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**Nature and Power: A Critique of 'People-Based Conservation'  
at South Africa's Madikwe Game Reserve**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Social Anthropology

University of Cape Town

2008

## Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any other degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: 

Signed by candidate
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 Date: *13 February 2008*.

## Abstract

People-based conservation is often portrayed as a mutually beneficial marrying of ecological and rural development objectives. In this thesis I examine the extent to which such approaches are indeed as ideal as the rhetoric suggests.

Drawing on empirical ethnographic data gathered from Madikwe Game Reserve and three villages neighbouring it in South Africa's North West Province, I argue that people-based approaches to conservation and rural development are constrained by a number of factors. I show that they seem unable to operate independently of hegemonic development discourse, or to avoid using paradigmatic models that encourage gross simplifications. Their use of generalising models encourages binary thinking which precludes a sensitive understanding of local complexities. The neo-liberal language that generally accompanies such approaches obscures how power operates both locally and regionally. Indeed, rhetorical changes from top-down to bottom-up, people-centred routes to conservation and development seem to have little effect on the actual implementation of initiatives: local people have remained marginalised or excluded.

In the Madikwe context, a politically correct over-emphasis on rural development rather than conservation meant that an economic definition of Madikwe as a potentially sustainable business dominated the Madikwe project. Conservation was (rhetorically) sidelined. Villagers were expected to benefit through a share in profits derived from ecotourism – not through visiting and sharing in the nation's natural heritage. Thus, the Reserve was the exclusive domain of privileged visitors, while villagers were denied access. Such an approach revealed that the managing agencies held a particularly synchronic view of development to which short-term economic benefits were central. It contrasted strongly with that of many villagers who argued that a major role of the Reserve should be to expose local school children to its conservation and tourism operations, to educate and encourage them in order that one day they might command top jobs within the Reserve. They argued that it was only through the long-term investment in future generations that local residents would ever truly benefit from and become significant partners in the Madikwe project.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the fieldwork participants whose thoughts and perceptions form the bedrock of this project, and particularly to my field assistants, Seth Modisane, Naledi Rapoo and Moses Molefe, for their interest, enthusiasm and commitment to the fieldwork.

I am indebted to the North West Parks and Tourism Board which commissioned the socio-economic survey and provided the financial support that made my field stay possible. Deepest thanks, especially, to Peter Leitner and Jennifer Seif for their encouragement throughout my fieldwork; to Richard Davies; and to Paul Daphne for sharing with me his rich knowledge of the social and political history of the area. Thanks are also due to the staff of Mafisa Research and Planning, particularly to Eddie Koch, Peter John Massyn and Lucy Kaplan.

For their intellectual input many thanks to Peter Anderson; Robert Thornton; Undine Kayser; Webster Whande; Sherry McClean; the Department of Social Anthropology, particularly Helen MacDonald and Colleen Petersen; the Cambridge Crew: Ozlem Biner, Manuel Arroyo-Kalin and Young-ho Nam; and, as ever, Nolwazi Mkhwanazi.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Mugsy Spiegel, for his guidance, patience and hard work throughout the years. Without his encouragement and invaluable comments, this thesis would never have been written.

Heartfelt thanks to the friends who have given me so much support over the years, in particular, John Campbell; Enrico Daffonchio; Elisabeth Hersov; Saul Dubow; Dominic Touwen; Jason Peters; Sarah Polonsky; Rafiq Asmal; Andre Naude; Jaco Barnard; Sophie Mills; Sasha Evans; Rohan Young; Malachy and Henry; and last, but never least, Petru for her endurance, empathy, and quite amazing ability to listen and inspire.

I do not know how to express the deep gratitude I owe my family for their incredible generosity with both financial and moral support: Anne Bologna; Kate and Dominic

Dodd; Paddy Hough; Peter and Alaine Apap Bologna, and most especially my grandfather, Sir Geofroy Tory, whose encouragement, throughout my life, has always given me the freedom and confidence to follow my dreams, and to whom I dedicate this thesis.

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## **List of Acronyms**

ANC	African National Congress
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CDC	Central District Council
CDO	Community Development Organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COD	Centre for Opportunity Development
Codesa	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPA	Community Property Association
DfID	British Department for International Funding
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KNP	Kruger National Park
MGR	Madikwe Game Reserve
MI	Madikwe Initiative
MSC	Molatedi Service Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWP&TB	North West Parks and Tourism Board
PAM	Protected Areas Management (a division of NWP&TB management)
PLAAS	Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies
PPP	People's Progressive Party
RDC	Rustenburg District Council
RDP Forum	Reconstruction and Development Programme Forum
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCDP	United Christian Democratic Party
VSC	Village Service Committee
WfW	Working for Water

# **The Cast**

## **Madikwe Game Reserve**

A 65,000 hectare, big five game reserve, established in 1991, and located close to the Botswana border in South Africa's North West Province (see map 1, page 6). At the time of my fieldwork in 2000, the Reserve straddled the Rustenburg and Central Districts. According to the NWP&TB (below), Madikwe was established with the express aim of using people-based conservation to bring economic development and opportunity to the area.

## **The Madikwe Project**

A term used to signify the role of Madikwe Game Reserve in its entirety: to stimulate and finance rural development through conservation operations. The Madikwe Initiative (below) was encompassed within the Madikwe Project. The 'partners' of the Madikwe Project were the NWP&TB, the private sector lodge operators within the Reserve and the so-called local community (below).

## **The Local Community**

The residents of the three villages in closest proximity to Madikwe Game Reserve (see map 3, page 34). In 2000, Molatedi, to the east, fell under the jurisdiction of the Rustenburg District Council as well as of Chief Matlapeng and his Tribal Authority. Supingstad and Lekgophung, to the west, were in the Central District. Supingstad's traditional leader was Chief Suping, and Lekgophung's was Chief Tsiepe.

## **The Madikwe Initiative**

A DfID (below) funded development initiative aimed at aiding local residents to become equal partners in the Madikwe Project and to maximise benefits accruing to them from the Reserve. It was initiated by the NWP&TB and implemented by Mafisa Research and Planning.<sup>1</sup>

## **The North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWP&TB)**

The government agency managing Madikwe Game Reserve. When the Reserve was first established in 1991 its planning and development fell under the former Bophuthatswana homeland administration, and the Bophuthatswana Parks Board managed the Reserve. After Bophuthatswana was reincorporated back into the Republic of South Africa in 1994,

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<sup>1</sup> There are substantial differences in (theoretical) approach between Mafisa and the NWP&TB which indicate that, just like the 'objects' of development, developers too cannot be consigned to a single, convenient category. For my analysis to be sufficiently perceptive to be useful, I have therefore tried to approach Mafisa and the NWP&TB as separate entities. However, as they are often entangled as 'partners' in the Madikwe Initiative, this has not always been possible.

Bophuthatswana Parks Board became North West Parks Board and later, North West Parks and Tourism Board.

**Mafisa Research and Planning**

The non-governmental organisation (NGO) implementing the Madikwe Initiative, directed by Eddie Koch and Peter John Massyn. Mafisa was established in the mid 1990s geared towards facilitating people and parks initiatives.

**DfID**

The British Department for International Development (formerly the Overseas Development Agency), which was funding the Madikwe Initiative.

## Prologue

“Romeo Four, Echo Five Delta... Romeo Four, Echo Five Delta, come in please,” stuttered the radio as I drove homeward to the former missionary building where I was staying in Madikwe Game Reserve. “Go ahead, Echo Five Delta,” I replied. “Can you make twenty hundred hours, Onverwacht? Over.” “Copy that. Over and out.” That evening I dressed in my dirtiest jeans and set off to the Madikwe ecologists’ residence, wondering what wildlife adventures the night might have in store. Over the months that I had been staying in the Reserve, carrying out fieldwork in three of the nearby villages, I had become friends with the ecologists, Seamus and Magriet. By way of social life they occasionally summoned me by radio and invited me out on various ecological expeditions. Many days I had helped to feed freshly shot buck carcasses to lions or wild dogs that had, for various reasons, been confined to fenced off enclosures, or bomas. One night I joined them for a hyena ‘call-up’ where we sat in the Landcruiser growing steadily colder and hungrier, blasting into the night’s stillness tape recordings of yapping, howling, snarling hyenas feasting on a carcass. Eventually our patience was rewarded when a pack of the spotted beasts came to investigate. Another afternoon I had helped drag a warthog carcass along a road and then hoist it into a tree – a process the ecologists called ‘leopard baiting’. The idea was to try to get the leopard habituated to a particular tree, in order that game rangers might be able to locate the shy cat for tourists to view. Once I had even assisted with an elephant autopsy, the only time I can truly claim to have been up to my neck in guts. Each wildlife encounter had been tremendously exciting, reconfirming for me what I already knew – that wildlife experiences have an undeniable primeval attraction, an awesome kind of power, part of which is the fallacy of being ‘at one’ with nature. It is a power that draws people from all over the world, making game reserves one of the more lucrative business propositions within the tourism sector in South Africa.

On this particular night the ecologists needed to locate, tranquilise, and transport to a *boma* three lionesses that were due to be transferred to Pilanesburg, another game reserve that, like Madikwe, was managed by the North West Parks and Tourism

Board. The exercise was part of a conservation measure to ensure lion populations did not become too inbred.

*Thwak!* With a growl the lioness leapt into the air, a dart dangling from her flank. As the anaesthetic took effect she sank slowly to the ground. *Thwak!* A second lioness was hit. The third snarled furiously, circling us menacingly, pacing just out of range. Following Magriet's lead I jumped off the Landcruiser to help heave and haul the dead weight onto the back of the vehicle, all the while keeping an anxious eye on her incensed, undarted sister. "Quick! She's waking up!" shouted Magriet, abandoning the other darted lioness and sitting on the head of the one in the 'Cruiser. There followed a scene of concentrated anxiety: the darts had malfunctioned and the beast we had lifted into the 'Cruiser was stirring with increasing vigour. We struggled to restrain her while Seamus slammed the vehicle into gear and tore off through the bush, branches whacking at our heads, the third lioness pounding after us. After long minutes Seamus judged he had put enough distance between us and our pursuer, slammed to a stop and leapt out of the cabin to re-inject the groaning animal we were barely managing to hold down. To my great relief she slumped immediately into total unconsciousness. Off we drove through the bush, at a more sedate pace, swaying and ducking under thorny branches, adrenalin running high. I stared at the huge lioness at my feet, and felt awed. The evening had been another fine example of the powerful attraction of the bush, the great sense of privilege and wonder that comes from experiencing close encounters with wild animals.

\*

A few days after the lion capture debacle the ecologists were transporting the single successfully captured lioness to the Pilanesburg National Park. An old man was walking wearily along the long, potholed road from Molatedi, on his way to visit his daughter in Obakeng. The ecologists' Landcruiser sped past in a cloud of dust, ignoring the old man's signal for a lift. He shook his head, as if to say: "Those people from the Reserve, they do nothing to help us, ever." He stomped grumpily onwards no doubt thinking angry thoughts about Madikwe, a fortress impregnable behind its imposing electric fences. Some few kilometres further he saw the Landcruiser pulled over to the side of the road with a flat tyre. One could imagine him thinking "Ha!

Serves them right.” As he drew level, to his amazement and great excitement, he saw there was an enormous lion lying in the back of the vehicle.

By that afternoon Molatedi was humming, electric with news of the lion that had passed through the village. “Why weren’t we warned?” “This could have been very dangerous!” “Why couldn’t they at least let us look at the lion?” “It was coming right through our village! We have a right to view it in this circumstance!” “Why is it that we must go to Pretoria Zoo if we want to view these things?” “Who are these people who experience these wondrous things while we are not allowed to go? We are the ones who are living next to this Reserve! We should have the first rights to see the wild animals! This should be our land and we are not allowed even to look at the animals that are there, not even when they are coming right through our village!” I thought guiltily of my privileged lion experience and said nothing.

But the episode and the debates it sparked in Molatedi made me think differently about the people part of people-based conservation at Madikwe.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

Madikwe Game Reserve is really most necessary: it helps to take the squash out of the past twenty years (interview, Madikwe Game Reserve lodge employee and local resident, 19 July 2000).

There is a seductive argument that has come to dominate international conservation discourse. It suggests that by managing conservation strategies as sustainable and economically profitable businesses, both rural development and ecological objectives can be met. It is a utopian vision which implies that all involved will benefit. It is a vision that is particularly appealing in South Africa because one of the legacies of apartheid is severe economic inequality due to grossly restricted access to resources and services. This is especially the case in the rural areas of the former bantustans or homelands where many game parks are situated.<sup>2</sup> In political terms, the mutually beneficial marrying of people, conservation and development is particularly gratifying, containing as it does the notion of direct atonement for the days of forced removals<sup>3</sup> and elitist, preservationist, 'fortress' approaches to conservation which dispossessed and excluded local residents.

The subject of this thesis is people-based conservation and its ability to fulfil both ecological and rural development objectives. Using Madikwe Game Reserve, in South Africa's North West Province, as a case study, I argue that people-based conservation, as it has been conceptualised at Madikwe since the establishment of the Reserve in 1991, could more appropriately be described as a complex and often paradoxical operation of power that ultimately resulted in the exclusion of local people both from the Reserve and from the ecological and developmental operations on which the Madikwe project was based. My fieldwork, rather than suggesting that the local community had become, or was on the way to becoming, an effective stakeholder in the Madikwe project (which is a driving concern within people-based

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<sup>2</sup> In the following chapter I provide an overview of the apartheid legislation that led to the creation of ethnic national states, known as homelands or bantustans, for different ethnic categories.

<sup>3</sup> In order to make room for game reserves to be established, people were often forcibly removed from their land. For more details about forced removals see page 58 and the section *From Fortress Conservation to People-Based Conservation* in chapter six.

conservation approaches to development initiatives), found concepts of participation, representation, stakeholders and partnerships to be highly problematic in practice.

\*

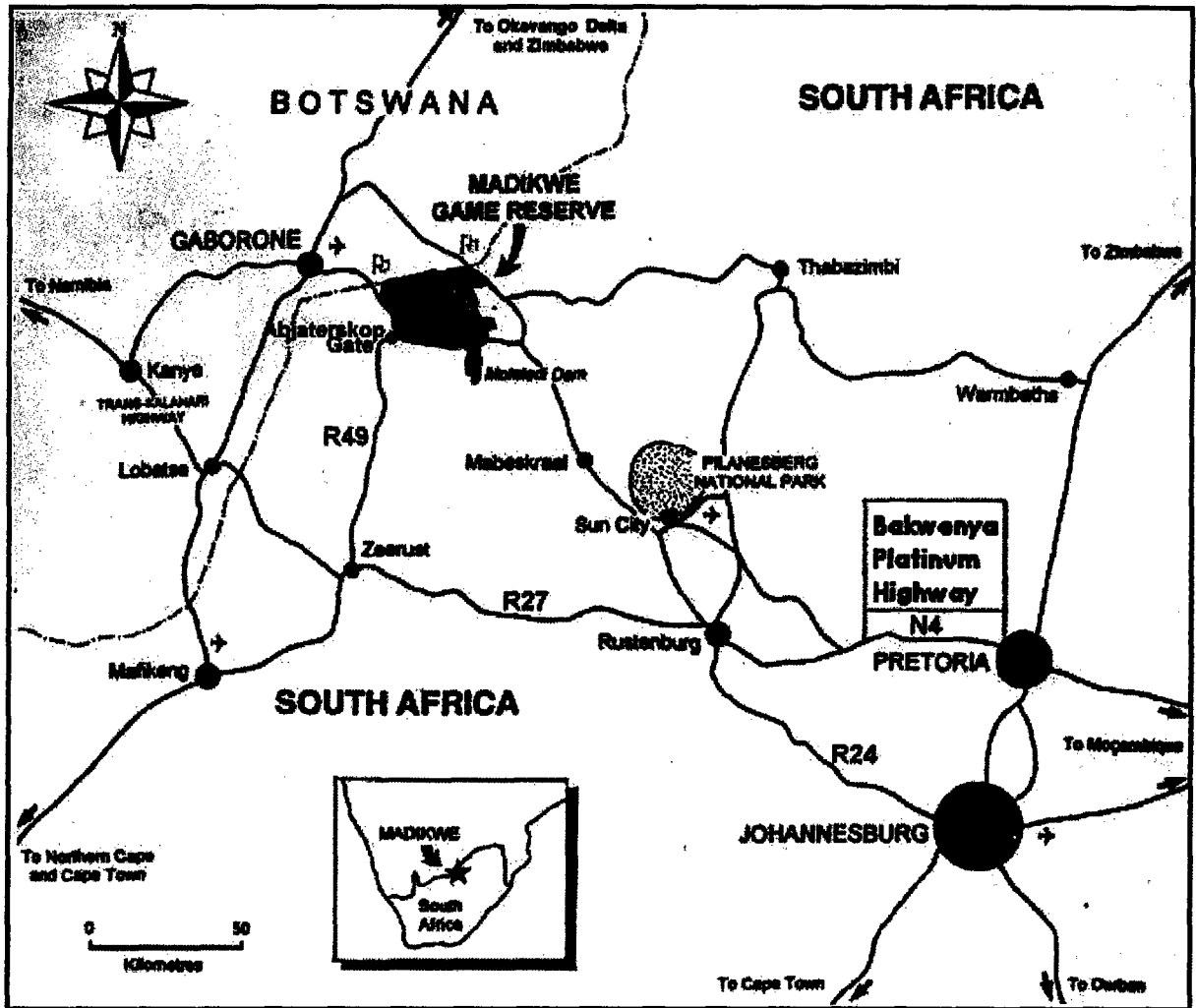
Some 250 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg lies the busy market town of Zeerust. Towards the end of the town's main road is a large sign directing travellers to Madikwe Game Reserve, the first visual evidence along the road from the North West's northernmost metropolitan outpost that the place exists.<sup>4</sup> The R49 out of Zeerust cuts a straight line through the bushveld, passing rapidly through two villages where dark oily patches scarring the tarmac warn motorists of the wrath that can be expected from villagers, sick of road deaths, taking the law into their own hands, holding up traffic and setting fire to offending vehicles. Or so the story goes at the Kopfontein border post to Botswana, 100 kilometres further along that same road: "Be alert!" warns the guard, "Those are dangerous villages. They set up roadblocks and have sometimes even destroyed vehicles. They are very angry at the traffic that is going too fast back and forwards from Gaborone to Johannesburg." Indeed, until Madikwe Game Reserve was established in 1991, the R49 was not used for much other than as an access route to and from Botswana and the few farms and villages scattered along the way.

Just over 80 kilometres after leaving Zeerust, Madikwe's electric fence begins, stretching forbiddingly along the eastern side of the road. Soon there is a sign for Abjaterskop Gate, the main entrance on the western side of the Reserve. Looking to the right, one can catch sight of the gate house and perhaps even one of the guards leaning against the boom. A few kilometres further, sweeping around a wide bend in the well cambered R49, it would be easy for a stranger to the area to miss the small sign, pointing to a dusty dirt road to the left, indicating the direction to Supingstad.<sup>5</sup> After the smooth, fast tarmac of the R49, the road to Supingstad, with its large, unexpected potholes, choking clouds of dust, and scatterings of donkeys and goats, comes as a shock to the uninitiated. The few kilometres seem to stretch interminably before the first houses appear, then a school on the right, a mass of scarlet

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<sup>4</sup> Map 1 on page 6 shows the route from Johannesburg to Madikwe.

<sup>5</sup> The roads and the location of the villages can be seen on map 3, page 34.



