

Challenges Facing a Community Structure to Implement CBNRM in the Eastern Cape, South Africa

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Abstract: In most developing countries, community based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiatives have been adopted in an attempt to address the issue of environmental sustainability. This has largely come about due to an increasing recognition of the ineffectiveness of the state to achieve such sustainability. Within the South African context, recent policies have been drafted that aim to achieve these outcomes, which strongly articulate the need for the participation of local people in the management of natural resources both within communal areas and on state-owned land. The objectives of new policies, however, are not being met in the Eastern Cape of South Africa for the following key reasons: the insufficient recognition of the impact of past historical and political upheavals experienced within the former homelands' situation; the government's inability to process land applications; the government's lack of ability and capacity to implement these policies; and frustratingly high levels of hierarchy at both the local and national level. The Masakane community, a group of former farm workers from the former Ciskei homeland in South Africa, are attempting to implement CBNRM initiatives. The Masakane case study reveals the urgent need to develop, implement and enforce new institutional and managerial arrangements, because without such arrangements state policies are unlikely to be implemented at the grassroots level.

Introduction

The worldwide political and economic changes of the 1980s and the growing concern with global environmental issues have brought the question of the environment to the forefront of

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v5/v5i3a4.pdf>

development and politics. This has generated immense interest and discussion over the issue of its future sustainability.¹ In response to the poor conservation outcomes that followed decades of governments' ineffectiveness in managing natural resources, scholars and policy makers have been forced to reconsider the role of the community in resource use and conservation.² The following reasons for the failures in conservation have been cited: the difficulty in obtaining diverse information relating to a resource and its users; the problem of enforcement of state rules in dispersed areas; financial and administrative constraints; corruption within the bureaucracy which encourages conflicts; and the subordination of environmental to shorter-term economic or political interests.³ Current writings nevertheless strongly promote the role of the community in bringing about decentralisation, meaningful participation, and biological conservation.⁴

The achievement of effective decentralisation and the devolvement of power and control over resources from the centralised state to local communities has become a pressing policy issue in all parts of the world.⁵ This has led governments, particularly in developing countries, to formulate policies which increasingly aim to promote participatory rural development and the empowerment of local populations.⁶ In the past two decades, this has led to the adoption of people-centred approaches in several developing countries, such as community forestry in Nepal and decentralised wildlife management, for example "Campfire," in Zimbabwe.⁷

The new South African government has adopted a similar standpoint. New and emerging policies relating to conservation and land management strongly articulate the need for the participation of local people in the management of natural resources both within communal areas and on state-owned land.⁸ The land redistribution and restitution processes have spearheaded this move, which has been facilitated by the Communal Property Association (CPA) legislation (Act number 28 of 1996). This backdrop has provided a framework for the establishment of legal entities enabling groups of beneficiaries to acquire, hold and manage property on a communal basis.⁹ It has been predicted that a considerable proportion of South Africa's rural land will be transferred to group ownership and management.¹⁰

This paper highlights some of the challenges facing the implementation of community based natural resource development (CBNRM) initiatives within large proportions of the former Ciskei homeland, in the Eastern Cape, at both a community and state level. Despite the adoption of enabling policies, we observe at grass roots level that a period of chaos is reigning with regards to the management of natural resources. This situation has arisen as a result of past political upheaval, and is being compounded by the current inability of the government to implement adopted policies.

APPROACH AND METHODS USED IN THE CASE STUDY

The information presented in this study has been collected from a number of sources. The Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Rhodes University has a long history of developmental involvement in the area and has produced numerous unpublished reports. In addition, a study by Ainslie (1998) on management of natural resources in a rural settlement in the Peddie District is an important source of information. For the past four years the first two authors have had an active involvement in the area on a number of projects.

Three methods were used to collect the information. The most important were in-depth interviews with individuals, key informants (committee members and government officials from the Department of Land Affairs and the Department of Agriculture) and community household members. These covered central issues regarding natural resource management. Furthermore 190 questionnaires were also administered to household members and PRA workshops were held with community members who represented different interest groups within the community, for example, men, women and youth.

