

WHOSE REALITY COUNTS? UNDERSTANDING SHIFTING MEANINGS OF BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE IN THE ALBANY THICKET BIOME



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Introduction

- Co-management and the promise of benefit sharing in protected areas/reserves
- Settlement Agreements underlain by the **promise** of
 - **sustainable use of natural resources**
 - **optimisation of benefits to claimants**
 - **respect of indigenous/local use rights**

Introduction



- Natural resources valuation - traditionally from an economic perspective (de Groot et al., 2012).
- Pitfall: approach assumes collective agreement on benefits.
- Aim is to provide empirical evidence against this tendency.

Case Studies and Analytical Approach

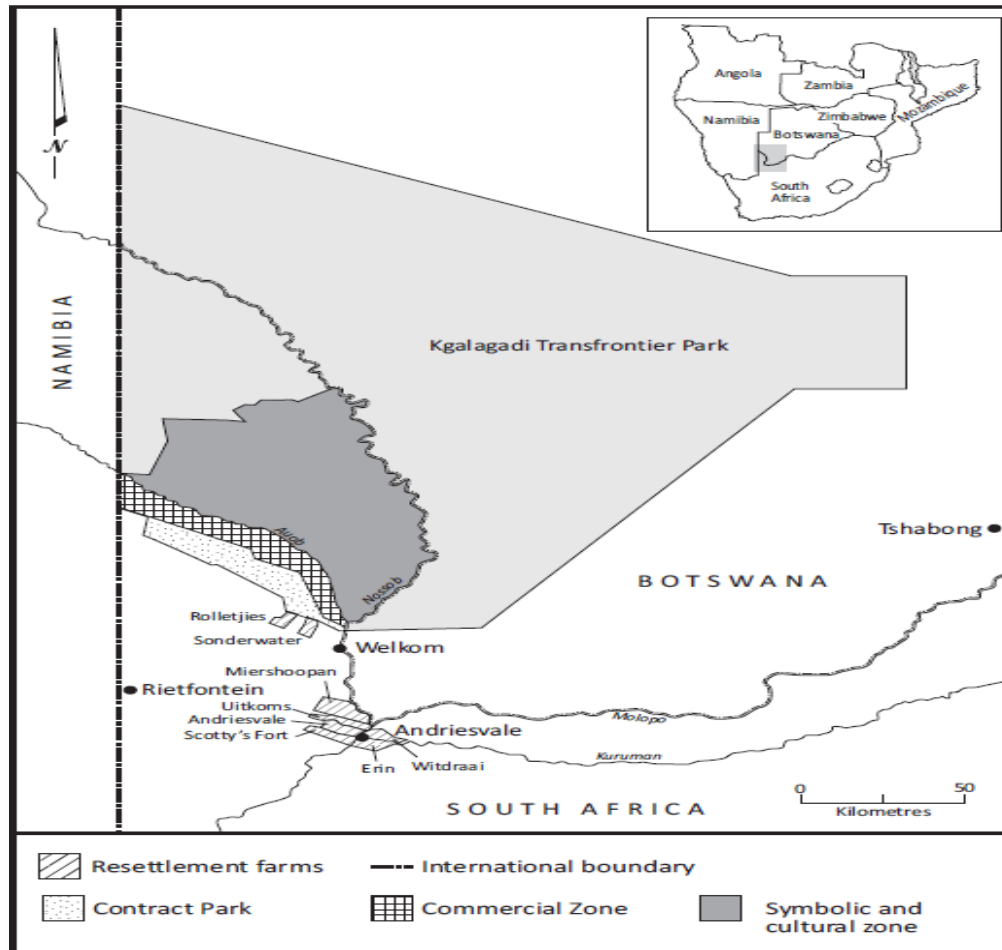
- 2 case studies
 - San and Mier land claim in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
 - Makuleke - Kruger National Park

- At least 8 years since the land claims

- Contrasting outcomes

- Focus on PAs but lessons equally relevant outside PAs

Land at Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park



- 50000 ha of land awarded to San and Mier communities in 1999
- Community Park/Contract Park
- Subsistence uses, cultural reconnection