**Map 1: Location of Madikwe Game Reserve**

[Source: North West Parks and Tourism Board, 1997]

bougainvillea marking the chief's house on the left and, further on, a turning to the right leading to the Tribal Authority office and *Lekgotleng*, where community meetings (*makgotla*) were held. Another few kilometres beyond Supingstad, the road peters out into a delta of tracks which is the village of Lekgophung, markedly smaller and poorer than Supingstad. One track leads to the village school, a large dusty playing field backed by a long, low teaching block. Another winds around to the post office, Tribal Authority office and community hall where, on the monthly pension day,<sup>6</sup> there is a small market. Yet another leads steeply uphill and out of sight to the village shop.

These were two of the three villages that, under the Madikwe Initiative,<sup>7</sup> were the focus of Madikwe Game Reserve's rural development aims. The third, Molatedi, was located to the east of the Reserve, along a dirt road that presented even more of a challenge to unaccustomed drivers than the one to Supingstad and Lekgophung. Coming from the Reserve, and having first successfully navigated the car-sized potholes, a traveller first passes Mr Ramorula's general store on the right and then comes to the Tribal Authority office compound on the left, which, as in the other two villages, marked the centre of Molatedi. Further along the road was a small medical clinic and then a school, with large signs proudly attributing its existence to the efforts of the local RDP forum.<sup>8</sup>

In 2000, when I was conducting my fieldwork, unemployment was high in all three villages. Figures, gathered from three socio-economic surveys, ranged from thirty-four percent (Perkins, 1993), to fifty-five percent (Bologna, 2000), to ninety-one percent (Magome and Sentle, 1998). While such statistics are highly problematic, given the many variables that may affect them, it was evident that employment opportunities were extremely limited in the villages. Before the establishment of Madikwe in 1991, cattle farming and limited chrome mining were the main sources of wage employment in the area this side of Zeerust. The majority of households were

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<sup>6</sup> When state pensions are distributed.

<sup>7</sup> A British DFID-funded development initiative intended to help enable three villages to become more effective partners in Madikwe Game Reserve and hence to realise benefits coming from the presence of the Reserve. See *The Cast*, page x and page 61-62 for more details.

<sup>8</sup> Reconstruction and Development Programme. The RDP forums are described in chapter five.

largely dependent on small-scale agriculture, pension funds and remittances from family members working elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

At the time of my fieldwork there were few services and little infrastructure in the villages: none had tarred roads and the water supply for most households was from communal standpipes that had only recently been introduced. While Supingstad had had a reticulated electricity supply since 1996, neighbouring Lekgophung was still not connected at the time of my fieldwork, although Eskom, the South African electricity board, had plans in place to set up the necessary infrastructure. Some fifty of about two hundred households in Molatedi were still waiting to be connected. The overall picture was one of poverty and lack of opportunity in this underdeveloped, economically depressed, and sparsely populated region of North West Province, formerly part of the Bophuthatswana homeland.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis is concerned with rural development, specifically the capacity and potential of game parks and ecotourism to function as effective routes to socio-economic upliftment and the reduction, if not elimination, of poverty in South Africa. In particular, the thesis is concerned with people living next to a large, potentially highly lucrative game reserve – and yet having limited, or no, access or secure tenure, nor real means of grasping the opportunities that were supposedly waiting for them behind Madikwe Game Reserve's fence. The thesis focuses on two broad interrelated themes in this marginal area of South Africa's North West Province: one is the experiences of people living with the reality of conservation-driven rural development initiatives; the other is the propensity for powerful, pervasive discourses arising from such initiatives to reshape attitudes and social relations.

## **Thesis Map**

After providing a map of the thesis to guide the reader, this chapter moves on to present an overview of people-based conservation as it was conceptualised at Madikwe Game Reserve and then situates it in the broader context of conservation-

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed description of the socio-economic situations in these villages see *The Villages in 2000* in the following chapter.

<sup>10</sup> An overview of the history of the Bophuthatswana homeland is provided in the following chapter.

driven development in southern Africa. The final section of the chapter comprises a discussion of my research methods.

Chapter two introduces Madikwe Game Reserve and the three villages adjacent to it in greater detail. It explains how the Reserve came to be established by the then Bophuthatswana Parks Board, now North West Parks and Tourism Board (hereafter NWP&TB or the Board); it outlines the factors that led to the implementation of the community development and support programme known as the Madikwe Initiative; and it introduces Mafisa Research and Planning, the NGO responsible for the implementation of the Madikwe Initiative. The chapter also provides an overview of the historical and socio-political context and background necessary to enable the reader to understand the complexities of the area.

Chapter three focuses on shifts in prevailing discourses of development and demonstrates that the rhetoric of the Madikwe Initiative-related agencies was consistent with people-based, grass roots, bottom-up, participatory discourses of development. The chapter argues that the uncomfortable discrepancy between the rhetoric and the actual practice of the agencies exposed and accentuated a power imbalance within the Madikwe Initiative that rendered the so-called local community marginalised and excluded. Drawing on post development literature, the chapter demonstrates that the development agents' conformity to a hegemonic, paradigmatic development discourse enabled and encouraged the creation of false and misleading knowledge about the villages. Another consequence was that local residents' potential involvement in the Madikwe project was confined to a pre-established framework which again emphasised the power imbalance, forestalled the establishment of real bottom-up interventions, and jeopardised the success of the Madikwe project.

Chapter four then argues that paradigmatic discourses fail to reflect or accommodate the complexities of diverse local realities. Drawing on empirical data concerning the relations between the Madikwe Initiative and Chief Suping from the village of Supingstad, I show that the exogenous agents created a deeply reductionist yet intensely powerful democracy/autocracy binary. This binary obscured the operation of power within the Madikwe Initiative and precluded its agents from generating a more sensitive and accurate understanding of the situation. It also justified excluding

the entire village of Supingstad from the Initiative. The chapter focuses on the all-pervasive issues of local governance, specifically the role of chiefs and tribal authorities in a new democratic South Africa. Central to the discussion are notions of democracy and autocracy, of power struggles and political expediency, of shifting positions and evolving identities, of the condition of living between the binaries, of being traditional and modern; local and national, all at once.

Building on chapter four, chapter five focuses on the complex conflicts between competing local governance structures: the chiefs and 'traditional' tribal authorities on one hand and the more recently established, 'democratically' elected district councils on the other. Using the example of Molatedi village, where there were five different and overlapping committees and structures, I demonstrate that a significant number of villagers became alienated from the Madikwe Initiative development process because of tensions over village governance. Those tensions were exacerbated by the presence of the resource-rich Initiative. Despite the efforts of the Initiative's agents to avoid becoming involved in local politics, ultimately they were forced to align themselves with one structure, thereby inevitably antagonising the others. The situation contrasted strongly to that in Lekgophung where there was a single structure effectively representing the village and where Madikwe Initiative-led development interventions had thus proceeded relatively smoothly. But the Initiative's inability to ameliorate or accommodate local governance conflicts in Molatedi, and the ensuing antagonism and exclusion that resulted from that, again highlighted the problems that arise from adhering to an inflexible paradigmatic discourse.

Having shown in chapters four and five how a high proportion of local residents came to be alienated or excluded from the Madikwe project because the developmental approach of NWP&TB and Madikwe Initiative agents adhered to a paradigmatic model that was unable to assimilate or adapt to the intricacies of local realities, chapter six moves on to discuss how the very conceptualisation and management of the Reserve justified and perpetuated the persistence of inequalities and local exclusion. Drawing on post structuralist approaches to landscape theory, I argue that Madikwe is a culturally constructed landscape with deeply political influences. The NWP&TB presented conservation and rural development as two mutually supportive

concepts that could be sustained through ecotourism. However, conflicting perceptions between the 'partners' of Madikwe regarding the role the Reserve was playing, or should have been playing, for residents of the neighbouring villages illuminated how, in reality, an emphasis on economic profit precluded access to the Reserve for villagers. Through presenting an overview of the history of conservation discourse and the changing conceptualisation of game parks in South Africa, I show how the rhetoric of the NWP&TB came to be so firmly (and misleadingly) focused on community development rather than conservation. Such a focus is indicative of yet another insidious form of power underlying Madikwe, a power that further ensured villagers were denied access to the Reserve. This was because, according to such narratives, economic development is what is important, not recreation or game viewing. Therefore the Reserve caters only for exclusive tourism and the receipts generated from private sector lodge operations. Yet, as I demonstrate, to the majority of village respondents, Madikwe represented more than just a business: it was about the conservation of the nation's natural heritage, a heritage to which local residents were denied access – just as in the colonial and apartheid days of 'fortress' conservation.

Having established how local residents were excluded from the Reserve right from its conception, as well as through the theories and logic guiding its operations, chapter seven then shows how the NWP&TB's solution to such exclusion – the Madikwe Initiative – was also flawed from the start. The chapter focuses on the NWP&TB's view of the villages as the 'weak leg' of the Madikwe Project and the Madikwe Initiative as the remedy, aiming to strengthen the communities' involvement in the Madikwe project. By presenting an overview of the Madikwe Initiative's structure and approach to development and illustrating, through empirical evidence concerning the projects, the effects of such an approach, I argue that projects were not sustainable because of an imbalance of power that favoured the Initiative's agents. I show that project participants were critical of such imbalances, but that their views had little impact on the structure or operations of the Madikwe Initiative. However, they did feed into an evolving village-based discourse of self/other, of defining 'empowerment' as control and choice, of a growing belief in the importance of local autonomy and of ensuring that power and control was retained in the village rather than exercised by exogenous agents.

In the final chapter I conclude that 'people-based conservation', as practiced at Madikwe during the time of my fieldwork, was failing to reach its potential to ameliorate rural underdevelopment because it was adhering to a paradigmatic model which could not cater for the complexities intrinsic in everyday life in each neighbouring village. Village residents were viewed by the dominant partners of the Madikwe project as 'the local community', a 'stakeholder', but one which was failing to fulfil its role. This view enabled, and at the same time concealed, the operation of power that marginalised village residents and excluded them from any sort of meaningful participation in the Madikwe project. I stress that such exclusion, rather than being intentional on the part of either the NWP&TB or the Madikwe Initiative, was a result of the inevitable gap between generalised, appealing rhetoric and complex, specific reality.

Throughout, I have avoided utilising the binary model in which a theoretical statement is laid down and developed preliminary to empirical enquiry. I have sought, rather, to integrate the two in some ways after the fashion in which all our minds work in reality. I have hoped to give some sense of the way in which theoretical concerns shadow fieldwork enquiry, infecting and inflecting, for better or worse, but never pretending a clinical segregation of the two (P.R. Anderson, pers. comm., May 2007). If at times this leaves a reader wishing for a fuller statement of theoretical precepts, I must urge that reader to consider that no theory should ever safely precede empirical observation just as no empirical observation should be taken at face value.

## **Madikwe Game Reserve and People-Based Conservation**

Madikwe Game Reserve has often been described as a successful example of people-based conservation. This is particularly true of its managing agency, the North West Parks and Tourism Board, which claims that its primary concern is people, not wildlife, that it uses conservation as a profit-making business, a means to an end, which is rural development rather than simply the protection of natural biodiversity. The Board describes itself as: "a conservation organisation that is world-renowned for its pioneering approach to people-based wildlife conservation" (Davies, 1997:2). It argues that, as long as the 'local community' benefits economically (through jobs and

business opportunities) from the presence of the Reserve, “then firm support for protected areas will be achieved and important conservation objectives will be met almost as a secondary spin-off benefit” (ibid).

Immediately evident from the outset of my fieldwork was that the presence of Madikwe Game Reserve had brought two contemporarily powerful discourses to the area: the discourses of conservation and of rural development. According to the rhetoric of the NWP&TB, the two coexisted, united harmoniously under the broad, evocative banner of ‘ecotourism’. Ecotourism was tantalisingly presented by the Board as potentially the most effective solution to South Africa’s rural problems whereby the national natural heritage could be conserved while, simultaneously, poverty and underdevelopment were being addressed. The Board’s central argument was that Madikwe Game Reserve was a business, and conservation the means of generating a profit, forty percent of which would be channelled through a Community Trust Fund into development projects in the villages.<sup>11</sup> For example, one NWP&TB brochure claimed:

[Madikwe] should not be looked at as solely a protected area or tourism destination – in truth, the Reserve acts as a major social and economic core and engine around which the development of the entire region can be based (Davis, 1997:2).

My fieldwork suggested a less idealistic picture than that painted by the NWP&TB. Indeed, the Board’s view of its approach to conservation was just one of many perspectives I encountered of the intended role of Madikwe Game Reserve. The more I became immersed in the field, the more diverse and divergent became the opinions I heard from my research participants. Ultimately, the myriad differing views they expressed led me to see that the NWP&TB’s claims to people-based conservation had had highly complex and problematic consequences. Contrary to the NWP&TB rhetoric, the economic definition of Madikwe as a ‘sustainable business’, an ‘engine’ to drive development throughout the region, meant that the Reserve, and the natural heritage within it, was the exclusive domain of high paying, elitist tourism. Because the Reserve was not yet making a profit and the Community Trust Fund had not yet

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<sup>11</sup> The park warden explained to me that before the Community Trust Fund can start functioning, however, the Reserve must cover its operational costs and at least begin paying back the original development loans. He gave no indication as to how long that might take (interview 21 September 2000).

been established, villagers had not experienced the promised economic and developmental benefits. For the vast majority of local residents, Madikwe was little more than a continuing story of exclusion, a continuation of the apartheid and, indeed, the pre-apartheid periods of dispossession.

A number of key factors contributed to Madikwe's exclusion of local residents which are best introduced through looking at people-based conservation on a more general level. One major reason that local residents are often forestalled from participating to any meaningful extent in conservation-driven development initiatives – even those initiatives run under the people-based conservation banner – is that the people-based conservation paradigm is so alluring that agencies tend to adopt its easily accessible rhetoric without managing to translate that rhetoric into meaningful changes in practice. Rural development maxims become incorporated into public sphere parlance, and conservation objectives are simultaneously sidelined, even though those objectives are still, in practice, the central concern, or attraction, for all those who have access to the Reserve, such as ecologists, rangers, lodge management and tourists. Hence, to return to the Madikwe example, comments from NWP&TB agents regarding the role of the Reserve (such as that quoted above) are notably free from ecological concerns – despite the fact that in reality the Board's mandate is, first and foremost, to fulfill ecological objectives. For example, an excerpt from the NWP&TB's mandate in the *Land Incorporation Agreement* (2000) reads: “the Board is obliged to manage, control and develop Madikwe and promote the protection, conservation and propagation of indigenous wild animals, fish and indigenous plants...”. The ‘people’ aspects of its commitments are not mentioned.

As I will show, conservation and its ethics, principles and objectives (sustaining the nation's natural heritage) becomes overshadowed, on a discursive level, by a heavy emphasis on development. Whether intentionally or not, this is another form of the power that underlies conserved areas, a power that marginalises or excludes local residents. It has tended to result in interventions that fail to achieve the goals of aiding local residents to become involved in and reap benefits from conservation operations. Instead, those development initiatives often lose coherence as, and possibly even because, their motivating force (conservation) is not the driving force behind initiatives. Furthermore, as I set out to demonstrate in the chapters that follow, local

residents, rather than being empowered to embrace the Reserve's priorities – namely conservation strategies – become further marginalised, even alienated, from conservationist discourses and their associated practices.

Indisputably, the very concept of conservation needs questioning: how, once socio-economic responsibilities have been attended to (even if only with a perfunctory rhetorical nod), it has come to occupy such a moral high ground; how its environmental goals are then considered to be ethically faultless; how the very idea of conservation has come to be so accepted and taken for granted that it is almost conceptually invisible. For, as Braun and Wainwright say: “environmental politics are always entangled with a cultural politics of knowing... [and] the very thing that is taken to be the object of environmental studies and politics – namely, ‘nature’ – is an effect of power” (2001:41). Furthermore, conservation has a proven capacity to generate economic profit through ecotourism. But it is those who have ownership and control of the ecotourism related operations, and the profits, who reap the benefits. Meanwhile, where local resident ‘stakeholders’ do not have secure tenure over or within a conserved area they can ‘participate’ in conservation only through having a share of the economic profits from ecotourism, and then only when delivered to them (usually via a trust) to finance exogenously initiated development projects (cf. Adams and Hulme, 2001; Emerton, 2001; Turner, 2004 and Matose, n.d.). The usual result is that it is only wealthy national and international tourists who have access to South Africa's natural heritage, while poor local residents are excluded.

Yet, people-based conservation suggests a cure-all for a major facet of South Africa's rural problems and thus continues to be deeply appealing. Indeed, initiatives based on people-based approaches to conservation and development have become progressively more prevalent throughout southern Africa, especially in the last decade. Interventions range from relatively small scale initiatives such as some of the CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe, to the Peace Parks Foundation's Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) which create vast conservation ‘corridors’ stretching across international boundaries. Not only does people-based conservation affect the lives of ever increasing numbers of people, but it is permeated by some of the most controversial issues in the new, democratic South Africa, such as land tenure and

redistribution; unemployment; poverty; underdevelopment and massive rural/urban inequalities.

There is a variety of phrases used to denote these developmental approaches to conservation. They include 'community-based conservation'; 'community-based natural resource management' (CBNRM); and 'people-based conservation'. All contain the notion that conservation can no longer be justified unless local people benefit. However, the phrase people-based conservation neatly conceals two dominant narratives. One is about conservation and natural heritage, the other is concerned with economic profit and development. Many conservation agencies triumphantly portray the two as mutually supportive and harmonious. Yet, attempting to treat the two as symbiotic can be problematic because they seek to fulfil interrelated yet entirely separate functions. Local residents often have highly restricted access to conserved areas largely because both the managing conservation agencies and the local private sector have found exclusive tourism to be the most effective way of generating profit from conservation. The result is that local residents continue to be excluded from conservation and associated development initiatives, despite the people-based conservation banner.

There is undoubtedly a need to ensure that conservation is economically viable and sustainable. Yet, to reduce it to the economic sum of its parts is to adopt a particularly impoverished definition of sustainability that is at odds with popular notions of sustainable development which emphasise local empowerment, participation and capacity building.<sup>12</sup> Even the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme called for "participation of communities in management and decision making in wildlife conservation and the related tourism benefits" (cited in Honey, 1999:345). In many respects, appeals to people-based conservation mirror a commitment to that kind of sustainable development, at least on a discursive level. Yet, as I shall show in the chapters that follow, practice does not necessarily reflect that stated commitment.

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<sup>12</sup> The literature emphasising the centrality of social elements of sustainable development is vast. See, for example, Honey, 1999, Gibbon et al, 1995, O'Hearn, 1999, and even the Brundtland Report, 1987 and the Rio Earth Summit, 1992 – as is the literature critiquing it (see chapter three).

Central to much people-based conservation discourse is a belief that rural populations need to organise themselves under a single representative committee, a “coalescent structure of organization which is the overall arbiter of community stance and action” (Barrow and Murphree, 2001:35). The problems arising from this organisational prerequisite constitute a major thread that runs through this thesis. For my fieldwork in the villages around Madikwe found that, particularly in Molatedi village, conflicts between competing local governance structures had highly complex impacts on the development enterprise. The conflicts emphasised a lack of social cohesion in the village and illustrated (as I will show) how the organisational requirement is highly difficult to achieve through intervention, if it is not already in place.

Such problems have led academics and practitioners to question people-based approaches to development. For example, in 2003, PLAAS<sup>13</sup> ran a web-based discussion forum entitled *CBNRM in Crisis*. One of the main reasons to which contributors attributed the crisis within CBNRM discourse is that external agents, whether they are NGOs, governments or donor agencies, have a tendency to bring into ‘the community’ already prescribed agendas about how local residents should be mobilised. Even if some form of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approaches or other similar approaches are applied in assessing community needs, they tend only partially to meet local residents’ aspirations. As Njaya (2003) says, often community institutions or organisations are established at the behest of external agents who fail to understand the scale and complexities of existing groupings and relationships within such communities. Needless to say, the norm is that they fail.

