

## PREFACE

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Originating in the United States in the 19th century, the concept of the protected area (PA) has been emulated all over the world. Understood as special areas of ecological importance protected by non-consumptive, restricted-access policies, the designation of national parks and lesser state-owned protected areas has been accompanied by eviction of resident populations within the demarcated area and exclusion of those on its boundaries. Especially in the global South where resident communities associated with PAs are more prevalent and more resource-dependent, these have been subject to removals or restrictions by the state and have been forced to modify livelihoods that depended on natural resources in the protected area.

The first 'Earth Summit'<sup>1</sup> provided public, international support for an alternative approach to the relationship between PAs and residents, insisting that considerations of social justice and ecological health should be priorities in all aspects of environmental planning. This new approach to conservation, which came to be known as *sustainable development*, was a response to the increasing recognition among many conservationists that it is neither feasible nor ethical to exclude resident and neighbouring human communities from PAs. The sustainable development approach has gained ground rapidly in recent years, but implementation poses major challenges to governments, conservationists and academics, and has had mixed results thus far. A recent strategy within the sustainable development paradigm is to address the specific interface between PAs and residents in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). This is an umbrella concept for attempts to devolve management authority to the local level in conservation areas; CBNRM tends to be sensitive to local conditions and thus varies greatly from case to case.

South Africa is part of this global change of heart in the conservation sector, but here the policy shift to sustainable development has been complicated by a number of unique local factors. Apartheid policies were either in place or heavily influential until the first democratic elections in 1994. The isolation of the apartheid years prevented the dissemination of new conservation models among local conservationists. The old ideas and the old guard were not replaced immediately: the integration of many separate conservation authorities into the new provincial governments, themselves in the process of establishment and with more pressing priorities, has delayed the transformation and development of South Africa's many PAs. The project of bringing South Africa's national parks and provincial nature reserves in line with the provisions of the Earth Summit, let alone realising their full potential for rural development, is as yet in its early stages.

This book provides a case study of Dwesa-Cwebe, the focus of one of the earliest efforts in South Africa to convert hitherto excluded residents into co-owners and active partners of a small nature and marine reserve on the 'Wild Coast' of the former Transkei,<sup>2</sup> now part of the Eastern Cape Province. The Wild Coast is a 300 km stretch of coastline that lies between the Kei river and the border of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. As the name implies, this coast is characterised by an unspoiled, rugged coastal

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1 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992.

2 In conformity with established academic practice the territory of Transkei is distinguished from the 'independent homeland' of Transkei (1976-1994) by the use of the definite article for the periods before and since 1976-1994.

environment which the South African government is now actively developing, principally on a basis of tourism.

The Xhosa-speaking residents of the land that became the Dwesa-Cwebe PA as well as the adjacent inland area were successively removed or excluded after the annexation of the Transkei to the Cape Colony at the end of the 19th century. In 1994, when other black South Africans were celebrating the advent of democratic government but nothing had changed at Dwesa-Cwebe, the residents mounted successive well-organised mass invasions of the PA, which were particularly destructive of marine resources. This unusual and uncharacteristic protest strategy attracted much public and official attention. Redressive interventions from many quarters have taken place since then, including the project on which this book is based.

'The Dwebe project' was conceived in 1995 by two environmental scientists – Christo Fabricius, then employed by Eastern Cape Nature Conservation (ECNC), and Herman Timmermans, a graduate of the University of Cape Town. With the assistance of Khayaletu Kralo, who had a social science background, Timmermans led this attempt to facilitate rapprochement between the conservation authority and the residents. When it became clear that the Dwebe project's mediation role was being hampered by its association with the conservation authority, Timmermans and Kralo transferred to the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Rhodes University. Professor PA McAllister, then Director of ISER at Rhodes University, re-orientated their project by adding a baseline data-gathering element to its facilitation goal<sup>3</sup>. The first phase of field research had already commenced when McAllister left ISER and the project. A social anthropologist and leader was urgently needed to replace McAllister, and this dual role was filled by Dr Robin Palmer of the Department of Anthropology at the same university.

As the tasks designated for the first phase of research<sup>4</sup> were nearing completion, the trajectory of the project was altered. For administrative reasons, the HSRC converted the project into an 'internal' collaborative project for its second phase. To the ISER team of Palmer, Timmermans and Kralo would be added an HSRC team composed of Fonda Lewis, Kamal Naicker and Johan Viljoen. In return for funding and technical support, the more experienced ISER team would provide field training for the HSRC team. A second requirement of the funders was that the project give more attention to tourism. (In the nine months since the acceptance of the original proposal the notion of tourism as a significant contributor to national development had been gaining wide acceptance.)

While these changes to the project were receiving consideration and the two teams were readying themselves for the second phase (which commenced at the end of January 1998), a chance encounter led to a further modification of the research design. A sociocultural anthropology PhD student from the University of Boston, Derick Fay, had elected to base himself at ISER for his doctoral field research at Dwesa-Cwebe. Given a common research focus, informal exchanges between ISER team members and Fay naturally ensued, eventually leading to his collaboration with this book. Fay has

3 Indigenous Knowledge, Conservation Reform, Natural Resource Management and Rural Development in the Dwesa and Cwebe Nature Reserves and Neighbouring Village Settlements, an 'external' project funded by the HSRC.

4 The findings of the first phase remain unpublished to date, but are contained in the interim report to the funders (Palmer 1997).

not only contributed a third community survey to the two the ISER-HSRC teams covered, but his archival research and longer periods in the field have restored a dimension to the project that was lost with the withdrawal of McAllister (with his 20 years of ethnographic research in an adjacent area of the Wild Coast).

Field research in the second phase involved several field trips over a period of nine months. Tasks included the above-mentioned household surveys, reinforced with interviews and site inspections, and an inquiry into local tourism from the residents' and the visitors' perspectives. An important part of the research, carried on before, during and after the period in the study area, was attendance at workshops and meetings about Dwesa-Cwebe. In the inclusive spirit of the new South Africa, the ISER-HSRC project was included among the stakeholders in the co-management, land reform and development processes affecting Dwesa-Cwebe. These encounters provided valuable insights into policy making and delivery at provincial level.

Part of our research brief had been, from the outset, to contribute to local capacity building. Through the holding of facilitation workshops and the training of 12 assistants in social research methods in the second phase, we made a direct contribution to local empowerment. Capacity building, however, was not limited to the field site: our joint involvement in an interdisciplinary, interinstitutional, collaborative, participatory research project requiring the close co-operation of many individuals of different gender, age, ethnicity and nationality also built capacity in ourselves. To the extent that writing the book has also involved close co-operation between a number of contributors, and in particular the three editors, the 'learning curve' has continued well beyond the research phase.

This book is a reasonably faithful reflection of the evolving research project, in particular the final phase, but there were subsequent developments. As a result of resignations from both the collaborating teams, continuity in the project was uneven: the organising and writing of this book was largely in the hands of the three editors. The accreditation of each chapter reflects the relative involvement as well as the contributions of other team members. A late recruit, Professor Christo Fabricius, Head of the Environmental Studies Programme at Rhodes University, made the major contribution to Chapter 11.

The collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to research, with training and capacity building among the aims, has come to the fore in recent years. The project on which this book is based typifies this approach. Whether it represents an advance on the former situation in which research was undertaken by individuals or small, close-knit teams from the same institution and discipline, readers may judge for themselves.

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