Motivation behind land claim at KTP

- For San: cultural and spiritual attachment to land (subsistence use of land)

- Rules for benefits sharing/access
 - ▣ Only traditional harvesting/use permitted in the KTP
 - ▣ No guns but bows and arrows
 - ▣ Bush meat to be consumed in the park
 - ▣ No hunting within 5km radius of tourist routes

- 'Indigenous tag' used to frame benefit access/broad brushing communities as homogenous

Crafts



Traditional livelihood activities are always at the heart of rural livelihoods



Medicinal plants

□ In reality:

- Heterogeneity in meanings and values of land
- Contested use between community members e.g. traditionalist-modernist dichotomy (Robins, 2001; Thondhlana et al., 2011)
- The impact of the market economy, modernisation (Thondhlana and Shackleton, 2013) – shifting meanings of land

So different values attached to land can provide insights into the causes of conflicts

THE MAKULEKE AT KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

- 25000 ha of land (only case not under co-management agreement)
- The benefits:
 - 10% of tourism revenue to CPA
 - Jobs guarantee (52% of hhs employed by SANParks)
 - Skills development, bursaries, village electrification, heritage centre, etc.
- Celebrated as a 'successful' model (Steenkamp and Uhr, 2000)
 - Homogeneous community group
 - Leaders' accountability to the wider community
 - Management structures effective and representative (Development Forum, Executive Committee, JMB)
 - Support from different stakeholders (Govt., Researchers, NGOs, experts, etc.)

Makuleke challenges

- ▣ Inter-generational conflicts over direction of development
- ▣ Elite capture of benefits
- ▣ Little direct evidence of the ‘grandiose plans’ (Robins and van der Waal, 2008)

Key findings and lessons for Thicket Biome

- ❑ The promise of benefits aligns actors in the pursuit of collective management
- ❑ Benefit sharing plans either partly implemented or not implemented at all
- ❑ Benefits almost never quantified, remain vague
- ❑ Fraught with misunderstanding and misguided expectations

E.g. (Mkhambati case study)

Continued..

- ▣ Local communities united by a common history of dispossession and expected benefits
- ▣ BUT empirical evidence shows:
 - Multiple uses of land and natural resources
 - Varying significance of resources across users
 - Non-use values often not measured or well understood
 - Meanings are personal, can overlap and variable across space and time
 - Intense competition among beneficiaries
 - Meaning is negotiated so **whose reality counts?**

Conclusions

- Narratives around benefits and **improved livelihoods** have become deeply embedded in conservation arrangements

- But no quantification before hand
 - ▣ Can lead to over-expectations
 - ▣ **Accounting for intangible benefits?**

- **Blueprint approach applied to benefit sharing schemes**

- **The panacea trap: falsely assuming that preferences and benefits perceptions of resource users are uniform (Ostrom et al., 2007)**

What are the likely outcomes in the near future?



- ▣ Resistance to benefit sharing rules, status quo
- ▣ E.g. Silaka Nature Reserve closure on 16 April 2013
- ▣ Decimation of natural resources (lose-lose scenario)

Way forward for Albany Thicket Biome:

- ▣ How best can the thicket biome be sustainably utilised in ways that reflect multiple meanings and interests?
- ▣ Is benefits accrual failure *false promise or premise*?
- ▣ To avoid the panacea dilemma in benefit sharing schemes:
 - More pragmatic approaches (real benefits vs ideological imperatives)
 - Going beyond numbers? Thinking of landscapes?

Way forward for Albany Thicket Biome:

- User behaviour - a function of the relationship between perceived and realised benefits
- What happens to meaning of land with a shift in land rights?
- Land has multiple production goals, so
 - ▣ Understanding causal links between meanings attached to land, benefits perception, benefits and the regulatory instruments that mediate benefits distribution.
 - ▣ Collective ordering of meanings and associated rules in the thicket biome.

THE END