The development arena has been a focus of social science research for at least the last fifty years, the period which Sachs (1992) calls ‘the age of development’.<sup>14</sup> Bennett and Bowen (1988) argue that: “Because development has become a historical and national necessity [sic], anthropologists are drawn into participation even as they protest its means and ends...” (1988:2). Indeed the arena of development, as I will discuss in chapter three, is highly contentious – and infinitely complex in its impact on socio-cultural, economic and political processes (Grillo, 1997). Development

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<sup>13</sup> Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape.

<sup>14</sup> Sachs dates the beginning of the ‘age of development’ from 20 January 1949, the day that President Truman labelled the Southern hemisphere as constituting ‘under-developed areas’.

interventions, largely because of innumerable unintended impacts and correspondingly disastrous results, have attracted passionate and penetrating analyses and critiques from a large number of anthropologists (see, for example, Ferguson, 1990, 1999; Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Werbner, 1999; Gardner, 1997). Yet, despite the evident failure of many development programmes, the need to address the real issue of poverty cannot be avoided and the perceived potential of development interventions to fulfil the development dream never entirely evaporates. Before setting forth on my own journey into the development arena I will first comment more fully on my presence in Madikwe and the research methods I used.

## Methods and Ethical Considerations

Hermeneutic philosophy in its varying styles...reminds us that the simplest cultural accounts are intentional creations, that interpreters constantly construct themselves through the others they study (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:10).

In anthropology, or anyway social anthropology, what the practitioners do is ethnography. And it is in understanding what ethnography is, or more exactly, *what doing ethnography is*, that a start can be made toward what anthropological analysis amounts to as a form of knowledge (Geertz:1973:7-8).

My fieldwork in and around Madikwe Game Reserve took place between February and December 2000. It was geared to fulfil the aims of three distinct but overlapping undertakings: a Mafisa-linked exploration of potential cultural tourism options in the area; a socio-economic survey and evaluative report for the NWP&TB to assess the impact of ten years of Madikwe Game Reserve on the three villages in closest proximity to it; and research for this academic thesis. At times, therefore, my fieldwork was shaped by research briefs from Mafisa and at other times by requirements for the NWP&TB survey with the result that the data presented in this thesis are the product of a wide range of research methods. As Gupta (1998) points out, anthropologists legitimately and necessarily utilise a variety of methods to achieve their goals, and it is important to acknowledge and explicate them. The purpose of this section is to describe and discuss the different methods I used and the data they generated.

The chapters that follow are necessarily shaped and informed by the totality of my field stay experiences, in that it is impossible to compartmentalise impressions and

understandings gained through each of the three undertakings. However, unless otherwise stated, evidence presented throughout the thesis derives from in-depth interviews, conversations and chats, ranging from tightly formal, particularly in the early stages of fieldwork, to wholly informal, relaxed and familiar as relationships with key respondents grew progressively more comfortable and trusting. This evidence is referenced with interview dates, regardless of the level of formality of the exchange, or whether I was conducting the interview specifically to feed into the NWP&TB report or for my own thesis. The two often overlapped. I have also made use of quantitative data generated from the socio-economic survey, which is referenced accordingly.<sup>15</sup>

I went to Madikwe initially to conduct research for Mafisa into cultural tourism possibilities that could link into and enhance the people-based conservation initiatives that the NWP&TB said were the bedrock of the Madikwe project. My first point of entry to the villages was therefore through and with Mafisa. Thereafter, my dilemma, as an anthropologist, was that I was forever associated with Mafisa no matter how hard I tried to convince fieldwork participants that I was an independent, neutral and unbiased researcher, as unfeasible as that was. Furthermore, in attempts to disassociate myself with the colonial and apartheid past of South Africa, I would introduce myself as coming from Ireland (usually managing to point out that Ireland has suffered a longer period of colonisation than any other country in the world), conveniently failing to mention the years of my undergraduate degree at the University of Sussex in England. In ways such as this I attempted to construct an identity based on my assumptions of what ingredients that identity might need for me to be most sympathetically received by village residents. Eventually I realised the futility of my efforts. To most villagers I was a potential resource, one of those people who come, with varying priorities and agendas, from 'the Reserve' (Madikwe). In their eyes, I was white, female, well educated, wealthy and highly privileged.

One experience in particular brought me face to face with my pretensions. I was walking past the bottle store in Molatedi with Paul, a young resident of the village whom I had come to know quite well over the months. As we drew level with a group

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<sup>15</sup> The main interview schedule that was used in the survey is reproduced in appendix 1.

of men sitting on the shop's *stoep*, or veranda, one of them shouted to me: "Hey, lady! Please help us with some rands. We have nothing—". Paul, embarrassed, said something angrily to them in Setswana, at which they looked chastened and apologised. "I was telling them you are a researcher, not one of the tourists," Paul explained. I had a sudden realisation that I was being viewed and treated in very particular ways. It was as if those who had had more contact with me had learnt how I wanted to be treated and even went as far as to pass on that knowledge to those not in the know. In this way, it seemed that my interactions with people were often consciously contrived. We were operating within a framework that had been established through years of researcher-researched role playing.<sup>16</sup> Such a framework inevitably had a great impact on how respondents selected what they did and did not share with me. It highlighted the importance of the long-term nature of anthropological fieldwork methods where participant observation and rambling informal conversations can fill in many gaps left by more contrived and rigid interviews. My methods, between the survey for the NWP&TB and research for Mafisa and my own thesis, were at times consistent with the former, at times with the latter. The remainder of this chapter comprises three sections: the first provides a description of my presence in the field; the second details the NWP&TB survey methodology and the third discusses broader ethical considerations.

### **Living in a Mission**

Whether or not Madikwe Game Reserve was degraded farm land ten years prior to my field stay,<sup>17</sup> in 2000 it was a rocky, impenetrable landscape of dense thorny bush accessed by a minimum of challenging (particularly for the old Opel Kadett I drove) dirt roads. It looked just like my *Out of Africa*<sup>18</sup> clichéd imaginings of a quintessential African wilderness. More or less in the middle of the Reserve was Vleischfontein Mission,<sup>19</sup> the downstairs half of which was used as offices by the NWP&TB.

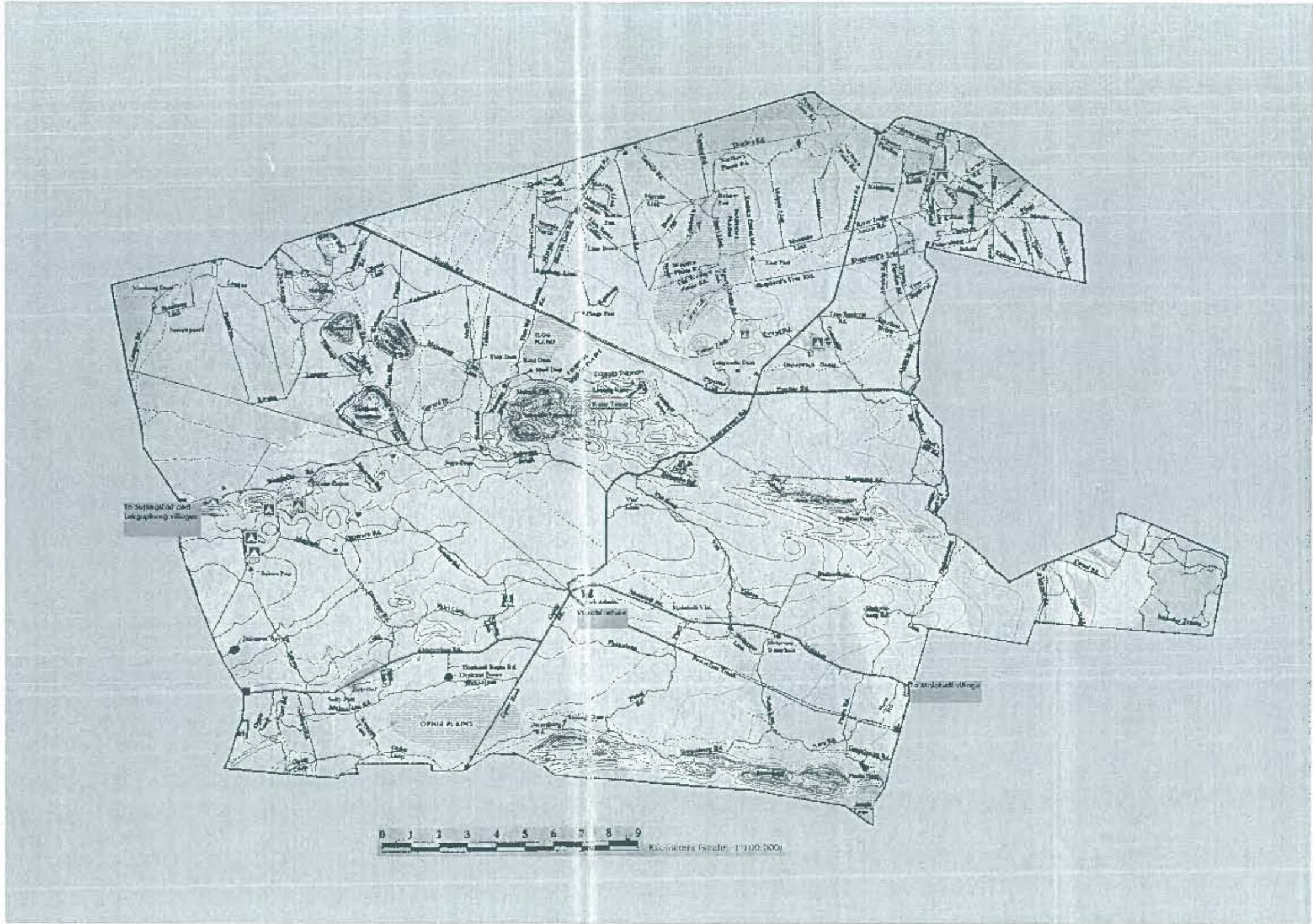
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<sup>16</sup> Including the original pre-feasibility survey conducted by a firm known as Settlement Planning Services (SETPLAN) in 1991, four surveys had been conducted in the villages, as well Madikwe Initiative-related research and DfID reviews. Many of my respondents therefore had a history of being 'researched'.

<sup>17</sup> As the SETPLAN pre-feasibility study which recommended the establishment of the Reserve asserts (see pages 55-57 of the following chapter).

<sup>18</sup> A romanticised film about colonial Kenya, starring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep.

<sup>19</sup> A brief history of the Mission is provided in appendix 4.



**Map 2: Madikwe Game Reserve.**  
[Source: Adapted from North West Parks and Tourism Board, 2007.]

Vleischfontein became my base and home for my first six months in Madikwe.<sup>20</sup> I had a little room upstairs, one of a row of five. At 4 pm every weekday the gates to the Reserve were locked and I would have to be back from whichever village I had been conducting research in. The Parks staff would all have gone for the day, not to return until eight the following morning, and I would be alone in the Mission. I soon established a routine of writing up my field notes, planning the following day and cooking an evening meal. I had no shortage of time to reflect and mull over each day's experiences.

Living at Vleischfontein was not ideal for my fieldwork, which would doubtlessly have benefited had I actually lived in each of the villages. But the NWP&TB allowed me to stay at the mission free of charge, and funding did not stretch to accommodation costs in the villages. Having to keep gate times was particularly irksome as it imposed tight strictures on my time, often curbing spontaneous interactions. It was possible to request special permission from the park warden to return late to the Reserve, but this was not encouraged as it caused considerable inconvenience to the Park's staff. Nevertheless, given its central location, Vleischfontein was the most practical place for me to base myself.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, when I first arrived in Madikwe I was working for Mafisa, which had its headquarters in an out-building of the former Mission. Three months later I was deep into the socio-economic survey for the NWP&TB and needed access to the office equipment at Vleischfontein. My evenings were then spent loading data into a NWP&TB computer.

### **The Socio-economic Survey**

Some ten weeks after I arrived in Madikwe the NWP&TB commissioned me to conduct a socio-economic survey in the villages. The Reserve was approaching its tenth anniversary and the Board had decided this was an apposite time to assess the

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<sup>20</sup> In appendix 4 there is a photograph I took in 2000 of the main building. My room was to the right of the entrance. For the remainder of my stay I lived in the old farmstead at Onverwacht, a (former) farm to the south east of Vleischfontein, where the ecologists lived.

<sup>21</sup> The location of Vleischfontein Mission can be seen on map 2, page 21. Map 3, page 34, shows the distance of the villages from Vleischfontein and from one another: while Lekgophung and Supingstad were relatively close to one another, Molatedi was located on the opposite side of the Reserve. A round trip of the villages covered some 200 km – and that on roads that were profoundly potholed and pitted, with unexpected thorny patches. Once I picked up three punctures in a single morning.

impact Madikwe had had on what they termed the local community.<sup>22</sup> The aims of the survey were to establish local perceptions and attitudes toward the Reserve; to determine the extent of villagers' involvement in Madikwe; to elicit villagers' needs and priorities; and to provide a socio-economic overview of the villages to compare with three earlier surveys conducted in 1993, 1998 and 1999.

I decided the best way to proceed would be to employ a field assistant in each village who would be able to administer interview schedules and also act as a translator. Following local protocol I wrote to the Tribal Authority<sup>23</sup> in each village and asked them to select five residents, who were fluent in Setswana and English, for me to interview. In an attempt to ensure that assistants were as neutral as possible, and perceived to be so by respondents, it was desirable that they were not members of any village committees and that they did not have strong political affiliations. After the first round of interviews in Supingstad and Lekgophung, I invited Moses Molefe and Naledi Rapoo to work with me. Moses was twenty-one years old and had recently completed matriculation. He was taking some time out while deciding what to do next. His dream was to become a pilot. He lived with his parents, who were relatively well off by Supingstad standards, three brothers and a sister, but had a *rondawel* (a round, thatched mud-brick building separate from the main house) to himself. Naledi was twenty-six years old and had completed her matriculation several years before. She also lived at home (in a single building) with her mother, an aunt, two sisters and four nieces and nephews. Both Naledi and Moses were charismatic people, questioning and assertive. They immediately engaged with the research, offering their thoughts and opinions.

The process of finding a field assistant in Molatedi was more problematic. After numerous requests to the Tribal Authority and two abortive interview sessions

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<sup>22</sup> A notion that I problematise throughout the thesis. See chapter three in particular.

<sup>23</sup> The colonial and apartheid systems of government created institutions that were called 'tribal authorities'. They were each presided over by a chief who was recognised by the government in power. The tribal authorities comprised a set of persons, conventionally men, who were regarded as counsellors to the chief (see Hammond-Tooke (1975) for a detailed description of the structure of tribal authorities). It is important to stress that notions of tribe and tribal are highly problematic and contested in the South African context, particularly as they were pivotal in justifying the colonial and apartheid governments' strategies for dividing and controlling the country's population. See Skalnik (1988), who traces the terms to their colonial origins, discusses how they were used to legitimise separate development and exposes them as the inappropriate yet resilient impositions they are, inapplicable to "actual social situations" in South Africa (1988:74).

attempts where nobody turned up, the Tribal Authority finally managed to present six people for interview. None was appropriate: two were members of the chief's family; another was the daughter of Mr Ramorula, Molatedi's main businessman; another was heavily involved in ANC politics and two could not really speak English. I asked the Tribal Authority to draw up another list of people, but after a week it still had not. As the pilot study and first week of research had already been completed in both Lekgophung and Supingstad, there was no time to wait, so I asked Seth Modisane, whom I already knew, if he would be my assistant. Seth was in his early thirties and lived alone in a two-roomed house. He was unmarried and had no children. Although Seth had been involved in village politics (he had been a member of the Village Service Committee and the former Community Development Organisation – committees which I will introduce in detail in the following chapters) and had also worked with Mafisa, at the time he was not involved with any of these bodies. It is almost certain that his past activities impacted on respondents' attitudes towards him and perceptions of his neutrality, but he was well liked in the village and, in the circumstances, he was the best option. Indeed, his knowledge and understanding of the numerous complex issues and conflicts in Molatedi were of fundamental importance to the success of the research.

### *The Interview Schedule*

While it is highly questionable how effectively statistics gathered from questionnaires and interview schedules reflect the real life situations they are supposed to represent, they nevertheless can be an efficient way of reaching a large number of people in a relatively short space of time (Tuckman, 1988; Bernard, 1995). The NWP&TB required a sense of 'majority' views and hard percentages from the survey. For these reasons the NWP&TB project manager and I decided interview schedules would be a useful tool, provided the data gathered from them were clarified, coloured and explained by the everyday contact and interactions that are so central to anthropological fieldwork methods. Based on my own earlier research in the villages while working for Mafisa (see the following chapter), I designed the interview schedules (reproduced in appendix 1) to elicit varying and changing community perceptions and attitudes towards the Reserve as well as to gather socio-economic data. The questions were written in English and then translated into Setswana. As a further precaution, to ensure that the full meaning of the questions was being

conveyed, a different person translated the questions back into English (cf. Bernard (1995:275) who stresses the importance of what he calls back translation when phrasing questions in another language). During this process, my field assistants and I discussed each question to see how it might be interpreted in the villages. We then conducted pilot studies in each village.

### *The Pilot Study*

Moses and Naledi each administered six trial interview schedules in Supingstad and Lekgophung respectively, choosing respondents randomly. As Supingstad and Lekgophung are located close together, it was possible for both Moses and Naledi to be present for some of the pilot interviews, one interviewing and the other observing. I was present for all but two of the interviews and this also served as a training process for the field assistants: after each session, we discussed and practiced interview techniques and identified and suggested remedies for problems within the interview schedules.

For example, we found that some questions were taking too long for people to answer in proportion to their importance to the aims of the research, so we amended or dropped those questions. We also found that respondents' interest tended to flag towards the end and answers thus become too superficial. To remedy this, we rearranged the order of the questions and this allowed interviews to flow more smoothly and helped to keep the pace going. Due to time constraints and the fact that pilot studies had already been carried out in the other two villages, Seth piloted only two interview schedules in Molatedi. We did not feel any further changes needed to be made. All in all, we conducted research for the survey between May and October 2000, the bulk of the interview schedules being administered between July and September.

The successful execution of the fieldwork, both for this thesis and for the NWP&TB survey, was almost entirely due to the personal relationships and understandings Moses, Naledi, Seth and I developed together. Over the course of the survey we interviewed over four hundred people. Because of the wide scope of the aims of the survey a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods were used, ranging from structured interview schedules and open-ended, in-depth interviews, to informal

conversations and participant observation. Interviews and conversations carried out before the survey formally began fed into the formation of a set of questions that I came to see, for the purpose of the survey, as representing the major issues around Madikwe.

Altogether we surveyed two hundred and forty households in Lekgophung, Supingstad and Molatedi. Each interview schedule was administered face to face. Initially we were going to weight the sample size according to the population size of each village, but in practice, due to time and transport constraints, we divided the sample equally, conducting eighty interview schedules in each village. Every effort was made to aim for a random sampling selection process but, as there were no maps of the villages showing houses, or data on household makeup, this was difficult. Similarly, the 1996 population census was neither recent nor detailed enough to help with the sampling process. These factors meant that formally systematic random sampling techniques could not be used, such as those Bernard (1995:71-101) details in his comprehensive guide to sampling methods. Instead, I drew sketch maps of the villages, and took a rough count of the number of houses. My field assistants and I then chose houses randomly within geographical locations. For example, in Lekgophung, we surveyed approximately every fifth house along each road. Respondents were drawn from all adult members of selected households, rather than just the household heads. We followed this approach in order to obtain as wide as possible a range of opinions and ideas, representing different age groups, gender, employment status, education level and so on.

