clarify certain issues and to resolve highly contested issues. In taking the engagement forward, we suggest that attention should be given to issues raised about feedback, benefits and local control over research. While the issue of local control creates a problem for researchers, the fact is that local people are in many ways justified in claiming a degree of authority over the manner in which research is conducted in their communities. However, the possible risks associated with local control require that attention be given also to researchers' concerns about local power dynamics, particularly the implications of such dynamics for the marginalised within local communities. An important output of the engagement process would be guidelines for research practice that take cognisance of concerns expressed by local people, on the one hand, and interests of researchers and institutions they are affiliated to, on the other. Such an output would by no means constitute an end to the engagement process, but would represent beginnings of improved ways of working together.

Acknowledgements

From June 2005 to October 2006, a team of researchers (the authors), embarked on a project to follow up on one of the major issues coming out of the

Skukuza Indaba: the control and benefits of social research to local communities surrounding the KNP. We resolved that from these grassroots conversations, we would embark on a novel project to test whether the engagement we sought could be done more practically. We called the project tentatively ‘Writing the Future Together’. Our approach would involve taking the discussions out of fanciful conference facilities like Skukuza to the villages themselves, to talk to people in their own backyard, on their own terms. We did this for two reasons: because we wanted to see whether the ‘community representatives’ we had heard speak on behalf of the community were telling us the views of the entire cross-section of their communities. We also wanted to enable villagers to speak in their own language and etiquette, since at Skukuza the medium of communication was English, and it was apparent that many of the representatives could not speak it as eloquently. Since they had told us ‘We can hear you but we can’t speak back’, we wanted to get at the problems of venue, language, and etiquette that somewhat silenced them at Skukuza.

With regard to venue, the post-Indaba meetings were held at venues agreed to by consensus as providing the most comfortable environment for free speech. With respect to language, all the meetings were held in Xitsonga, Sepedi, and SiNdebele – the three languages of the land. Those who found English as best enabling them to air their views were free to do so, and those who could not hear such speakers had the message translated to them. With respect to etiquette, we gave due respect to the structures of authority in each case. At Makuleke the Chief opened the meeting to dignify and instill confidence in the occasion.

To address the question of representation, we gathered participants from local communities along the western boundary of Kruger National Park. Some of these people wanted to be acknowledged by name and social profile, something which also serves to illustrate the variety of views, dissonances and convergences that for the subject of this paper. The following local people participated in various stages of the engagement process, on behalf of the seven forums—or one-hundred and eighty (180) communities—neighbouring the Kruger National Park: **Sukumani-Nkomazi Forum:** Komisanani Mhlongo, Sysho Lubisi, Afrika Maseko, D.J. Shugube, Monica N. Maimela. **Hlanganani Forum:** H.D. Maphophe, H.J. Mashava, John A. Maleka, Francis Mhinga, Thomas Mashaba, Maano E Chabalala. **Lumbambiswani Forum:** Douglas Bheki Mabuza, E.W. Mthombothi, S. Mgweny, Regicks Ngwenya, Diana Phiri. **Phalaborwa Forum:** T.G. Lesufi, M.A. Malatji, T. Zitha, Godfrey Leseto, F.M. Rakoma. **Ntirhiswano Forum:** Alan Mkonto, Glory Khoza. **Mahlamandlovu Forum:** Solly Mkiba, Hepercia Ubisi., Andries Nhlango. **Makuya Forum:** Lamson Jackson. **Makuleke Communal Property Association:** Chief Phahlela Joas Makuleke, Livingstone Maluleke, Mavis M. Hatlani, Vettlee Chauke. **Makuleke Community Development Forum:** M.P. Makamu (farmer), Reginah Mabasa. **Makuleke Royal Family:** Eric G. Tivane. **Seville B’ Community Development Forum:** Collen Ndlovu. **Kruger**

National Park: R. Mabasa. **Locally based researcher, Seville B Community:** Mandla Mathonsi. **Locally based researchers, Makuleke Community:** Elmon Chauke, Attorney Hlongwane, Edward Maluleke. Many other people from Seville B and Makuleke communities participated in questionnaire surveys and interviews that provided background insights for the engagement process.

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