THE STUDY SITE

This study focuses on the Fish River area of the former Ciskei homeland, situated between the Great Fish River in the west and the Kei River in the east. The area is characterised by Valley Bushveld vegetation, which in its natural state consists of extremely dense, semi-succulent thorny scrub forest interspersed with grassland in upland areas.¹¹

The study site is found within the Great Fish River Reserve Complex (Figure 1). The reserve complex consists of three amalgamated nature reserves, namely the Andrises Vosloo Kudu Reserve, the Double Drift Reserve, and the Sam Knot Reserve. The reserve complex is surrounded by nine village settlements, accommodating approximately 20,000 people at approximately 70 people per km².¹² All these villages are characterised by poverty, environmental degradation, very low or non-existent levels of economic activity, a heavy dependence on urban earnings and welfare payments, high unemployment, poor infrastructure and a desperate lack of basic services. Despite the existence of the reserve, almost no collective benefits have accrued to the communities. The nine villages represent different histories of land occupancy and land tenure frameworks. These influences have had an impact on a number of issues including the distribution of people, the distribution and types of settlement, land tenure systems, land management, and ultimately the use of resources.¹³

This study focuses on the experiences of the Masakane community, a group of one hundred and ninety former farm workers and their families located on the northeastern boundary of the Reserve. The area comprises the following farms: Mooihoek, Thornfield, Welcomewood, Ebenezer, Victoria Post, Nomtayi (Klipfontein), Fenryn, Llangollen and Tweni (Figure 1 and 2). These farms were formally owned by white stock farmers and were bought out by the previous government to consolidate the formation of the Ciskei homeland in 1972. Land in the former homelands is state-owned and held under a modified communal land tenure system.¹⁴ The area is regarded as prime grazing veld for cattle, forming part of the superior “smaldeel” swathe of sweetveld.¹⁵ Two larger communities of Sheshegu and Middledrift surround the Masakane community. Both Sheshegu and Middledrift are currently densely populated, have high stocking rates, and are held under a modified communal land tenure system.

PROFILE OF THE MASAKANE COMMUNITY

The total population of the Masakane group is approximately 800 people, most of whom are residents. Over a third (36.9%) are young and working-age adults between the ages of 19

and 45. Young children and infants between the ages of 1 and 12 comprise approximately a third (30.6%), while 17.4% are teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 years. The middle-aged and pensioners each make up 7.2% of the population.¹⁶

Few people have formal employment, as income is derived from sale or use of stock and social welfare is low. Estimates based on questionnaires reveal that just under one third of the households (30.4%) generate an income of between \$85 and \$170 a month.¹⁷ A smaller group (22.6%) receive less than \$85, while only one sixth (15.4%) earn over \$170 a month. Some families earn small amounts of money from goat, sheep and dairy products.¹⁸

The total number of livestock of all the families amounts to 986 cows, 731 goats and 390 sheep. The number of cattle kept by individuals' households varies substantially. A large percentage of these households own no cattle (45.6%). 26.4% own a small number, between 1 and 5 cattle. 10.7% own a medium-sized herd, between 16 and 40, while 3.1% own significant herd numbers, over a hundred head of cattle each. Goats, on the other hand, are more evenly distributed amongst the families.¹⁹

In addition to the income and products generated from livestock, social welfare and formal employment families are heavily reliant on the contribution that the communal rangelands provide for their livelihood. This is because the communal rangeland is an important source of grazing land, fuel, food security, nutrition, income, medicines, fertilizer, and building material. Within the study site, over 83 different plant species were documented as being used on a regular basis.²⁰ Preliminary studies, conducted by the authors in nearby communities, reveal that the mean direct use-value of these resources amounts to \$273.43 per household on an annual basis.²¹ Access to these resources from communal rangelands contributes to livelihood security and provides a safety net for rural households.²² Per hectare studies have estimated the potential value of secondary products to be as high as \$133/ha/yr from communal grazing lands.²³ Consequently, the Masakane community considers continued access to these resources a priority, thus indicating their reliance on these resources.

MASAKANE COMMUNITY

In the 1980s the South African Development Trust purchased farms in the Victoria East district for the purpose of consolidation into the former Ciskei. The families of the Masakane community continued to live on the farms where they were previously employed. The policy of the then Ciskei government was to retain farmland for "commercial" purposes, by leasing out units to black farmers who, however, failed to take up residence in the area.²⁴ Consequently, the Masakane community secured a tentative foothold on this land.