Initially I intended that the sample of two hundred and forty households would be stratified to include representatives of all people involved in Madikwe, for example, employees within the Reserve and participants on all Madikwe Initiative projects. This became problematic due to differences in the kinds of questions that needed to be asked of those familiar with the Reserve and those not. It was also desirable to see how many Madikwe-related employees and trainees were caught in the random selection process. Therefore I drew up separate interview schedules and processes for people involved in the Reserve or Madikwe Initiative-related employment or training programmes.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

I held semi-structured interviews with a selection of people employed on each Madikwe Initiative project and with a cross section of NWP&TB and lodge employees. I determined the sample size by making it relative to the number of people working in a particular project or occupation. I selected respondents randomly, with the use of staff lists. With the lodges and the NWP&TB staff, I stratified the sample to include employees working in different sectors and domiciled in different areas. I interviewed all members of upper level management.

### *Focus Group Discussions*

Despite the problems inherent in them, surveys based on formal interview schedules administered by interviewers can be an effective way of collecting data, especially in comparison to systems of self-administrated questionnaires (Bernard, 1995).

However, a major concern, particularly with the collection of qualitative data, is that structured questions severely limit the depth and scope of information a respondent offers. Structured interview questions are necessarily designed more on the basis of the researcher's preconceptions than on what the respondent may find most important. Although every effort was made to include open-ended questions which would allow respondents room to raise and discuss issues they found most important, I felt that the interview schedules were still too structured to ensure a full exploration of participants' priorities, perceptions and ideas. A further consideration was that interview schedules are static, usually involving only the interviewer and the respondent, question and answer (Punch, 1998).

To create a more dynamic environment to elicit and discuss different views, I therefore also held a series of focus group discussions. The aim was to have three focus group discussions in each village, each comprising not more than ten people in a context where people would feel comfortable voicing their views. Interest and attendance varied widely from village to village. Ultimately, three discussions were held in Lekgophung, two in Molatedi and four in Supingstad, as residents' interest in attending there was far greater than in the other two villages. The first discussion took place in Supingstad's Tribal Authority office in a situation that unavoidably became quite formal. Over sixty men and women attended. Initially five older men dominated

the discussion to the extent that it became more like a forum for airing patriarchal views. Although towards the end some younger men and women finally offered a few opinions, the experience made me appreciate the benefits of small and age/gender-equal samples for discussion groups so that participants would be less likely to be intimidated by older men. Three such meetings were held in the following weeks. In Molatedi and Lekgophung the groups were never larger than ten people.

### *Broadening the Focus*

My field assistants and I also interviewed residents in the nearby village of Nietverdiend (see map 3, page 34), as well as a selection of nearby farmers and farm workers, to see how their perspectives might differ from people resident in the villages that were within the scope of the Madikwe Initiative. We held twenty-four such interviews. Of these, fourteen were semi-structured and were carried out by Moses and Naledi in Setswana while I conducted the rest, which were more open-ended, either in English or, more problematically, in Afrikaans with the aid of a translator.

### **Ethics and Reflexivity**

The nature of our research relationships and the fact that anthropologists often work in contexts characterised by differential access to power and resources imposes upon us a grave responsibility to consider carefully the character of our research and its likely effects for those who participate in it (Ethical Guidelines, 2005).

In the context of practicing and maintaining good ethical conduct in the field, I had two major, overriding concerns. The first was any unintended and damaging repercussions my work might have on research participants, and the second was a fear of misunderstanding or misrepresenting those participants.

My research, particularly for the NWP&TB survey, was geared primarily towards assessing and understanding perceptions and realities of the impact the Reserve and the Madikwe Initiative had had and was having on the residents of the three villages. A major theme that runs through this thesis is that there was an overwhelming imbalance of power that rendered villagers marginalised and placed them at the bottom of the hierarchy around which the Madikwe project was structured. It is not surprising that trawling through my data has revealed that many research participants

from the villages held intensely negative views of the partners who dominated the project, and even of the few village residents who were seen as reaping profits at the expense of others. In order to protect those respondents I have omitted their names throughout the thesis, apart from those respondents who were in public office (such as the chiefs), whose positions thus made their identities apparent, and who had given me express permission to cite them.

My other chief concern about the ethical dimensions of my fieldwork was the question of accurate respondent representation. This came to dominate the data analysis and writing up process. Because of my discomfort with interpretation and representation, the first draft of the report I wrote for the NWP&TB was called *Voicing the Issues*. It presented only excerpts from interviews, with a minimum of interpretation and analysis. I felt there was no place in that highly complex world for my own voice. Who was I, a mere outsider and a foreigner, to have an opinion? Yet the NWP&TB had employed me to have an opinion. In order to fulfil my brief and produce a document that could be useful to the Board, analysis and interpretation were essential.

According to Grillo (1997) I was not alone in my torment: he asserts that since the 1980s anthropologists have become increasingly absorbed with reflexivity and self-analysis, suffering what could be termed a post-modern crisis (1997:1). After many months of living in Madikwe, conducting fieldwork in the three villages, I finally felt I had begun to understand the meaning of such a crisis. What I found to be highly problematic was the need to organise, and present in a linear manner, be it a report or an academic dissertation, more than a year of multi-dimensional thoughts, ideas, perceptions and feelings – and to then consign those experiences to an ordered, tangible form which is easy to scrutinise, to read, criticise and evaluate. One result of the fieldwork experience was a daunting realisation of the multiple ways of understanding and infinite shades of meaning that a researcher must process and then shape into a cohesive, coherent argument. Eventually, the crisis can cripple – and ultimately become the height of self-indulgence. At times anthropologists' predilection for reflexivity is simply fence sitting, which, although uncomfortable, is not nearly as difficult as actually producing, processing and forming a hopefully balanced, informed analysis of the fieldwork data.

For me, it was the need to order my fieldwork, to order research participants' perceptions and, worse, to order my own understandings and interpretations of those perceptions, that I found so uncomfortable and problematic. Evidently, fieldwork methods impact heavily on the results that are produced, just as interpretation of those results can never really be objective. Indeed, it is important to recognise the unfeasibility of objectivity within the research process as such a recognition enables a more accurate view of the relationship between researcher and research participant, which is inevitably one of unequal power (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004, Mills, 2004). My background, assumptions, influences and experiences could not but shape the research process and how I interpreted the data it generated. Indeed, as Abu-Lughod says:

to ignore the encounter [between anthropologists and their hosts] not only denies the power of such factors as personality, social location in the community, intimacy of contact, and luck (not to mention theoretical orientation and self-conscious methodology) to shape fieldwork and its product but also perpetuates the conventional fictions of objectivity and omniscience that marks the ethnographic genre (1987:10).

In order to remind the reader that the fieldwork data I gathered were so definitely shaped by who I was, throughout the thesis I emphasise and restate my presence in the field. I also quote research participants extensively throughout the following pages in order to bring their voices to the fore. Although I have 'tidied up' quotes for the sake of clarity, I have deliberately kept such tidying to a minimum in order to provide as precise as possible a reflection of the voices of respondents, to retain the texture, individuality and tone of their words.

## Chapter Two

### Setting the Scene

#### Finding the Fieldwork Site

It is clear that one of the key resources that these communities own is their culture and history. Culture is an asset that communities own and that can be marketed, particularly to tourists, in a way that creates jobs and attracts investment. Cultural tourism, that is tourism which develops and promotes the diverse heritage of a country, region or particular community has been shown to be the most effective and sustainable basis for community tourism. Supporting, developing and promoting the cultural and historical wealth of these communities is, therefore, a key component of the Madikwe Initiative (E. Koch, Mafisa Director, email correspondence, 13 February 2000).

This was what I had been looking for – an opportunity to explore the cultural tourism possibilities within a people-based conservation framework in a rural South African setting. I had recently completed a coursework-based research project on tourism to Robben Island and Cape Town's townships in which I had focussed on issues of representation and authenticity, exploitation, voyeurism and stereotyping. MacCannell (1992) wrote: "Tourism is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs" (1992:1). Indeed, while writing my paper on the Robben Island museum and township tours I had grappled with the problematic potential of history and culture to become packaged commodities that lose integrity through being angled to meet the demands of a tourism market. The Madikwe Initiative presented an opportunity to explore issues around 'community tourism' (as outlined by Koch above), particularly as work had not yet begun: I would be able to witness its evolution from the start.

Soon it was all arranged. I would go to Madikwe and conduct preliminary research for Mafisa into cultural tourism possibilities. At the same time I would be able to undertake research for my own thesis. "You do have a car. Yes? You'd better drive up," added the director of Mafisa in our final telephone conversation, "I'd like you to stop at the Kimberley Museum on your way. There is an excellent photographic

collection of the Tswana by Duggan-Kronin.<sup>24</sup> And anyway, you'll need a car in Madikwe.”

And so early one February morning in 2000 I set off in my old Opel Kadett on the long journey from Cape Town to Madikwe, which I knew was somewhere in the far North West Province. But as I drove out of Cape Town I had little idea of how far that actually was. The Klein Karoo. The Groot Karoo. Scrubby bush, distant horizons and dry, shimmering heat. It seemed quite reasonable when the needle on the Opel's temperature gauge inched steadily upwards into the red. The clacking noise coming from somewhere under the bonnet was more alarming. Forty kilometres outside Kimberley the car finally gave up. My saviour was a huge Afrikaner man who hitched my car to his fifty-two ton truck with a five-foot air pipe, and towed me to safety. I stayed in Kimberley for four days, perusing the museum's Duggan-Kronin collection and admiring the town's Big Hole,<sup>25</sup> while I waited for a farm mechanic (located some 20km outside Kimberley, near to where I broke down) to fix my car. Eventually the mechanic admitted that I might be waiting for weeks, so I proceeded to Johannesburg in a hired car.

The adventures of the trip from Cape Town tremendously, if misleadingly, elongated the distance I had travelled, rendering Madikwe forever in the back of beyond in my mind, just as befits any 'genuine' safari. Furthermore, as my car was still being repaired by the farm mechanic, I travelled from Johannesburg to Madikwe with a Mafisa consultant. So it was that on my arrival in Madikwe I was firmly linked to Mafisa. As I have mentioned, I spent much of the following months protesting the Mafisa labelling and striving to convince research participants of my 'independent' status. As I write this now I am sure that such protestations were fruitless. I do not doubt that most people in the villages viewed me as a potential source of opportunity, one of those Mafisa/Parks Board elite who had unrestricted access to the Reserve and its resources, which, in a sense, I did have.

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<sup>24</sup> Alfred Martin Duggan-Kronin (1874-1954) was an Irish photographer who photographed Tswana people extensively. I have included two of his photographs of Chief Gaborone in appendix 2.

<sup>25</sup> The remnants of an opencast diamond mine hacked out of blue kimberlite rock that has the distinction of being the largest manmade hole in the world.

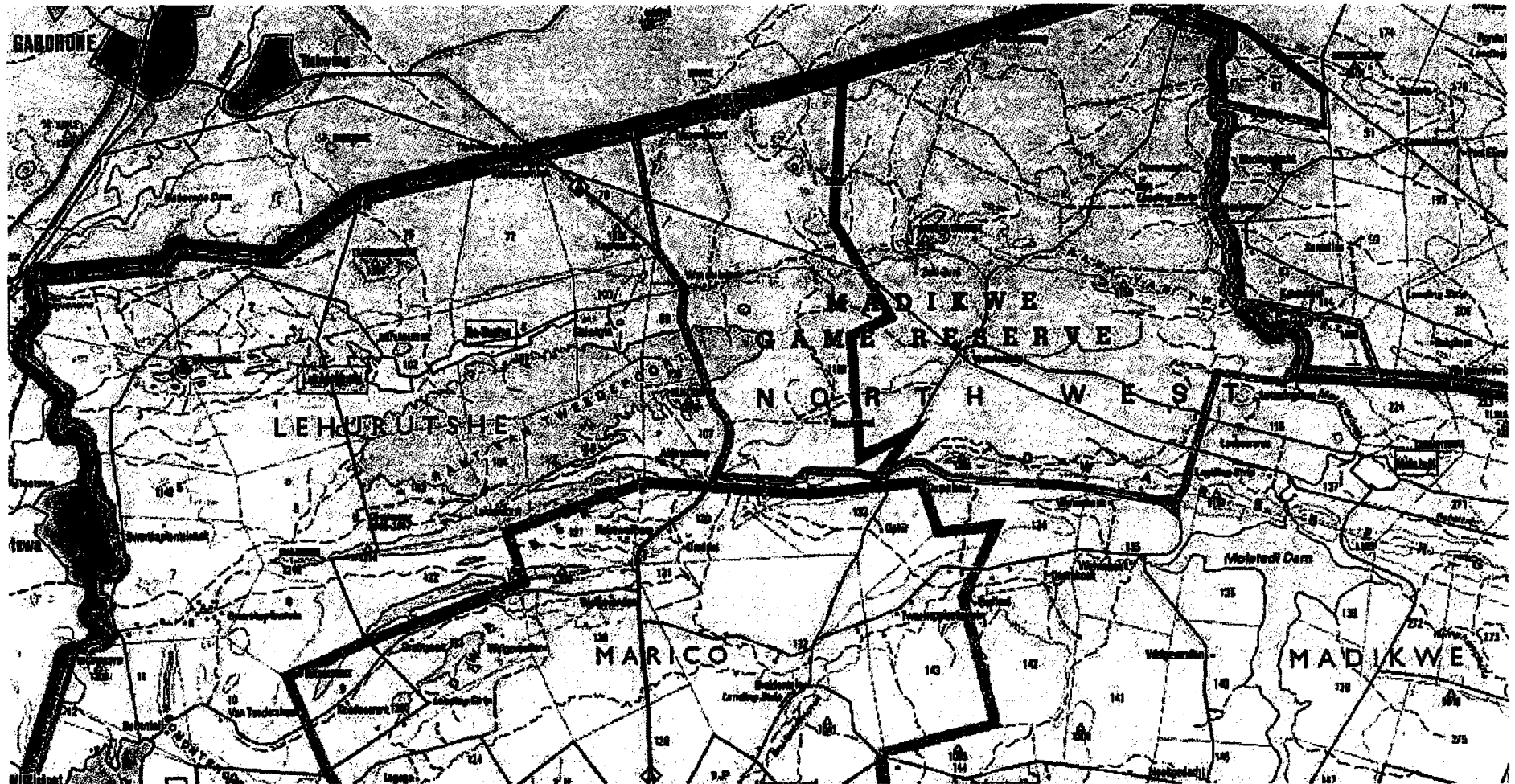
The purpose of this chapter is to introduce my fieldwork site: Madikwe Game Reserve and the three villages adjacent to it that were the focus of the Madikwe Initiative – Molatedi, Supingstad and Lekgophung. I provide an explanation of how the Reserve came to be established, as well as an overview of the historical and socio-political context in which it was developed. The overview is intended to help the reader to understand the complexities and tensions that have influenced the social and developmental relationships, attitudes and perceptions in the area. It also illuminates one of the main threads running through the thesis: that development is unavoidably and intensely political and cannot proceed effectively unless the socio-political context that has shaped, and continues to shape, the lives of the people to be ‘developed’, is understood, addressed and accommodated.

## **An Historical View**

In this section I draw on historical data about the Madikwe area in order to create a sense of the socio-cultural and political processes that have shaped the region where the Reserve and the villages of Lekgophung, Supingstad and Molatedi are located. The Reserve straddles two districts that, at the time of writing, are the districts of Lehurutshe to the west and Madikwe to the east. But, during my fieldwork the former was known as the Central District and the latter as Rustenburg District. Names change and borders move – indeed, the land which comprises my fieldwork site has been viewed and demarcated in many different ways during its documented history by the diverse people who have occupied or traversed it. A perusal of those different perspectives serves as a reminder of how space comes to be a cultural construction – and is thus irrevocably a reflection of dominant politics and shifting balances of power. It is plainly well beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into a thorough exploration of the history of the region.<sup>26</sup> My aim, rather, is to provide an overview, painted in broad brushstrokes, of past events and processes that, at the time of my fieldwork, still had reverberations in the area, influencing actions and relationships.

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<sup>26</sup> For a particularly comprehensive exposition I refer the reader to Manson (1990), whose doctoral thesis comprises a history of the area, focusing particularly on the Marico District in the period 1848 – 1914, but also providing a thorough account of early pre-colonial history throughout the region.



**Map 3: Madikwe Game Reserve and surrounding villages. My fieldwork sites, Lekgophung, Supingstad and Molatedi, are circled in green.**

*Scale: 1:250 000*

[Source: Chief Directorate, Surveys and Mapping, 2002]

## Pre-Colonial Times

In order to develop a picture of pre-colonial history, a researcher is inevitably drawn to the work of ethnographers, anthropologists, historians and archaeologists, work that is often as problematic as it is informative. The chief flaw that has infected many accounts of pre-colonial Africa is the practice of dividing the African population into clearly delineated 'tribes' and presenting chronological accounts of patriarchal succession complete with the European practice of numbering monarchs – even going as far as to use Roman numerals. In the case of the Madikwe area, a reader of Breutz (1953), Ellenberger (1912), Rheinallt Jones (1937) or Van Warmelo (1935), for example, is faced with a litany of Tswana patronyms that succeeds, one could argue, in little more than alienating the majority of readers from the subject matter.<sup>27</sup> While such sources do provide a history (of sorts), it is an impoverished history that lacks sensitivity to context and fails to acknowledge the complexity and range of factors that have shaped settlement patterns and movements. The result could more usefully be viewed as a colonial counter history that is explicitly not interested in people's relations to land or to each other. Rather it is concerned with grouping, categorising, labelling and geographically confining people in a manner that ultimately served the colonial cause of justifying occupying powers' claims to land.<sup>28</sup>

The authors referred to above document chiefly lineage over the centuries in accounts that duly note the squabbles of brothers, the splitting of 'tribes' into 'sub-tribes' and the places to which each group then travelled. Thus, from such accounts, one learns that the dominant leadership of the people living in Supingstad today are called the BaHurutshe-baga-Suping; in Lekgophung the BaLete, and in Molatedi the BaTlokwa. By association, all the people living in each village often come to be labelled BaHurutshe, BaLete or BaTlokwa respectively.<sup>29</sup> To highlight the superficiality of such designations, it is constructive to quote Spiegel who wrote:

...I find difficulty with an approach which sees as primary any sense of necessary continuities between people who, over time and to distinguish them somehow from

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<sup>27</sup> An amalgamation of these histories is reproduced in Appendix 3: *Colonial Chronologies*.

<sup>28</sup> It also often served the interests of those who were locally dominant at the time the written record was created – chiefs and the men who were their counsellors and acolytes.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Mafisa initiated a theatre group project in Molatedi and called it the *Thakadu Theatre Group*, after the totem animal of the BaTlokwa, on the premise that it was representative of the collective cultural history of the people of the village (pers. comm. Mafisa consultant, March 2000).

others, are described by a single name....Social categories have been [quite fluid] in the past and...individuals and indeed named groups have [readily] switched allegiances in changing circumstances... The same applies today, making the nature of group membership and association an issue worthy of analysis in its own right. One certainly cannot take named groups for granted, and then proceed to use them as a natural starting point for discussion and analysis (1990:52).

Suffice to say that the early history of people in the region was shaped by centuries of centralisation and fragmentation that led to emergent Tswana chiefdoms. These chiefdoms were characterised by power struggles where patriarchs strove to control resources, particularly cattle and land, and where, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, there was a gradual shift, sparked by trade, from subsistence living to the accumulation of surplus (Guy, 1987; Hall, 1987; Manson, 1990 and Wright, 1978). By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, ivory trading and the associated profits had become a defining factor of such chiefdoms' economies, with a concomitant intensification of power struggles and the emergence of social classes within and between particular cohorts of people (Manson, 1990). A patronage system that was of critical importance to the emergence of social classes was a practice known as *mafisa* whereby less well-off men would work for chiefs or other wealthy patrons in return for the loan of cattle – needed for ploughing, transport and milk. Thus a cycle of dependency was created which helped enable patriarchs to develop and sustain a support base (Schapera, 1953; Denbow et al, 1985; Manson, 1990:46-7).<sup>30</sup>

By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, patrilineal ward systems had become a salient feature of the political organisation of Tswana chiefdoms. Schapera describes a ward in the following terms:

The ward... is a patrilineal but non-exogamous body of people forming a distinct social and administrative unit under the leadership and authority of a hereditary headman. Wards vary considerably in size; some have less than 100 people each, and others well over 1,000, but the majority contain between 300 and 600. The members consist, firstly, of the headman's close relatives; some of the smallest wards are in fact single family groups. But the great majority also contain other family-groups, sometimes remoter segments of the headman's lineage, but often not related either to him or to one another, except perhaps through intermarriage.... Each ward has its own name, its own settlement or settlements, and one or more cultivating areas of its own.... The ward is also the basic unit in the administrative system.... Only the chief can create or recognize a new ward.... The chief himself is head of the royal ward...

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<sup>30</sup> The practice of *mafisa* is particularly pertinent to the Madikwe context as the NGO running the Madikwe Initiative in 2000 was named after it. As will be seen in the chapters that follow, such an association is more than a little ironic given the balance of power that I saw as defining Mafisa's relationship with its project participants – and, indeed, village residents more generally.

[and] ward hamlets are usually situated according to traditional rules of seniority and precedence (Schapera, 1953 [1991]:40).

Such a system of social organisation helped to strengthen a chief's autonomy. Indeed, an important aspect of the ward system was that ward heads "constituted a nascent appointee bureaucracy which could be used to increase centralisation and liberate the ruler from dependence on his potentially rebellious relatives" (Omer-Cooper, 1969:211). Manson (1990) argues that the ward structure greatly facilitated the amalgamation of people into Tswana chiefdoms and Schapera (1952, 1953) describes how chiefdoms were not self-contained ethnic units. Rather, steady flows of immigrants ensured social heterogeneity, which again underscores the superficiality of consigning people to homogenous social categories or named groups.

### **The 'Difaqane' and the Colonial Encounter**

During the 1820s and 1830s there was widespread conflict across the whole South Africa region. The period has often been referred to as the *difaqane* or *mfecane* – broad terms referring to Zulu conquest led by Shaka. Both terms are strongly contested as they fail to acknowledge the multiple origins of the conflicts that swept the region – conflicts that pre-dated the expansion of the Zulu kingdom and were aggravated, if not instigated, by the colonial encounter (Cobbing, 1988; Wright, 1988; Manson, 1990). Manson identifies four trends within the period:

... firstly that it was a time of extreme political fluidity when different groups competed for power, secondly, that political allegiances consequently shifted frequently and did not correspond to any notions of race or ethnicity, thirdly that groups which could offer political security and material sustenance were likely to attract large followings, fourthly that traditional leadership structures fell apart, many never to be revived (1990:65).

For the people in the Madikwe area there was a similar picture of strife, movement and political expediency – as is indicated in Appendix 3: *Colonial Chronologies*. For example, it is known that people described as the Matabele, led by Mzilikazi, invaded the area in the early 1830s and that Chief Matlapeng, great-grandfather of Franz Matlapeng who was the chief of Molatedi village when I was there in 2000, retreated with his followers into the mountains to Tswene Tswene (Breutz, 1987; Ellenberger,

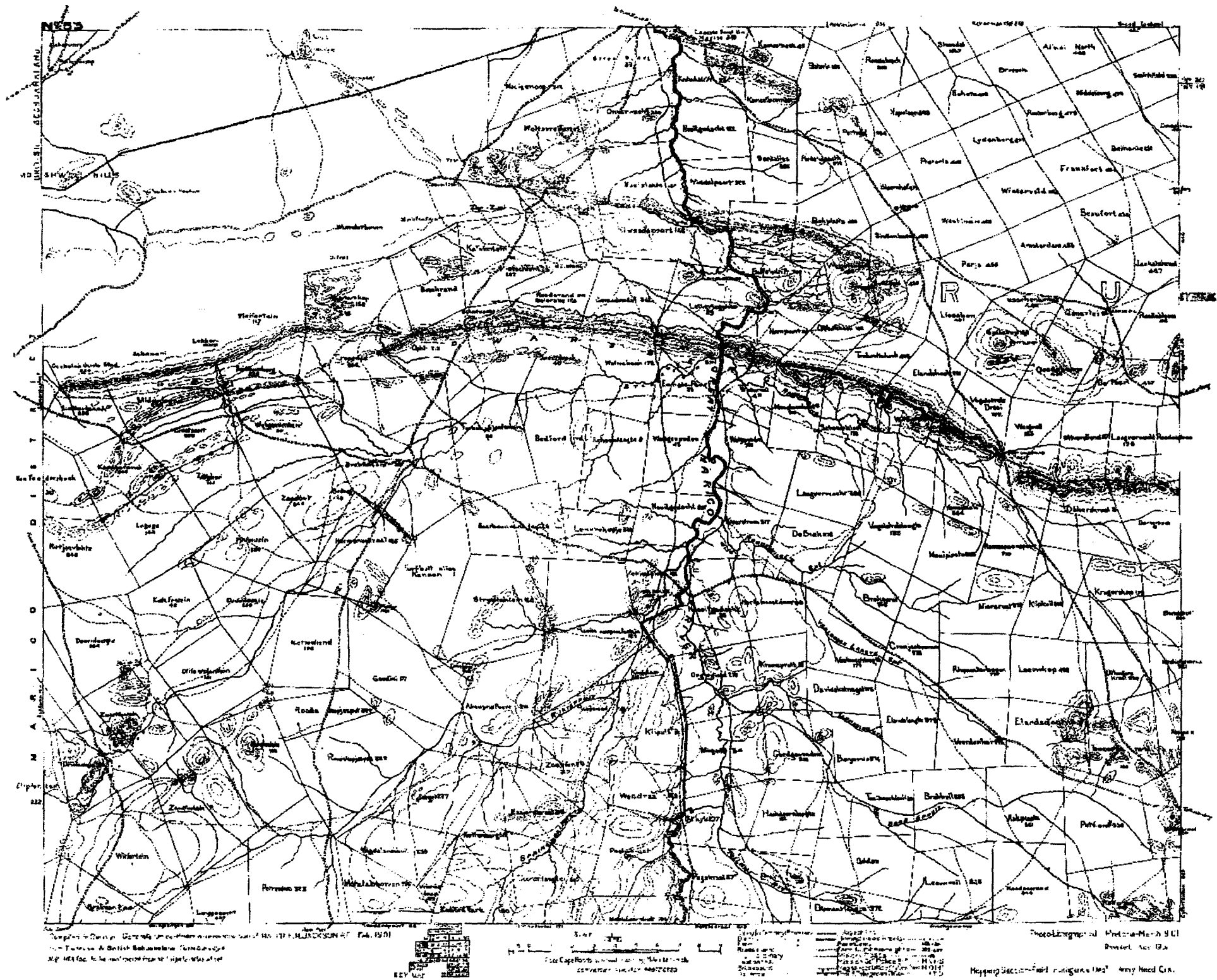
1912; and Huffman, 1997).<sup>31</sup> Tswene Tswene became the capital of the Tswana chiefdom (known as BaTlokwa) over which Matlapeng ruled until the late 1800s. By then there was increasing pressure on land from Afrikaner (Boer) farmers, who had started settling in the area from circa 1850, claiming entitlement to land because they had helped to drive out Mzilikazi's Matabele in 1837 – another instance of expedient alliances and shifting allegiances.

Indeed, from the first wave of Voortrekkers,<sup>32</sup> repercussions have emanated from the colonial encounter that have shaped relationships between the local population and the land that today comprises Madikwe – and even the very contours of the Game Reserve itself. In 1836 the first Boers trekked from the Cape and moved slowly northwards, pegging and parcelling land into farms on which to settle. For more than a decade the Dwarsberg Mountain Range, to the south of the Madikwe area, acted as a barrier stemming the northward flow of the trekkers. It is instructive to look at a turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century map of the region (reproduced on page 39) depicting how the land that became Madikwe Game Reserve is bordered by the considerable boundary of Dwarsberg Mountains to the south and the Great Marico River to the east. To the north and west the map peters out into the British Bechuanaland Protectorate (which was not established until 1884), a few sparse squiggles the only indication that, in 1901, it was not an entirely featureless or uncharted wilderness. South of the Dwarsberg Mountains bold letters proclaim the Marico district, bordered by the Great Marico River to the east and the South African Republic to the west. It is characteristic of the general fluidity of borders, particularly during this period of expanding colonial frontiers, that although the border of the South African Republic was defined by the 1871 Keate Award it was not until the early 1960s, when a fence was erected, that the exact boundary was demarcated to mark the boundary between the then Transvaal Province of South Africa and the Bechuanaland Protectorate that later became Botswana (Lamar and Thompson, 1981).

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<sup>31</sup> Map 2 on page 21 shows Tswene Tswene, to the north of Vleischfontein.

<sup>32</sup> Frontiersmen who have also been called Boers or Afrikaners, but who themselves hardly constituted a coherent unit.



**Map 4: 1901 Map of the Region.**  
 [Source: Mapping Section, Field Intelligence Department, Army Headquarters, 1901]

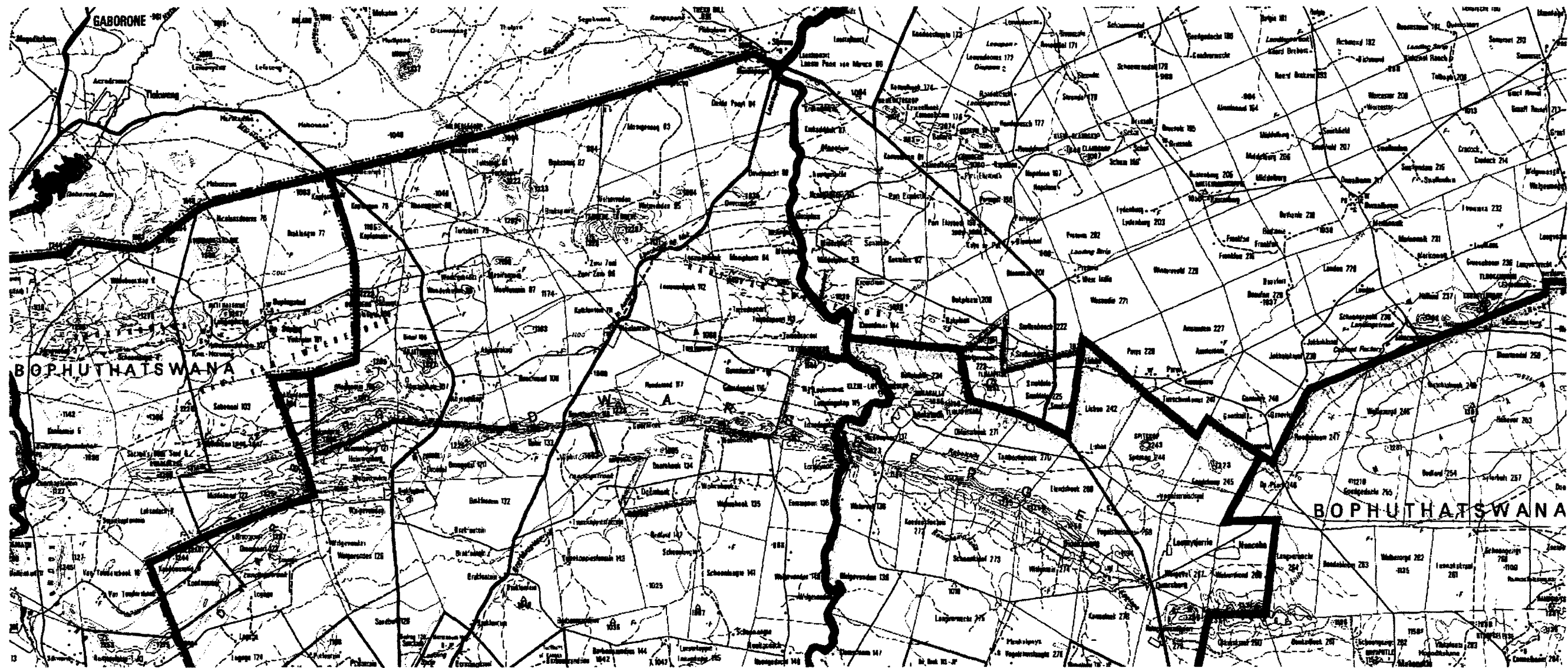
By the 1850s colonial hunters were finding their way through the Dwarsberg Mountains and Boers began to encroach into what is now the Madikwe area.<sup>33</sup> George Copp Westbeech (1844 – 1888) was one colonial hunter and pioneer who helped open a road north to the Zambezi Valley. He died while travelling between Mochudi and Zeerust and is said to be buried in the middle of what is now Madikwe Game Reserve, at Vleischfontein (Shaw and Parsons, 1989).<sup>34</sup> Zeerust, the nearest South African town to Madikwe and located some 80km from the southern border (in 2000) of the Reserve, was a booming frontier town from 1867 until it was eclipsed by the establishment of Mafikeng in 1886 (Manson 1990:126). Manson cites an article in the *Transvaal Argus* (7 February 1867) which describes Zeerust as “a new village in the vicinity of the rich and friendly kafir tribes who live in peace and carry on an extensive trade in ivory and ostrich feathers etc” (1990:127). Manson writes of how, in general, Tswana people in the area (he focuses particularly on people under the leadership of those he describes as BaHurutshe chiefs) were successful agriculturalists during this period, with large herds of cattle and crops of maize, sorghum, wheat, melons, tobacco and citrus (ibid.).

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Boers had settled extensively in the region. The result was escalating struggles over land and access to, and control over, productive resources. 1868 saw the rush for goldfields at Tati, and the Marico lead mines were opened a few years later. In 1869 diamonds were discovered at Kimberley. As more and more people moved northward from the Cape Colony into the area, prospects for settlement for black people became increasingly limited. Many Tswana people were dispossessed of their land by Boer settlers (Van Onselen, 1996:20) – such as the people who were living under the rule of Chief Matlapeng at the BaTlokwa capital at Tswene Tswene. By the 1890s they were forced to leave. Matlapeng’s heir, Gaborone, went with his followers and established himself in the place that today is known as Gaborone, the capital of Botswana. Another son, Sebolawe, moved to Naaupoort (farm no. 150 on map 5, page 41) and founded the village of Molatedi in 1890 (Breutz, 1987).

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<sup>33</sup> Manson (1990) claims that Boers did not start occupying land north of the Dwarsberg until as late as 1884-1885.

<sup>34</sup> Despite long searches I never managed to find his grave at Vleischfontein.



**Map 5: Cadastral Map of Bophuthatswana and the Madikwe Area**

Scale: 1:250 000

[Source: Chief Director of Surveys and Mapping,, 1984. Extraction from Map 2426 Thabazimbi, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.]

At the same time, some 45 km to the west, Suping, the great-great-grandfather of Victor Suping (who was chief in Supingstad village in 2000) was also striving to acquire land for his people. According to one source (Native Affairs Department, 1904), he applied to the government of the South African Republic in 1891 to grant him some of Hartebeestefontein farm (no. 195 on map 5, page 41) as well as neighbouring Vinkrivier farm (no. 132 on map 5, page 41). His request was denied but, on 9 April 1894, he and his followers bought 3556 hectares of Vinkrivier with the Superintendent of Natives acting as trustee. He also retained the use of parts of Hartebeestefontein. There was little water on Vinkrivier which necessitated that wells be sunk. Grazing was so poor that Suping was forced to move cattle onto neighbouring unoccupied white-owned land. He soon came into conflict with Boer farmers over grazing rights and accusations of stock thefts (Native Affairs Department, 1904). Eventually, in 1895, he succumbed to pressure from the white farmers and moved with his people to Odi, near Gaborone, in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. After the South African war (1899-1902) they returned to Vinkrivier, under the leadership of Suping's son, Thebe, Suping having died in 1896. In 1903 Thebe Suping built the village of Supingstad and in 1906 he and his followers bought the eastern portion of Hartebeestefontein from the government (Breutz, 1989; Manson, 1990; Rheinallt Jones, 1937).

Less information is recoverable about the people under the rule of the BaLete chief. Chief Mokgobjwe (great-grandfather of Tsiepe who was chief of Lekgophung in 2000) and his followers had been living on the western portion of Hartebeestefontein (farm no. 195 on map 5, page 41) since 1893 (Breutz, 1989:259), and bought two portions of the farm in 1901. The village of Lekgophung was established on the farm in the same year. The land Suping bought in 1906 adjoins their land.

The years leading up to the establishment of these settlements were characterised by increasingly restive politics, with borders and ownership of resources becoming ever more contested. In 1877 the British annexed the Transvaal. Soon thereafter they established a Department of Native Administration in the Transvaal, following a system similar to that already in place in Natal whereby the province was divided into defined districts overseen by magistrates who liaised directly with the Secretary of Native Affairs (Manson, 1990:161). There followed a spate of legislation that served

to systematically undermine the social and economic security of rural Africans while providing a workforce for the mines and white farmers. For example, a ten shilling hut tax was imposed on African men – which had the effect of forcing increasing numbers of Africans into wage labour (Roux, 1948:76).

Antagonism between the British and the Boers grew into an ever escalating struggle over control and power that erupted into the Anglo-Boer War of 1880-1881 (Lehmann, 1972). There was no unified Tswana response to the war. Some groups of people sided with the British, others with the Boers, some with both (but at different times), others with none. When the British finally withdrew from the Transvaal, the Boers took retribution regardless, imposing fines on black people, confiscating livestock, seizing land and introducing more taxes. In addition to the ten shilling hut tax the British had started, there were also road, dog and farm taxes, and a tax of two shillings on any African who had not held employment with a white farmer in any taxable year (Manson 1990:174-194). This latter law was indicative of the fact that productive activities on white-owned farms had declined substantially during the years of conflict. Severe droughts in 1880-1881 and 1882-1884 compounded farmers' problems – for Tswana and Boer alike. But increasingly harsh laws imposed on Tswana and other African people in the South African Republic (what had been the Transvaal; and later reverted to that description as a province of the Union of South Africa in 1910) meant that relationships between black and white farmers became progressively more tense. In 1896 pass regulations entrenched control over the movement of Africans. Then, in 1899, the South African war broke out. As Manson says, the war (1899-1902) “transformed the human geography of the region, and it thrust entire communities into new political and economic relationships” (1990:227). He adds that although the evidence is that many Tswana sided with the British “Boer-Hurutshe relations were peppered with instances of mutual cooperation even up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (1990:237).

In 1884 the British annexed Bechuanaland and the Republics of Stellaland and Goshen.<sup>35</sup> The following year, typical of the seemingly arbitrary way in which

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<sup>35</sup> Two Boer Republics that had been established to the west of the line demarcated by the British as the westernmost boundary of the South African Republic and were thus considered by the British to be

colonial powers packaged land, the British divided Bechuanaland along the Molopo River. The area to the north became the Bechuanaland Protectorate and to the south the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland. The division is important because the portion labelled the Bechuanaland Protectorate was given independence in 1966 and became Botswana. The Crown Colony of the British Bechuanaland, on the other hand, became part of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and hence fell under the rule of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party in 1948. The farms that in 2000 comprised Madikwe Game Reserve, and the villages of Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi, fell into that second portion. During the course of 1904-5 all African-owned title deeds were transferred to the Commissioner for Native Affairs (Manson, 1990:254), so by the time of Union in 1910 the land that each group had purchased was communally owned and vested in each respective chief but held in trust for them by the Commissioner for Native Affairs. Effectively, therefore, they lost all freehold rights.