During the period 1980 to 1994, the Masakane families did not act jointly as a group. Each family made decisions independently and consequently no unified decisions were made regarding natural resource management issues. During this time families felt exceptionally vulnerable, particularly when new tenants began arriving. These new tenants showed very little respect towards the Masakane community despite their three generational residence on the farms.

Only after the overwhelming electoral success of the ANC did the Masakane families feel confident enough to form their own Resident Association. Their main communal objective

became applying for land of their own for settlement purposes and to pursue their livestock farming interests. It was felt that by forming their own group they could co-ordinate their efforts. Consequently, between 1994 and 1996, the Masakane Resident Association made several unsuccessful approaches to the provincial government. Their concerns were eventually taken up by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) researchers who approached the Department of Land Affairs for assistance.²⁵ The ISER finally submitted an application for land for settlement, for commonage purposes, and additional farms for livestock farming on behalf of the Masakane group in 1998.

In the interim, the Masakane Resident Association prioritised the need to control the influx of outsiders and to attend to issues surrounding resource management. The Association is comprised of elected committee members who represent the interests of each farm. The committee meets weekly and an open forum is held fortnightly. Decisions relating to grazing regimes and the dipping of stock are made independently on each farm. Each family owning livestock contributes \$2.80 for dipping solution.²⁶ Broader issues affecting all the farms are decided at committee level. Grazing is in good condition on the farms and is testament to the fact that this management system is successful.

A number of factors, however, threaten their continued success. These include the impact of past political policies, a lack of statutory power, and lack of government support.

PAST POLITICAL UPHEAVALS

The formation of the Ciskei homeland in the 1980s led to the introduction of Tribal Authorities who became responsible for the allocation of land and its management. Later, various government departments such as the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and Department of Public Works (DOPW) shared the responsibilities of land and natural resource management, albeit on an ad-hoc basis. For example, the DOA introduced policies that attempted to control livestock numbers and funded community-based conservation projects, such as manual noxious weed eradication and erosion control. The funds made available to implement these projects tended to be directed towards supporters of Lennox Sebe's Ciskei National Independence Party and excluded those communities who opposed the Bantustan system.²⁷ Local headmen were responsible for allocating employment positions and distributing funds. Community members who gained access to these positions were employed for several years.²⁸ The DOPW provided fencing and poles to rural communities following the same stipulations. This had the effect of politicising issues surrounding natural resource management.

In 1990, Sebe was ousted in a military coup and was replaced by Oupa J. Gqozo as head of state of the Ciskei. Gqozo suspended the already unpopular headmen but did not transfer their powers to the ANC-aligned South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) Resident Associations at village level. This led to intense political activity and resistance against Gqozo and his party, the African Democratic Movement (ADM). He later reintroduced the headman system, and furthermore linked access to rural resources to membership of the ADM. Conservation projects similar to those introduced under Sebe were implemented and these were also politically linked.²⁹

After the instatement of Gqozo in 1990, conditions changed fundamentally for members of the Masakane community. For example, the DOA established a number of irrigation schemes in the former Ciskei, under the Small Project Program. A small scheme was established in the Masakane district to cultivate vegetables for resale. Initially only members of the Middledrift community were employed to work on the scheme, as they were strong supporters of Gqozo and his party. However, friction soon developed amongst those community members who were employed and those who were not. The DOA reacted by replacing all employed Middledrift community members with Masakane community members. This caused further conflict between members of the Masakane and Middledrift community and in 1992, the Middledrift community responded by destroying packing sheds and fences, and by driving their livestock onto cultivated lands.

In 1982 the Department of Agriculture of the Ciskei introduced a system whereby stockowners from neighbouring communal areas were allowed (at a nominal fee) to graze stock on the state owned farms.³⁰ The government, through the employment of local stock rangers, undertook the management of the farms. The rangers were responsible for ensuring that the farmhouses and irrigation equipment on the farms were not stolen and that additional families did not move onto the farms. This initiative fell under the Ciskei Employment Assistance Program (CEAP).³¹ For the most part, Masakane rangers succeeded in preventing families from neighbouring communities from moving onto the farms. Consequently, the grazing resources are currently in better condition than the rangelands on the surrounding communal areas. Because of the poor quality of grazing on the Middledrift communal lands members of the Middledrift community leased portions of the state farms occupied by the Masakane community for their livestock.³² It is generally acknowledged that the Middledrift settlements are overcrowded, with little scope for expansion.³³