That was the situation, then, when what has proved to be a critical piece of legislation, the 1913 Natives Land Act, was implemented, dividing the Union of South Africa into black and white areas. The Act restricted land ownership and occupation rights for black people, some seventy-five percent of the population, to designated areas constituting just seven percent of the land (Davenport, 1991). It also prohibited sharecropping in the highveld region (Van Onselen, 1996:7) which meant that increasing numbers of black Africans were forced into wage labour. Sol Plaatje (1982) wrote of the Act: "Awaking on Friday morning, 20 June 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth". Map 5 (page 41) shows that while Vinkrivier (farm no. 132) and Hartebeestefontein (farm no. 195), both in the Marico District, and Naaupoort (farm no. 150) in Rustenburg District (the farms where Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi respectively were established), became part of the black scheduled areas (as they were already so-called Native Reserves), the twenty-eight farms that were later to comprise Madikwe Game Reserve were white-owned and therefore became prohibited areas for Tswana occupation, other than as labourers.

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a threat to the security of the region (see website: <http://www.ndmc.gov.za> – accessed 16 December 2007).

The 1913 Natives Land Act was followed by the Beaumont Commission of 1916, set up to identify and recommend more land areas that might be scheduled for black occupation. Its recommendations were, however, ignored following a change in government. But a similar set of recommendations underpinned the subsequent 1936 Trust and Land Act which increased black scheduled land to twelve percent of the country (Roux, 1948:296). As the following section describes, these Acts provided the basis for the creation of separate 'homelands' in a system which attempted to turn the 'Native Reserves' into independent 'national states'.

### **Apartheid and the Rise and Fall of Bophuthatswana**

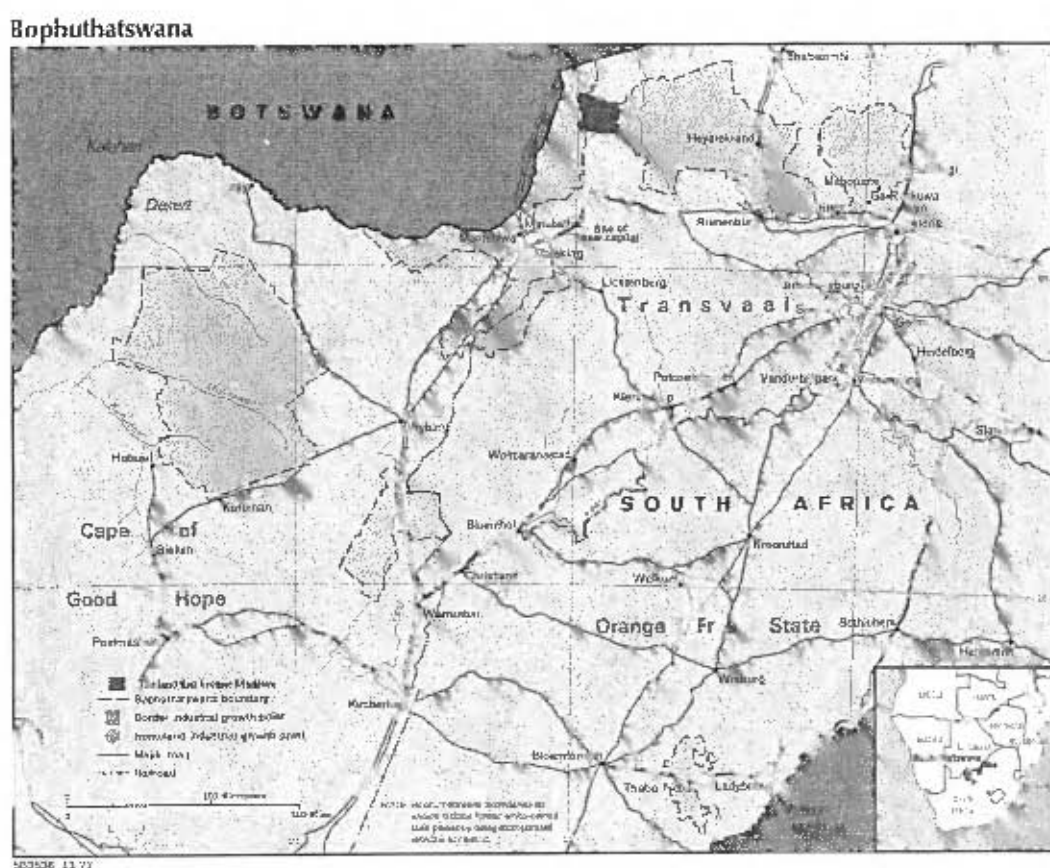
In 1948, the Afrikaner-dominated National Party, with its infamous policy of separate development, or apartheid, came into power. Once in office the apartheid government passed a string of legislation which increasingly differentiated black from white land and black from white administrative systems. Included were the Population Registration Act of 1950, whereby all South Africans were classified into 'racial' groups (West, 1998); the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951; the Natives Resettlement Act of 1954; and the Promotion of Black Self-Government Act of 1959. One historian has written: "As early as 1952, Verwoerd, the architect-in-chief of 'grand apartheid', had given notice to all who would listen of 'how the various Acts, Bills and also public statements which I have made all fit into a pattern, and together form a single constructive plan' (Van Onselen, 1996:357). According to Davenport, also in 1952 "Verwoerd announced a campaign to eliminate black land ownership in white farming areas, and to get rid of African squatting and labour tenancy on white farms through the conversion of all farm workers to wage labourers, and the revision of the 1936 Land Act to make its anti-squatting provisions enforceable" (1987:372-373). This policy of dispossession and segregation culminated in the creation of ten 'homelands', or bantustans. Between 1976 and 1981 'independence' was granted to four of these so-called homelands.<sup>36</sup>

In December 1977 Bophuthatswana, comprising those parts of the former Crown Colony of the British Bechuanaland that were considered as black-occupied in terms of the 1913 Land Act, and scheduled for black occupation under the 1936 Trust and

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<sup>36</sup> The National Party government intended that all ten would eventually be given independence.

Land Act, became the second of the four homelands to be granted independence.<sup>37</sup> Chief Lucas Mangope, with his Bophuthatswana Democratic Party,<sup>38</sup> became president. As map 5 on page 41 shows, the villages of Supingstad and Lckgophung fell into one of the disparate segments of land that comprised the ‘jigsaw’ of Bophuthatswana, and Molatedi into another. Meanwhile, the land in between, the twenty-eight farms that became Madikwe Game Reserve in 1991, remained white-owned and within the Republic of South Africa.<sup>39</sup>



**Map 6: The six scattered fragments that comprised Bophuthatswana**  
 [Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas, 1977.]

I have included this map of Bophuthatswana because, more than the many vivid written accounts and descriptions of the homeland, it is the visual evidence of the

<sup>37</sup> The others were the Transkei (1976), Venda (1979) and the Ciskei (1981).

<sup>38</sup> After 1994 it became the Christian Democratic Party.

<sup>39</sup> I have tried to trace the exact patterns of ownership of all the farms that comprised my fieldwork site. However, not only are cadastral numbers inconsistent (and the Surveyor General’s office in Pretoria had no explanation for this other than human error), but the deeds of the farms that comprised Madikwe in 2000 were lost sometime during the turbulent history of the region, probably when Bophuthatswana was reincorporated into South Africa in 1994.

map that most powerfully portrays the so-called rationale that attempted to unite the six distant and disparate segments of land into a single, independent country.

### **Bureaucratic Violence: The Homelands Policy of Grand Apartheid**

Many of the most brutal gross human rights violations that took place during the apartheid regime have, since apartheid's fall, been documented by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), through painful and vivid public hearings that shocked the world. But, it is clear that the gross injustices of apartheid were not limited to those most extreme human rights violations. Colin Bundy (1999) has compared apartheid's trajectory to a slow dawn followed by a brief noon and argued that, while the TRC focussed on the 'heroic minority' that constituted those most harshly affected during that brief noon of apartheid, it failed to address the entrenched effects of over two hundred years of colonial conquest and the systematic bureaucratic violence suffered, in some parts of the country, by the 'stoic majority' (Bundy, 1999). The homelands policy of grand apartheid and the associated laws that deprived the majority of South Africans of basic civil rights constituted some of the more violent of those bureaucratic decisions. It provoked widespread fury, disbelief and bitterness and has had far reaching effects that are still, over a decade after the abolition of homelands, difficult to fully unravel and comprehend.

Most of the areas allocated as homelands were barren tracts of densely populated land. There are estimates that some three and a half million black South Africans were removed – usually forcibly – to these overcrowded homelands (Platzky and Walker, 1985), where there was little chance of finding work, not enough land even for subsistence agriculture and where overcrowded conditions often resulted in outbreaks of disease (Sparks, 2003; Jeffery, 1993). In the process, over nine million black South Africans lost their South African citizenship.

The homelands, as indeed the native reserves before them, were effectively labour reservoirs, providing cheap labour for the mining industry, for associated support industries and for growing urban areas. However, with the tightening of what were called the pass and influx control laws soon after World War II it became illegal for black people to be in white areas for periods longer than seventy-two hours, apart

from those (about one in four) who, under 'section 10' of the Blacks (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, had permission to live and work in white areas. These 'section 10' rights were available only to people who had been born in that particular ('prescribed') urban area, had lived there continuously since birth, and to those who had entered an urban area legally and had lived there for fifteen years continuously or had worked there uninterruptedly for one employer for ten years. The wife or child (under eighteen years of age) of a man with such rights could also live with him in the urban area, but only if housing was available (which often it was not). People without section 10 rights were not permitted to spend longer than seventy-two hours looking for work in an urban area (Savage, 1986). Consequently, most black people with jobs in white areas remained entirely dependent on their white employers, particularly from the late 1960s: redundancy meant being forcibly removed to a homeland, where there were few jobs. As a result the homelands became less 'labour reservoirs' for the white areas, and more like unemployment reservoirs – that only those who had work, and were therefore permitted in white areas, could escape. Journalist Riaan de Villiers wrote of the homelands:

For the first time in my life, after a visit to the Ciskei, I have understood what the homelands mean in terms of economics. It's just God-Awful. The leftwing phrase that homelands are labour reservoirs is absolutely true.... The place is a vast ghetto. The subsistence agriculture theory is a myth.... Those people are crammed in there and they can't get out. The only way a man can get out is if he is recruited as a contract worker.... There's nothing, no visible means of life support (quoted in Johnson, 1981).

Given the overcrowding and paucity of land available even for subsistence farming, reserve and then homeland residents became increasingly dependent on white areas for employment and economic support. Across the country, separate education systems resulted in black people being poorly educated, or not formally educated at all. They were also deliberately prevented from acquiring skills under the Job Reservation Act, whereby skilled jobs were reserved for white people. Black people could not become apprentices and could not join trade unions, which meant that wages could be kept low. Sparks has said of the system: "It must be the only instance in history in which a government deliberately crippled the skills base of its country's working class" (2003:21) and, agreeing with Cyril Ramaphosa, a former trade union leader and subsequently a captain of industry, he continued "this planned neglect [was] the worst of all apartheid's crimes against humanity. Its legacy is now the new democratic regime's greatest liability" (ibid.).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the homelands were a burning issue and a central focus point for resistance to the apartheid regime. Many people said that homeland leaders (including the majority of the supposed 'tribal chiefs') were sell-outs, 'Pretoria puppets', who had co-operated with the apartheid government and, in accepting independence, or even so-called self-government, had made possible the severe restriction of civil liberties and rights of black South Africans – not least of which was the loss of South African citizenship. The intensity of resentment was illustrated in Bophuthatswana when the Legislative Assembly building was burnt down soon after the homeland became 'independent' in 1977 (Jeffrey, 1993). From the moment of Bophuthatswana's 'independence', there was conflict between 'President' Mangope's administration and the African National Congress (ANC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the opposition parties in Bophuthatswana: the National Seoposengwe Party (NSP) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP). The ANC, importantly, had refused to register as an opposition party, declaring firstly that it would never recognise Bophuthatswana's independent status (worldwide, South Africa and the other 'independent' bantustans were the only countries that did) and secondly that it was a liberation movement rather than a political party.

There is much evidence that Mangope's presidency was more like a dictatorship than a democracy, that elections were rigged and voters bribed or intimidated. There were reports of severe civil rights violations, such as widespread abductions and shootings by police; of prohibitions of political meetings other than those of the ruling Christian Democratic Party (CDP); and that political opponents to the administration had been detained without trial (Sparks, 1994:208). In the words of a senior ANC official, "Mangope *is* the law in Bophuthatswana. Even the CDP of which he is the leader is not free to function as a political party, except to echo his own sentiments. There is absolutely no free political debate, even within the party itself" (interview cited in Jeffery, 1993:28). Furthermore, there were many allegations of widespread corruption and nepotism within the Bophuthatswana administration (interview with human rights lawyers, cited in Jeffery, 2003:31), as well as the misappropriation of funds.

By the 1980s, fifty-four percent of Bophuthatswana's working-age population was working in white areas of South Africa, either as migrant labourers or as border commuters forced to comply with the pass laws. Their earnings constituted forty-six percent of Bophuthatswana's income (*ibid.*). The economy was heavily dependent on platinum mining (forty-seven percent of GDP), and on white-dominated South Africa for budgetary aid as well as employment. Yet, during the 1980s the Bophuthatswana administration spent millions of rand on high prestige projects, such as a ninety million rand convention centre with a new parliament building and a second supreme court; a sixty million rand international school; a multi million rand opera and concert hall; a two hundred and fifty million rand power station that was then dismantled, having never been used; and a national airline that ran at a substantial loss (Jeffery, 1993). According to a former economic advisor to Mangope: "Since being forced into early retirement in 1982, I have observed sadly that nothing is really developing in Bophuthatswana – except the government offices, houses, cars and the roads for the elite to drive around on. Mmabatho as a capital must surely rival the ancient pyramids as a monument to its ruler" (Professor Magyar, cited in Black Sash: 1990:10). Meanwhile, in 1988, seventy-one percent of the bantustan's population was living below the minimum living level and the average monthly income per capita was eighty-five rand (Department of Population Development, 1990-1991).

Throughout his presidency, which lasted as long as Bophuthatswana itself (1977-1994), Mangope relied heavily on South Africa to help him maintain his position. For example, on 10 February 1988 the Bophuthatswana National Security Unit (BNSU), a part of the homeland's army, staged a coup d'état. Mangope and his ministers were detained and the leader of the PPP, Mr 'Rocky' Malebane-Metsing, swore himself in as the new president. But the South African Defence Force came to the rescue and restored Mangope to power, in the process sparking off a barrage of criticism which questioned Bophuthatswana's independence in light of its dependence on South Africa to maintain the status quo. International newspapers commented on 'PW Botha's puppet being rescued' (Cooper, n.d:10). By August 1988, the PPP had been declared an unlawful organisation and was banned in Bophuthatswana. Malebane-Metsing fled into exile in Zambia, where he joined the ANC, itself then in exile. Restored President Mangope made the most of the coup, saying:

We have shown the world we are determined to protect democracy.... Our very freedom and all that goes with it must be firmly embedded in the tenets or rules of democracy. This was especially brought home to me when I realised on February 10<sup>th</sup> that it was for democracy that I was prepared to die... Without democracy the other values and principles that we cherish would not last long... (cited in Cooper, n.d.:106 and 132).<sup>40</sup>

On 20 December of that year, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) was established in what was to turn out to be a first stage of a process of negotiations that eventually lead to a united and democratic South Africa. One of the central points on its agenda was the reincorporation of the homelands. Of the four 'independent' homelands, the Bophuthatswana administration was the most insistent on its right to retain sovereign status. Mangope was the only 'independent' homeland president to refuse even to sign the Declaration of Intent (to bring about an undivided, free and democratic South Africa). He attempted to justify his refusal to entertain notions of Bophuthatswana being reincorporated with South Africa by dredging up bits of distant colonial history. He argued that in 1895 the British had reneged on an earlier promise not to annex what was then the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland to the Cape Colony. Because of Britain's failure to honour its word, the area that was now Bophuthatswana had come under South African rule. Hence, he argued, Bophuthatswana's independence in 1977 was nothing to do with apartheid, but rather a regaining of Batswana's rightful sovereignty that dated back to the end of the nineteenth century (Jeffery, 1993:138). It was not a strong argument, especially given that the former Crown Colony had comprised only a small part in the northwest of Bophuthatswana. The argument had little impact on the ever growing resistance to Mangope.

In a last ditch attempt to retain 'independence' in 1994, Mangope led Bophuthatswana, along with Ciskei, another 'independent' bantustan, to join the Concerned South African's Group (COSAG), an unlikely Boer-Zulu alliance, with Chief Buthelezi and his Inkatha Freedom Party and the far right Afrikaner Conservative Party at its centre. The alliance was purely opportunistic as politically the members had little in common, except the need to join together in the face of the then new ANC-National Party coalition in order to prevent South Africa's transition

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed treatment of the concept of democracy, particularly the way it is frequently invoked as an unimpeachable ideal in contexts where it is clearly being used for political expediency, see chapter four, *Democracy: A Versatile Abstraction*.

into a united democracy. Along with the Conservative Party there was also the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), which was even more far right than the Conservative Party, its members described by Sparks as 'crude, racist Rambos' (1994:198). These rightwing Afrikaners joined together into the Afrikaner Volksfront, which hoped to bring about an independent Afrikaner *volkstaat* (people's state). The Volksfront was chaired by the Conservative Party's Ferdi Hartzenberg, while Constand Viljoen, ex head of the apartheid-era South African Defence Force, led a directorate of four generals who had been appointed to put together a Boer People's Army.

In March 1994, twenty-two thousand civil servants of the Bophuthatswana administration went on strike over pensions and wages. This was because the ANC/National Party Negotiating Council had agreed that on election day, April 27th, the homelands would be reincorporated into South Africa, and the administrations would cease to exist. The Bophuthatswana civil servants therefore wanted their wages and pensions before this happened. Bophuthatswana was reduced to anarchy when the homeland's police joined the strikers: looters ran amok through Mmabatho, the homeland's capital; students took over the university; and workers took over the Bophuthatswana Broadcasting Corporation. Mangope called in his COSAG allies, the Volksfront, for help, stipulating, however, that members of the AWB should not be part of any plan to restore order in Bophuthatswana as there would be clashes with his own army if they did.

The Volksfront came to the rescue, imagining that by stabilising Bophuthatswana and restoring Mangope to power they would be in a stronger position to negotiate for their own independent state. However, despite warnings from Viljoen, Eugene Terre'Blanche, leader of the AWB, ignored all pleas to keep AWB members out of Bophuthatswana. Their presence in Mmabatho aggravated an already highly tense situation and led to disaster for both Mangope and the Volksfront. According to Sparks, AWB groups arrived "...in their farm trucks, armed to the teeth with hunting rifles, shotguns, and pistols....They drove through the streets of Mmabatho yelling racial abuse at the locals and taking potshots at groups of people, killing and wounding several.... And it so outraged the already shaky Bophuthatswana Defence Force that it mutinied" (1994:211).

Conflict between Mangope and the ANC grew ever more intense. The ANC circulated pamphlets of highly charged statements and calls for action such as the following: 'Mangope's hands are dripping with the blood of our defenceless and oppressed people...'; 'Mangope's actions are dictatorial and one-man show. He did not consult our people for his independence...'; 'Starvation wages, unemployment, high rent tariffs, bus-fares are having a high toll on our people. Only his pockets are getting fatter...'; 'Defy Mangope's laws and march to Freedom...'; 'Demand and intensify the call for reincorporation'; 'Force Mangope to resign...'; 'Boycott all Mangope's functions and celebrations'; 'Refuse to join his organisations...' and 'Demand your land appropriated by Mangope, Agricor and his puppet ministers' (*An ANC Call to the People in Bop*, reproduced in Jeffery, 1993:296-7).

On 12 March 1994, some six weeks before the then proposed date for the first post apartheid election on 27 April, Mangope was finally deposed, informed by apartheid South Africa's Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, and Mac Maharaj representing the ANC,<sup>41</sup> that Bophuthatswana was no longer independent, and that Mangope therefore had no country to govern. Mangope had no choice but to accept the situation. The erstwhile South African ambassador to Bophuthatswana, Tjaart van der Walt, became administrator, with Job Mogoro, an ANC representative, appointed as co-administrator soon afterwards. The Bophuthatswana homeland was no more, and in time it was incorporated into one of post apartheid South Africa's nine new provinces, the North West Province.

### **After Apartheid: Traitors or Heroes?**

In South Africa's first democratic elections, some eighty-three percent of Tswana people in what became the North West Province, voted for the ANC (Sparks, 2003:230). Apartheid was formally over, and South Africa was a united, democratic country, with the homelands apparently seamlessly reabsorbed into its borders. Yet it was evident that such a dramatic transition could not happen overnight. It was perhaps inevitable that part of the legacy of apartheid in the North West Province would be political distrust, suspicion, divisions and confusion. Mangope had not only

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<sup>41</sup> Mac Maharaj subsequently became Minister of Transport in the first post apartheid cabinet.

collaborated with the enemy, the apartheid government, but in his attempts to retain 'independence', had formed an opportunistic alliance with the most extreme far right, white Afrikaner racists – proof enough, for many, of his perfidy. In many people's eyes he was a sell-out of the worst kind, a traitor in the extreme. But, to some people, especially those who had collaborated along with him, he was a hero. He had done his utmost to protect Tswana rights to self determination in an independent 'democracy'.

In stark contrast to Mangope, and with over seventeen years of well documented and open conflict with him and his Bophuthatswana administration, was the ANC, the freedom fighters. They were the ones who had fought and defeated the evil system of apartheid and, through an outstanding (though often deeply criticised) process of negotiation and compromise with apartheid's governing National Party, had enabled South Africa's peaceful transition to a united democracy. In the eyes of the world they were true heroes – and were acknowledged as such when FW de Klerk, the National Party's leader, and Nelson Mandela, the leader of the ANC, became joint recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize.

It was highly evident in the new democratic South Africa that among the most economically deprived of previously marginalised areas were many rural parts of former homelands. In those areas there had been few resources to fund social welfare schemes such as pensions and, because of the country's history of land dispossession along with the pass and influx control systems, unemployment had been the most concentrated. As soon as the homelands became reincorporated into South Africa, many who were resident there rushed to the cities in search of work (Sparks, 2003). The result was a rapid growth of squatter settlements around urban areas, overcrowding, unemployment and, with it, an ever increasing crime rate. But those left behind in the rural areas still had little chance of securing employment and were usually heavily dependent on remittances from family members who had managed to find work in urban areas.

Hence, there was, and still is, a definite need for development interventions which focus on improving access to services and resources in those rural areas, on alleviating poverty and unemployment, and on trying to stem the rural-urban flow of unemployed people. Molatedi, Lekgophung and Supingstad were three villages that

were precisely the kinds of rural area settlements that were under-developed and impoverished as a result of the injustices of the past, and Madikwe Game Reserve offered a promise of opportunity and development. Indeed, Madikwe's potential to constructively stimulate the building of a more optimistic future for residents in the villages neighbouring it was one of the primary reasons it attracted me as a fieldwork site.

## **Why a Game Reserve?**

As map 6 on page 46 shows, when Bophuthatswana became 'independent' in 1977 its lands resembled an awkward jigsaw. In an attempt to create corridors to link together some of the islands of Bophuthatswana territory, South Africa's Homeland Consolidation Programme initiated a series of Acts to transfer parts of the intervening land from South Africa to Bophuthatswana. The twenty-eight white-owned farms lying between the two segments of Bophuthatswana that contained the villages of Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi became a focal point of the Programme's activities. Starting in 1980 with the Borders of Particular States Extension Act, five Acts were passed which culminated in Proclamations numbers 4 and 98 of 1989 and 70 of 1990 whereby some 70,000 hectares of farmland were expropriated from the white commercial farmers who had owned the twenty-eight farms, and transferred from South Africa to Bophuthatswana.

The land was handed over the Bophuthatswana Land Allocation Board which initially intended to pass it to Agricor, the Bophuthatswana Department of Agriculture, for formal distribution to 'emerging' black farmers. But it so happened that the then CEO of the Bophuthatswana Parks Board<sup>42</sup> was flying over the area and saw that while much of it, particularly the southern half, was prone to drought and was overgrazed, it showed great potential for a game reserve. Mangope, who could see evidence throughout the homeland that the Bophuthatswana Parks Board was delivering successful, labour intensive, economically sustainable interventions<sup>43</sup> (indeed, their

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<sup>42</sup> Now North West Parks & Tourism Board (NWP&TB) – the agency managing the Reserve.

<sup>43</sup> Pilanesberg National Park is given as an example by the Board (pers. comm., June 2007), but its people-centeredness, particularly at its conception, is questionable – especially considering that it was created only after forced removals. For more details on Pilanesberg, see page 58.

budget had been increased from R6 million to R23 million in just five years),<sup>44</sup> agreed to bring in an independent firm to conduct a survey to determine the optimal use for that land (interview with NWP&TB Resource Economist, 11 June 2007). The survey was carried out by Settlement Planning Services (Setplan) between 14 December 1990 and 31 January 1991. The resulting report recommended that the establishment of a game reserve would be the most efficacious and potentially lucrative use for the twenty-eight farms described as overgrazed and degraded by cattle ranching (Setplan, 1991:8).

The Setplan survey had looked at two main options:

- 1) the establishment of extensive cattle ranching with irrigated agriculture; and
- 2) wildlife tourism and the development of a big five game reserve.

The criteria used to evaluate the most appropriate land use were:

- i) social: assessing the impact and implications of the option on the local population;
- ii) economic: from the perspective of regional and local economic conditions;
- iii) financial: the impact of each option on government finances;
- iv) technical: the technical capacity of local residents and government support services to operate and maintain the different options considered;
- v) institutional: the organisational ability of private and public groups to participate in each option;
- vi) environmental: the impact of the options on the local environment; and
- vii) strategic: the impact on overall national development objectives and strategies (Setplan,1991).

Setplan recommended the game reserve option for the following reasons:

- Once fully established, Setplan predicted, the game reserve would be able to generate in excess of twelve hundred jobs compared with just eighty from the ranching option, with an associated pay roll of R4.5 million per annum. The

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<sup>44</sup> At the same time, Agricor was not enjoying such a successful track record. Many of its agricultural interventions had proved to be economically unsustainable. According to a former member of the Bophuthatswana Parks Board this was because "they had too much money and the interventions were over-planned and over-engineered" (interview, June 2007).

cost per job opportunity for the cattle ranching option would be in the region of R150 000, while that of the game park would be nearer R25 000;

- The spin-off effects of the game reserve on the local economy, through linkages and multipliers, would be much higher than from cattle ranching;
- The local economy, already highly dependent on agriculture, would be significantly diversified and improved;
- The net income accruing to the government through taxes would be significantly increased (Setplan, 1991).

Thus Madikwe Game Reserve was established in 1991, in the midst of extreme political turmoil, three years before the formal inauguration of the post-apartheid South Africa. South Africa's North West Province did not yet exist, and Madikwe was therefore developed in the 'independent' Bophuthatswana homeland. The Mangope Administration was still in full swing, with Mangope firm in his support of the apartheid regime and adamant in his refusal to allow Bophuthatswana to be reincorporated into South Africa.

It is evident from the Setplan report that the establishment of the Reserve was recommended for socio-economic reasons, rather than for the sake of ecology and conservation. It enabled what was then still the Bophuthatswana Parks Board to assert its proud claim to people-based conservation:

Madikwe Game Reserve is arguably one of the first game reserves in southern Africa to be established for wildlife conservation purely on socio-economic grounds... The approach to conservation that has been adopted at Madikwe puts the needs of people before that of wildlife and conservation (Davies et al, n.d.).

Indeed, according to its former members, the Bophuthatswana Parks Board was highly progressive in its approach to conservation management. The Board had at its core a group of what one former member described as 'forward thinking, liberal men', some of whom had been headhunted from organisations such as Natal Parks Board, the CEO of which was 'very Eurocentric', particularly in comparison to the CEO of the Bophuthatswana Parks Board who was 'not so policy-driven'. In other words, while Boards such as Natal Parks were still focussed purely on conservation, Bophuthatswana Parks was already embracing the so-called 'people-and-parks' ideology. Its members believed that successful conservation schemes needed to be

relevant in the emerging economic context in which they were implemented (pers. com., June 2007). The interventions they initiated were thus redolent with the rhetoric of people-based conservation.

Such reasoning reflected a major departure from earlier national park ideology, such as that then still dominating Natal Parks, which held that preservation and conservation were ends in themselves. That brand of ideology had justified game parks being established at the cost of dispossessing and relocating black South Africans (Carruthers, 1997). Examples of forced removals are numerous and include Sabi, where 3000 residents had been relocated in 1902; the Makuleke people, who were dispossessed of their land in 1969, to make room for the Pafuri region of the Kruger National Park;<sup>45</sup> and the Pilane people, who were forcibly removed in 1979, in order for Pilanesberg National Park to be created (Kaplan, 2000).

The Bophuthatswana Parks Board's 'people and parks' philosophy mirrored a shift that was taking place on a global level towards a way of thinking that conservation must be not only economically sustainable, but also able to deliver concrete benefits to local residents, particularly the poor. An example is the ideology behind the Bali Declaration of 1982 which emphasises sustainability as opposed to preservation, and states that protected areas must serve human society (Carruthers, 1997:14). The argument is that ecological sustainability can only be realised if there is firstly socio-economic sustainability.

However, translating ideology into practice has, unsurprisingly, proved to be problematic. Pilanesberg, also set up under the former Bophuthatswana government, is often referred to, by the North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWP&TB), as Madikwe's sister park. When Pilanesberg was first established in 1979, the *African Wildlife* periodical wrote that Bophuthatswana "emerge[d] as the shining example of how wildlife management should be practiced in Africa" (vol. 43, no. 6, 1989:325). Yet according to Carruthers:

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<sup>45</sup> Their case is perhaps the best-known in South Africa today as, in November 2000, they finally won what had then been the largest land claim to date (24,000 hectares) (Kaplan, 2000). For more details on the Makuleke case see pages 85-88.

It would be inaccurate to think of the Pilanesberg National Park as a conserved natural area: it is more of a forced removal, land reclamation and game stocking project.... [Pilanesberg] owed its very origins to the 'homelands' policy of the nationalist [apartheid] government of the 1960s.... Even at the early planning stage, opposition to the scheme was intense from the Pilane clan [sic] who had inhabited the crater for many years.... It thus had a difficult birth at a time when paramilitary wildlife management and anti-human ecology was powerful in national park dogma (1997:9).

In contrast to Pilanesberg, with its anti-people ecology that excluded local people, the NWP&TB claims that Madikwe Game Reserve was established only after careful consultation with, and approval from, the villages adjacent to it. Although a detailed implementation plan is not laid out in the final Setplan report, it states that the research found "a game park would be acceptable to the local communities and arrangements can be made to grant local herbalists controlled access to the park for the collection of specimens" (Setplan, 1991:17). The report adds that "Poaching is not foreseen as a major threat" (ibid), but does not provide any evidence or reasons for such a statement.

Drawing on the findings of the Setplan report the NWP&TB has, right from its conception, described Madikwe Game Reserve as a partnership between three main stakeholders: the state, the private sector and the 'local community'. The Board has repeatedly emphasised that its driving concern is not conservation, but to bring economic development to the 'local community'. According to a general manager:

Our focus from the government is to improve the quality of life, financially and socially, of the people in the area and we use conservation, as we would have used mining or agricultural practices. We use conservation as the most efficient way to address our main objective, which is economic development. But if conservation management is not up to standard we will not achieve this. So conservation is not secondary but nor is it an end in itself. It is a strategy to achieve economic development (interview, general manager, Protected Areas Management, NWP&TB, 25 July 2000).

At the start of 2000 the Reserve comprised some 65,000 hectares<sup>46</sup> and stretched across the boundary between Rustenburg District to the east and Central District to the west (see map 3 on page 34). According to the NWP&TB, Madikwe was

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<sup>46</sup> The figure cited for the number of hectares that Madikwe comprises is inconsistent throughout NWP&TB and Madikwe Initiative literature. See page 55 above where I refer to the Setplan document which states that 70,000 hectares had been expropriated. After careful consultation with the park warden he decided the most accurate estimate of the Reserve's size in 2000, before the incorporation of the 1500 hectares of Sentellies Farm (no. 93 on map 5, page 41) in June 2000 (see pages 167-168), was 65,000 hectares.

established with the express aim of bringing economic development and opportunity to an area that had largely been denied access to both (Davies, 1997).

### **Enter the Madikwe Initiative**

By 1993, it was evident that the Reserve had not yet begun to succeed in its regional economic objectives. In response to the evidently unequal nature of the 'three-way' partnership between the Parks Board, the private sector and the villages, the Parks Board began approaching donor agencies for funding for community development and empowerment interventions. Discussions began with the then Overseas Development Agency (ODA) of Britain which at the time had a 'people-and-parks' programme. But before any agreements were made the events of 1994 overtook the proceedings and discussions were halted during Bophuthatswana's reincorporation into South Africa and the transition from apartheid to democracy. In 1998 negotiations reopened, the ODA having now become the British Department for International Development (DfID) and the Bophuthatswana Parks Board the North West Parks and Tourism Board. DfID awarded the NWP&TB a sum of UK£410 000<sup>47</sup> to fund an initiative that would be independent of the Board and aimed at ensuring that the Reserve benefited local residents and maximised its economic impact on the local economy. Because DfID required a well-defined area, limited in size, in which to implement capacity building projects, the main developmental drive of the Reserve as a whole came, perhaps by default, to focus on the villages of Supingstad and Lekgophung to the west and Molatedi to the east, rather than encompassing all the settlements in the area (interview, former NWP&TB Resource Economist, 11 June 2007).

The NWP&TB then invited tenders from independent agencies with the expertise to manage the Initiative. Mafisa Research and Planning (hereafter Mafisa), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), applied and after a series of interviews was appointed. The Madikwe Initiative was launched at Tau Lodge in Madikwe Game Reserve in 1998 (ibid.).

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<sup>47</sup> With currency fluctuations and the weakening of the rand, DfID's £410 000 became R6.4 million.

## **Mafisa Research and Planning**

Mafisa itself had grown out of the collaboration of three individuals: Eddie Koch, David Grossman and Peter John Massyn. From the early 1990s all three were particularly gripped by the concept of 'people and parks' and had had experience of such initiatives through work they had done with an organisation called Group Environmental Monitoring (GEM). They also knew Derek Hanekom, who became the first ANC Minister of Land Affairs in Mandela's cabinet, and had gathered from him that in the new democratic South Africa people would be compensated for having been forcibly removed from their land during the apartheid era. The three were aware that the Makuleke people had been forcibly removed to make room for the Pafuri strip of the Kruger National Park<sup>48</sup> and so supplied them with informal technical support, also mobilising the Legal Resource Centre to help them put together a land claim. Out of this experience, the three created a formal partnership in the shape of Mafisa, with Koch and Massyn as directors (Grossman was already the director of his own ecology and planning consultancy business). After the Makuleke case, where they continued to be involved, the Madikwe Initiative was their second project (interview, Mafisa director, 7 June 2007).

According to the directors of Mafisa the aims of the Madikwe Initiative were as follows:

The Madikwe Initiative is being implemented according to three key areas of focus. The first is centred around the understanding that if the communities surrounding Madikwe are to benefit from its existence then they need to hold some ownership stake in commercial lodges in the Reserve. Secondly, tourism creates jobs and it is important that people from the surrounding villages are suitably trained to take up senior wage employment in the lodges. And thirdly, tourism in the Reserve as well as the daily operations of the Reserve itself may create many opportunities for entrepreneurship and small business development in areas such as lodge maintenance, the provision of bricks, bush clearing, construction, the provision of fresh produce to the lodges.... Local entrepreneurs need to be trained and their businesses supported so that they can enter into business contracts with the lodges and the park in these areas (Koch and Massyn, 1999).

Mafisa's modus operandi was to recruit consultants as and when their expertise was required for a particular project. As an organisation it comprised a loose-knit web of consultants held together by a core of directors and associates. All expert personnel

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<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed account about the Makuleke case see chapter 3 pages 85-88.

had other work and responsibilities elsewhere and both directors were based far afield, one in Johannesburg and one in Nelspruit. In order to cohere and monitor the various projects comprising the Initiative, Mafisa employed a field coordinator who was supposed to live full time in Madikwe.<sup>49</sup>

The Initiative faced multiple difficulties from the start, not least because the Reserve's development stagnated largely because pending land claims made issuing new private sector lodge concessions problematic.<sup>50</sup> A director of Mafisa asserted that there was thus no thriving market to sustain the emerging small businesses Mafisa had set up (interview, 7 June, 2007). At the same time, as I will show, the government's restructuring of local government exacerbated governance problems in the villages.

### **The Villages in 2000**

After the turbulent history of the previous few centuries, the turmoil of the colonial encounter and the repression of the segregationist and apartheid years, the post apartheid picture of the villages when I arrived in 2000 was relatively tranquil. The population of each village was reasonably stable, with roughly 3500 people living in Supingstad, 2500 in Lekgophung, and 2500 in Molatedi.

But in each of the villages unemployment was high. Indeed, according to the socio-economic survey I conducted, the combined unemployment proportion for all three villages was 55% of the working population.<sup>51</sup> As figure 1 illustrates this broke down to 68% in Lekgophung, 56% in Supingstad and 46% in Molatedi.

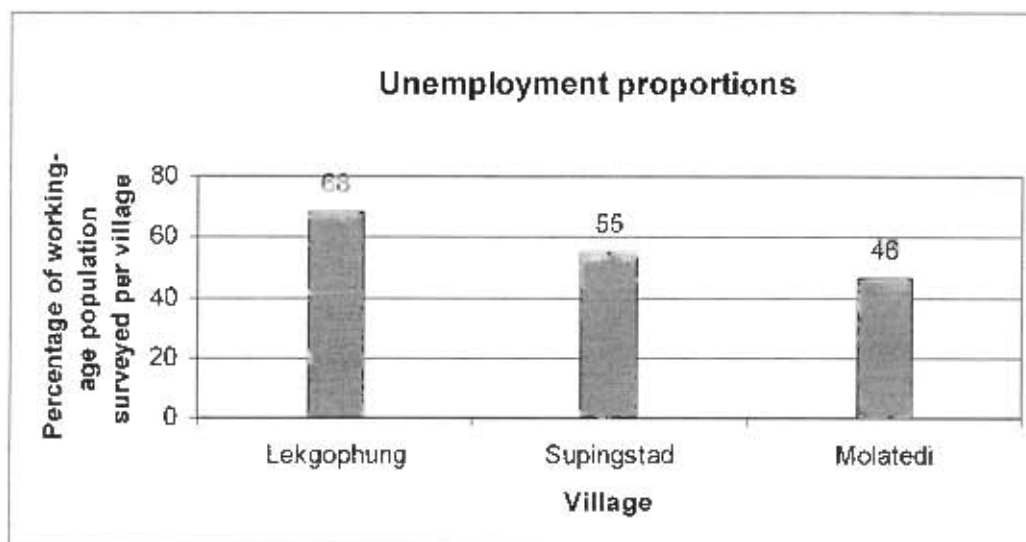
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<sup>49</sup> For more details about Mafisa see chapter seven, particularly the section *A Culture of Consultants*.

<sup>50</sup> For more details about the land claims see chapter 6 pages 175-176.

<sup>51</sup> I have categorised the working population as adults between the ages of 15 – 60.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of Unemployment Proportions in Each Village in 2000.**



[Source: 2000 survey]

The tables below provide more details about the employment patterns in each village, showing the proportions of the working population surveyed that were employed locally or that were known to be migrant workers.