Twenty seven stock rangers from nine farms were employed for ten years, from 1982 to 1992. As a result some families, despite limited tenure security and with very little state support, have managed to secure relatively sound livelihoods by accessing rangeland through the fortuitous land expropriation policies of the former government. Livestock farming has consequently become the main source of direct livelihood for many families, and indirectly for most of the community.³⁴

These interventions have had a significant impact as they have politicised key aspects of resource management in the study site. For example, the state manipulation of the allocation of resource management funding to their supporters has had the effect of undermining the ability of local institutions to undertake local resource management initiatives. Currently, local people have very little incentive to be pro-active in activities relating to erosion control the removal of noxious weeds because the hope exists that the state will intervene and provide some jobs to undertake these activities.³⁵ Similarly, with regards to fencing, community members are ever optimistic that the state will intervene and fund these supplies.

Regarding the Masakane community, these past policies have had a major impact on politicising their relations with their neighbouring communities. For example, under the Sebe and Gqozo regimes, Masakane families were empowered economically through the allocation of various job opportunities; these same opportunities were denied to community members of Middledrift. Furthermore, under the Gqozo regime Masakane rangers were given authority to

manage the farms. This resulted in very tense relations between the two communities. After the termination of CEAP in 1992, by the DOA, the Masakane rangers lost their authority and this resulted in members of the Middledrift community driving their stock onto the farms without consultation. This severed relation made it very difficult for the Masakane Resident Association to enforce its decisions surrounding grazing regimes on the farms.

LACK OF STATUTORY POWER

The lack of statutory power in the Masakane community hinders their ability to enforce decisions regarding resource management. Currently there are no legal claimants to the ownership of the land other than the state because the national policy is the disposal of all state land via the market. This has found resonance in the provincial agricultural policy, which favours a continuation of individual leases with an option to purchase - the model used by the old Ciskei regime. The majority of Masakane families have strong interest by virtue of their long residence, but their ownership is currently not acknowledged on "state land." Their informal rights are protected by short-term legal measures in the form of the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act (IPILR), but this does not constitute entitlement.³⁶ The IPILR act is a short-term measure, which protects people from eviction until new land tenure reform legislation is passed. One of the objectives of the act is to protect long-term vested-interests and insecure tenure rights which exist in practice but which have not been legally recognized. The IPILRA protects a person who has occupied the land if he/she is the owner openly and without having used force to occupy the land, and if he/she has occupied the land in this manner for a continuous period of 5 years or more prior to December 31, 1997.³⁷

In 1999, the Minister of Department of Land Affairs (DLA), however, approved the Masakane application which resulted in three of the farms being granted to the Masakane community.³⁸ The DLA is in the process of implementing the application. However, due to administrative constraints, including institutional weaknesses and poor co-ordination of the various spheres of government, the final legal processes of the Masakane community application have yet to be finalized. This is an example of how administrative constraints within the DLA are hindering the delivery of land to black South Africans who have been identified as the primary beneficiaries of the new land reform policies.³⁹

Since the collapse of the Ciskei government's administrative structures in 1994, members of the Middledrift community have continued to drive their livestock onto the farms currently occupied by Masakane community, without abiding by lease agreement and payments.⁴⁰ The Masakane Resident Association has made numerous formal complaints to the Middledrift Resident Association concerning the livestock invasions but to no avail. Committee members have also reported the incident to DOA personnel in Alice but they remain unsympathetic, pointing out that no clear boundaries are yet in place.

Besides the frequent livestock invasions, neighbouring communities also harvest wet and dry fuelwood from the Masakane farms, contrary to the regulations set by the Masakane Resident Association. The Resident Association has made several attempts to prevent this since it is now becoming difficult for families living in the area to harvest sufficient amounts for their own needs. A formal complaint was made to the both the Middledrift and Sheshegu Resident

Association. In the instance of the Middledrift community, a fine was paid and no further incidents have been reported. However, the Sheshegu association has refused to abide by the regulation until the Masakane community can prove that the land belongs to them.

LACK OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

There is very little support from the local government structures regarding the Resident Association's attempts to manage their resources. This has stemmed largely from the confusion created by the amalgamation of former homeland administrative bodies into the new Eastern Cape Province. This process has been fraught with difficulties, and as a result the provincial government has been slow to address issues relating to management of natural resources. The current administrative body responsible for the study site, Amatola District Council, is not able to affect control over its enormous jurisdiction due to lack of capacity and funds.

Current government policies offer very little support concerning CBNRM. For example, the Communal Property Association (CPA) Act (1997), developed as part of the Land Reform Programme, proposes to provide communities with the legal status to collectively acquire, hold and manage property in terms of a written constitution. A land holding group is required to draft a constitution which sets out the rules governing access to and management of the jointly owned land.⁴¹ In the study area no CPAs have yet been established and the probability of this occurring is unlikely, as current studies presented at the Land and Agrarian conference (1999) show that CPAs are no longer being promoted as a viable option. CPAs are in many cases established as a requirement for legal entities in collaborative ecotourism initiatives with the private sector. The constitutions (hastily drawn up by CPAs) often have very little meaning for their members and are therefore ineffective.⁴²

Apart from the Communal Property Association (CPA) Act, the proposed Land Rights Bill promised to offer communities more statutory power. Under the new Directorate of Land Affairs, this bill has been indefinitely postponed, and it is not known yet what guidelines are envisaged.⁴³ In the interim, no alternative institutional support is offered to rural communities to manage natural resources, and even extension services have been put on hold. Under the previous government, the DOA drafted the Ciskei and Transkei Agricultural Development Act whereby extension officers in the Department were responsible for providing management assistance in communal grazing areas. This act was annulled in 1996 and new bills are being drafted to replace it.⁴⁴ In the interim, the DOA has provided little assistance to rural communities. Local DOA personnel report that the department's capacity and funding is severely limited. Currently the regional offices receive only \$170 a month for transport and are therefore unable to assist with outreach programs. Furthermore, local officials are of the opinion that the Resident Associations do not have the capacity to implement effective programs.⁴⁵

Conclusion

The case material reveals that despite the CBNRM initiatives adopted by the state, the communities involved are experiencing a very different impact than that envisaged. Instead of witnessing a shift in power to the rightful holders and beneficiaries, we observe that numerous

factors impede this process. Past political upheavals have severed relations both within and between communities, thus making it difficult to implement effective natural resource management initiatives. These difficulties are exasperated by the lack of the government's ability and capacity to implement policies, particularly within the DLA which is characterised by over-bureaucratization at the both local and national levels. The lack of the Department's ability to authorize community status as legal owners of the land they occupy is making it virtually impossible for communities to implement effective CBNRM. Furthermore, the lack of government support to local Resident Associations also seriously impacts natural resource management as community structures are generally unable to enforce regulations.

We therefore need to take heed of Campbell's (1999) warning that the simple devolution of control and decision-making to local users is not a panacea that will necessarily ensure the conservation, sustainable use and ongoing social and economic benefits from natural resources. This is because such sentiments often ignore practical complexities, such as historical and political issues and even ecological factors as this case has revealed to us.⁴⁶

In response to the problems identified here it is important to take cognisance of experiences offered from other parts of the world, regarding state and community efforts to manage local natural resources. Both bodies have weaknesses in terms of implementing effective management regimes, but they also have unique strengths. For example, in Botswana, Rozemeijer et al. (2000) advocate the need for involvement of Local District Councils and encourage central government to make the necessary resources available to do so effectively. Similarly, in the South African context, the simple devolution of power from the state to the people and increased tenurial security will not necessarily result in improved resource management. There is an urgent need to develop a comprehensive government policy towards sustainable land and natural resource management.⁴⁷ In order to co-ordinate these activities, appropriate mechanisms need to be put in place. This can only be achieved by urgently putting in place new institutional and managerial arrangements and setting up strong relationships with government.⁴⁸ As the Masakane case study shows, without such arrangements the laws lie fallow, and are likely to remain so. The implementation of environmental awareness and capacity building programmes within communities would go a long way to help to promote more sustainable practices in the future.

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Notes

1. Twyman 1998.
2. Agrawal and Gibson 1999.

3. Sekhar 2000.
4. Agrawal and Gibson 1999.
5. Twyman, 1998, Kejembe and Kessy 1999, Sekhar 2000.
6. Twyman 1998.
7. Sekhar 2000.
8. Campbell & Shackleton 1999, Kepe 1999.
9. Shackleton et al. 1998.
10. Ibid.
11. Acocks 1988, Low & Rebelo 1996, Palmer 1988.
12. Fabricius and Burger 1996.
13. Ainslie et al. 1994.
14. Ibid.
15. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
16. Ibid.
17. The conversion rate in 1997 was \$1 to R4.70.
18. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
19. Ibid.
20. Dold and Cocks 2000.
21. The conversion rate in 2001 was \$1 to R8.21.
22. Shackleton et al. 1999.
23. Cousins 1999.
24. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
25. Ibid.
26. The conversion rate in 2000 was \$1 to R7.02.
27. Ainslie 1998.
28. Vanda 2000, personal communication, Mr. S. Vanda (Chief Agricultural Technician, Alice DOA Offices)
29. Ainslie 1998.
30. Cocks 1997.
31. Vanda 2000, pers. comm.
32. Ibid.
33. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
34. Ibid.
35. Ainslie 1999.
36. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
37. White Paper 1997.
38. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
39. Kepe 1999, Cock Kingwill 1998.
40. Cocks and Kingwill 1998.
41. White Paper 1997.
42. Kwaw 1999.
43. White Paper 1997.
44. Department of Agriculture 1996.

45. Vanda 2000, pers. comm.
46. Shackleton 2000.
47. Bob and Banoo 1999.
48. von Maltitz and Evans 1998, Bob and Banoo 1999.

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FIGURES

Figure 1: The Masakane study site

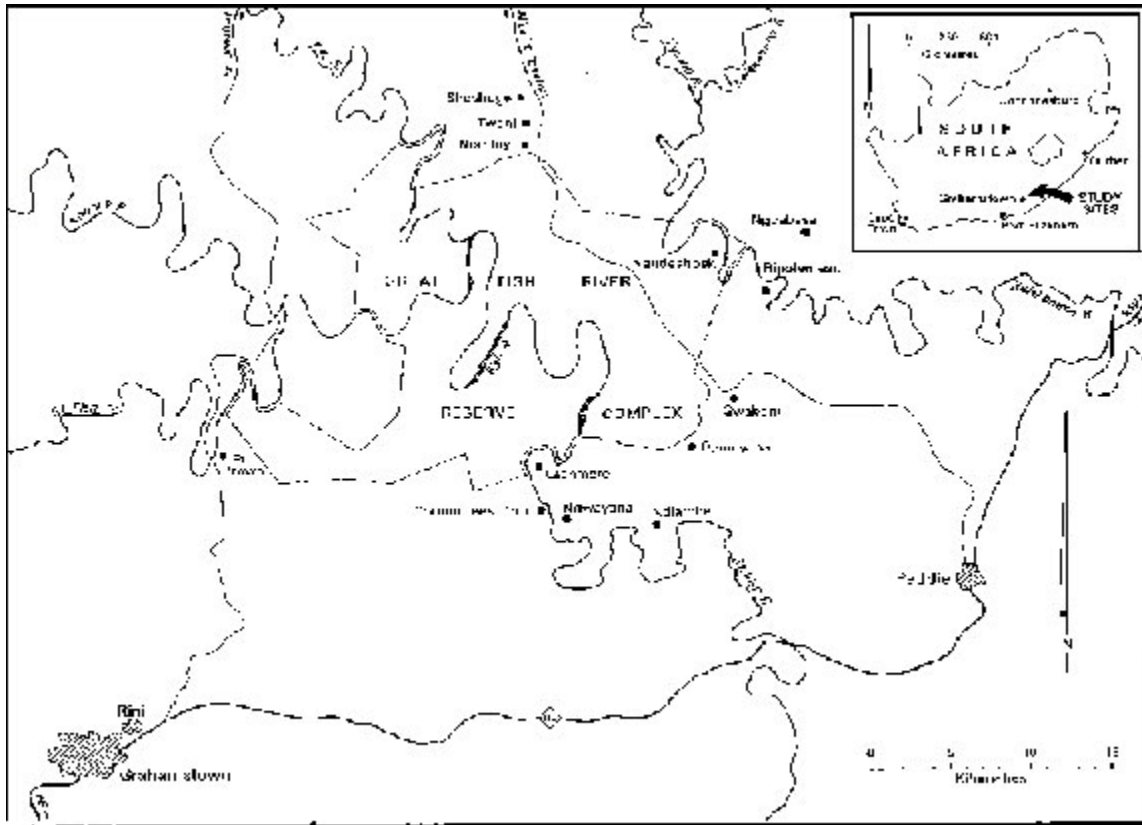
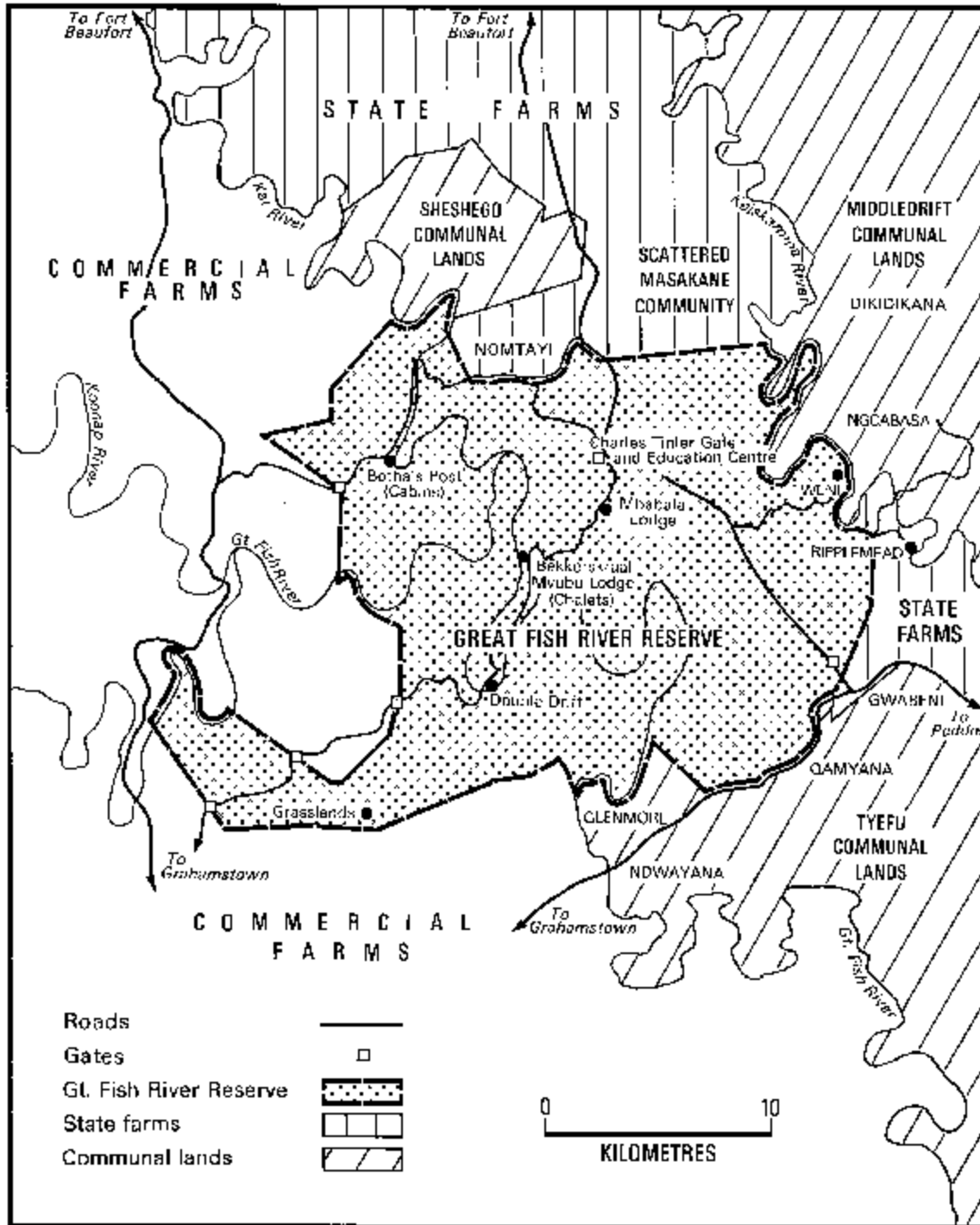


Figure 2: Masakane Community and Farms



Reference Style: The following is the suggested format for referencing this article:
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