**Table 1: Employment and Unemployment by Gender in 2000 in Lekgophung**

Gender	Employable Age*		Employed in total		Unemployed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	123	100	35	28	88	72
Male	102	100	37	36	65	64
Total	225	100	72	32	153	68

\*Aged between 15-60 years.

Sample size: 419, including persons outside working age.

[Source: 2000 survey]

**Table 2: Area of Employment by Gender in 2000 in Lekgophung**

Gender	Employed in total		Employed Locally		Migrant Workers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	35	100	18	51	17	49
Male	37	100	11	30	26	70
Total	72	100	29	40	43	60

[Source: 2000 survey]

As the table above shows, of the 72 surveyed people in Lekgophung who were employed (and of an employable age), 43 (60%) were known migrants. Broken down by gender, 17 (49%) of those migrants were women and 26 (70%) were men.

**Table 3: Employment and Unemployment by Gender in 2000 in Supingstad**

Gender	Employable Age*		Employed in total		Unemployed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	135	100	48	36	87	64
Male	124	100	67	54	57	52
Total	259	100	115	45	144	56

\*Aged between 15-60 years.

Sample size: 475, including persons outside working age.

[Source: 2000 survey]

**Table 4: Area of Employment by Gender in 2000 in Supingstad**

Gender	Employed in total		Employed Locally		Migrant Workers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	48	100	15	31	33	69
Male	67	100	25	37	42	63
Total	115	100	40	35	75	65

[Source: 2000 survey]

In Supingstad, 75 (65%) of the surveyed working population were migrant workers, 33 (69%) women and 42 (63%) men.

**Table 5: Employment and Unemployment by Gender in 2000 in Molatedi**

Gender	Employable Age*		Employed in total		Unemployed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	157	100	70	45	87	55
Male	136	100	88	65	48	35
Total	293	100	158	54	135	46

\* Aged between 15-60 years.

Sample size: 492, including persons outside working age.

[Source: 2000 survey]

**Table 6: Area of Employment by Gender in 2000 in Molatedi**

Gender	Employed in total		Employed Locally		Migrant Workers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	70	100	16	23	54	77
Male	88	100	15	17	73	83
Total	158	100	31	20	127	80

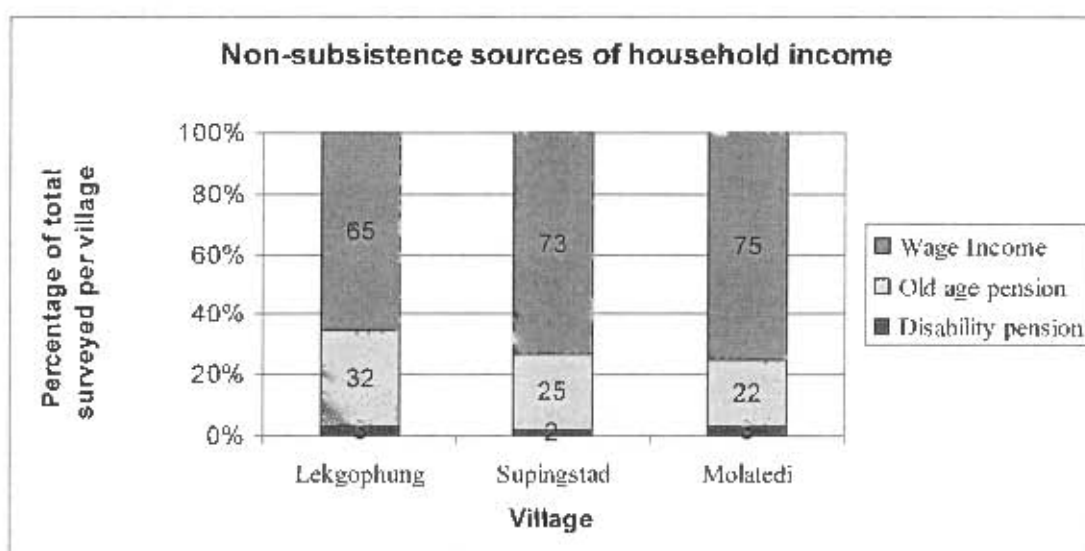
[Source: 2000 survey]

The picture in Molatedi was the most extreme of the three villages, with migrant labourers constituting 127 (80%) of the employed population of 158, which broke down to 54 (77%) of the employed women and 73 (83%) of the employed men. Thus, my survey suggested that, as in the apartheid days when a high percentage of homeland residents were dependent on work in 'white' areas (55% in Bophuthatswana in the 1980s; Jeffery, 2003:31), households in 2000 were heavily reliant on remittances from family members who were working in urban areas such as

Rustenburg and Johannesburg. Mining still played a significant role in employment, constituting some 18% of jobs among the employed people interviewed in my survey.

Another striking feature about each of the villages' economies was a massive dependency on pension income that, according to my survey results, contributed nearly 27% to total household income across the villages, for all household members, not just those drawing the pension. This broke down to 48% in Lekgophung, 34% in Supingstad and 14% in Molatedi. Figure 2 below shows the relative proportions in households of people drawing pensions and wage incomes in each village.

**Figure 2: Non-subsistence sources of household income in each village in 2000 (ie. not including subsistence agriculture or other subsistence activities).**



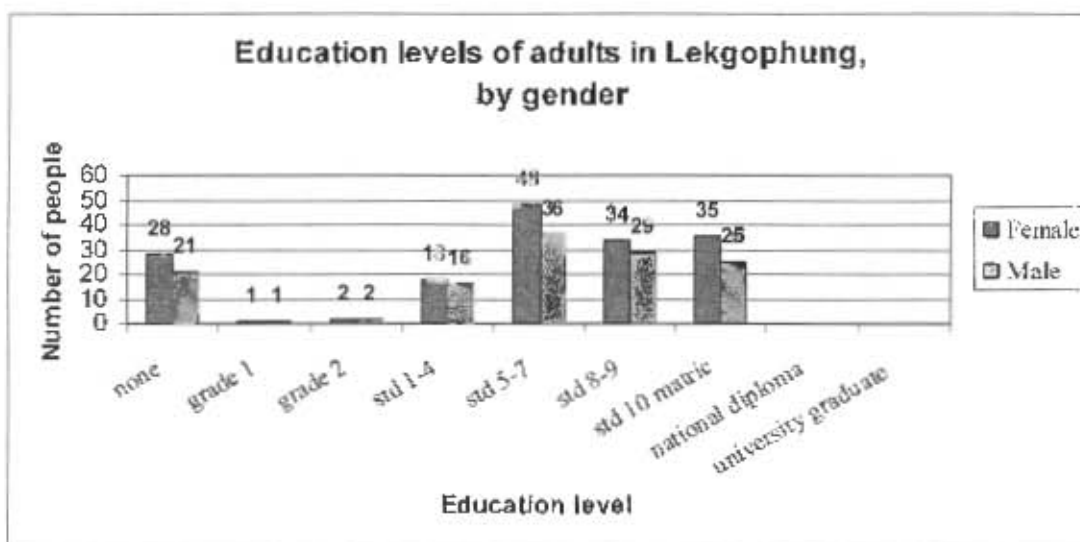
[Source: 2000 survey]

The questionnaire survey also found that respondents listed transport, roads, telephones and schools as the services most in need of upgrading, with some 53% (127 people) across the villages stating that of all services schools most pressingly needed attention. Of those 127 respondents, 62% were in Lekgophung, 23% in Molatedi and 15% in Supingstad.

Figures 3-5 below show a gendered breakdown of education levels for adults in each village. In Supingstad 28% of all surveyed adults had matriculated (completed high school); in Molatedi 27%; and, in Lekgophung, 21%. In Supingstad three people had

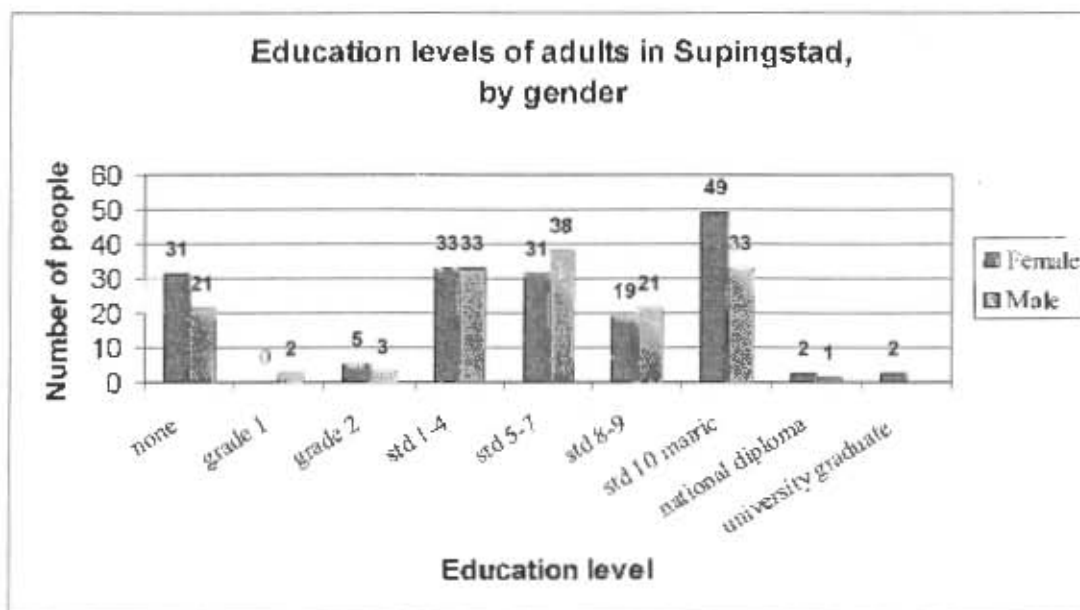
national diplomas, and two had university degrees. One person in Molatedi had a university degree. No one surveyed in Lekgophung had any higher education.

**Figure 3: Graph showing a gendered breakdown of education levels in Lekgophung in 2000.**



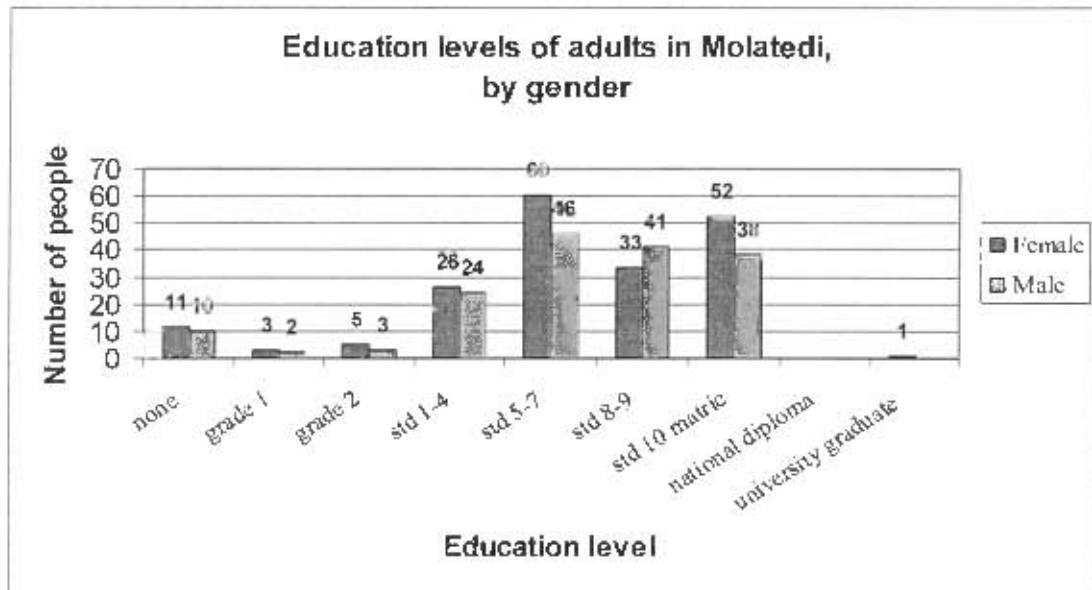
[Source: 2000 survey]

**Figure 4: Graph showing a gendered breakdown of education levels in Supingstad in 2000.**



[Source: 2000 survey]

**Figure 5: Graph showing a gendered breakdown of education levels in Molatedi in 2000.**



[Source: 2000 survey]

Overall, these socio-economic indicators suggest that Lekgophung was markedly less affluent than the other two villages. Lekgophung had the highest rate of unemployment; households in Lekgophung were considerably more dependent on pension income than those in Molatedi or Supingstad; and the formal education levels were lower. This impression was supported by visual evidence – most obviously, its roads and buildings.<sup>52</sup>

While statistics such as those I have presented from my socio-economic survey are useful for illustrating the general shape of the data generated by the survey, it is questionable how accurately they reflect reality, given the many variables that may affect their proportions. For example, although the survey found that some households had very low non-subsistence incomes (such as a household of ten people living off a single pension of R540), no one was actually starving in any of the villages, and no one was homeless. This shows the inherent superficiality of statistics (particularly for anthropological analyses) in that they are unable to explain mechanisms people use to supplement household income and the different ways wealth can be generated. Let us consider a couple of examples.

<sup>52</sup> I provided a visual description of the villages on pages 5-8.

Khumo, a twenty-eight year old woman with some eight to nine years of schooling (she did not have matric) and who had never been formally employed, lived in Lekgophung with her parents, four brothers and a sister, constituting a household of eight persons. Two of her siblings were still in school and the rest of the family was unemployed. Khumo's father, Tsome, was drawing a monthly state pension of R540 and that constituted the entire non-subsistence household income. However, Tsome owned the buildings and plot, so there was no rent to be paid. Also, bills were kept to a minimum as they had no electricity, running water, telephone, or hire purchase payments to make. The family had access to land where they grew vegetables such as beetroot, spinach and cabbage for household consumption. Although they had no cattle, they had five goats and eight chickens which they raised for family consumption. They also brewed beer which they sold locally. According to Khumo, these activities enabled the household to make ends meet.

Similarly, twenty-eight year old Masaka lived in a ten-person household in Supingstad with his daughter, two sons, a sister, grandmother, aunt, and three first cousins. His wife had died. He was unemployed and none of the ten household members was earning a wage. Five were at school, two were toddlers, and his aunt was also unemployed. Masaka's grandmother drew a monthly pension of R540 all of which went into household expenditure. The household owned nine goats and seven chickens although they did not grow any crops. However, Masaka's three cousins spent part of the week living with their paternal grandmother, and their father, who was a miner, sporadically sent remittances to their mother (Masaka's aunt).

In ways such as these, people survived, despite extreme poverty. Not surprisingly, Madikwe Game Reserve presented a vision of opportunity to villagers such as Khumo and Masaka even though, along with 83% of respondents surveyed, they had never been to the Reserve and had no personal experience of any benefits coming from it. Like many others, both Khumo and Masaka nevertheless talked of their hopes of getting jobs in the Reserve one day in the future and stressed that, at the very least, they wished to have the opportunity of becoming more involved in the Reserve, as did 96% of people I surveyed. It is also notable that Khumo and Masaka each perceived the other two villages to be receiving more benefits than their own, as did

people in interview after interview in each village. In reality, apart from a minimum of employment (fewer than ninety jobs in all three villages combined) none of the three had seen any benefits prior to the implementation of Madikwe Initiative projects. According to the NWP&TB, it was because the Reserve developed so rapidly, with *Operation Phoenix* (whereby 8057 individual animals belonging to 25 different species were moved to Madikwe over just four years) constituting the largest translocation of animals to date in South Africa (Hofmeyr, 1997), that local villagers were largely 'left out' (Davies, 1997).

A final point to make in this chapter is that the three villages were indisputably far from homogenous. Apart from the heterogeneous histories of their varied residents, I will show that each also had diverse internal dynamics, politics, priorities and influences. Yet, within NWP&TB rhetoric they were, and had since before the Reserve was even established, been referred to as 'the local community' as though the residents of the three villages were some kind of homogenous, bounded, single, united entity. A major concern of the following chapter is to assess the impact of such assumptions of community homogeneity on the success of the Madikwe project.

## Chapter Three

### Stakeholders and Stickholders: Power and Paradigms in the Development Arena

Madikwe is run as a three-way partnership between the State (represented by the Parks Board<sup>53</sup>), the local community and the private sector.... Without full and meaningful participation and successful contribution of each one of these partners, the Madikwe project would fail.... Its ultimate success is based on a foundation of good and strong partnerships that have been forged between a number of stakeholders. Some of these stakeholders, such as the North West Parks Board, the private sector and local communities, are major and indispensable players in this 'partnership in conservation' (Davies, 1997:2).

These statements, quoted from the Madikwe Development booklet,<sup>54</sup> are representative of declarations that the way forward for rural development is people-based wildlife conservation. I heard such sentiments expressed repeatedly whilst conducting fieldwork in Madikwe and at the NWP&TB head office in Mmabatho, the capital of the North West Province. The NWP&TB was proud of its "pioneering approach to people-based wildlife conservation" (ibid), and many NWP&TB employees spoke often, albeit in abstract terms, of the importance of the 'local community' and of how community development, rather than conservation, was the primary objective of Madikwe Game Reserve. "The local community," stressed the Park Warden of Madikwe during our first interview (4 April, 2000), "is a major stakeholder in the Madikwe project."

The 'local community', it soon transpired, was a term used in the Reserve, usually to refer to the three villages adjacent to it: Molatedi, Supingstad and Lekgophung. In one of the first interviews I held in Molatedi, my respondent commented: "When they [the Parks Board] first came here they said we, the people in Molatedi, were going to benefit. But I ask you: how have we benefited? It is only the stickholders [sic] who are benefiting" [interview, older male Molatedi resident, 12 April 2000].

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<sup>53</sup> Now North West Parks and Tourism Board (see *The Cast*, page x).

<sup>54</sup> A publication circulated to potential investors and also freely available from NWP&TB to anyone interested in Madikwe.

The irony implicit in this village respondent's interpretation of the community-as-stakeholder rhetoric seemed profound to me at the time. It conjured up visions of aggressive people arriving in Madikwe, clutching and brandishing sticks with which to exert power and claim profits. Such imagery fundamentally helped to shake loose in my mind the powerful, appealing rhetoric of community-based development as articulated by the NWP&TB. It emphasised the need to examine, deconstruct and clarify key phrases used by the NWP&TB, such as 'local community', 'people-based conservation', 'three-way partnership', 'empowerment', 'participation', 'community development' and, of course, 'stakeholders'. The first step was to trace where such concepts originated, to understand the politics and ideologies behind these seemingly utopian visions of equality and fraternity. The arena of development discourse seemed the logical place to start.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the rhetoric of the agencies managing development in the Madikwe area was firmly consistent with the discourses of people-based, participatory approaches to development that are presently dominant within hegemonic development discourse. Having established that relationship, I then begin to engage with one of the major themes running through this thesis: that the inconsistency between the rhetoric and the practice of both the NWP&TB and Mafisa revealed and emphasised a power imbalance within the Madikwe Initiative, an imbalance which the stickholder image had highlighted for me. I argue that the Madikwe Initiative's conformity to hegemonic development approaches, albeit rhetorical, concealed how power operates within that hegemony. I support this argument by drawing on literature which I categorise as being fundamentally 'post-development' in approach, a positioning that Rapley (2004: 352) cynically describes as a school of thought that believes the real goal of development interventions is inevitably human control and domination, not human improvement. A central aspect of this domination derives from adherence to hegemonic discourse because it encourages the creation of false or misleading knowledge about the local. I then go on to show that, in the Madikwe context, an inaccurate understanding of the local retarded or precluded the successful participation of village residents in the Madikwe enterprise.

## The Post Development Position

In the past few decades, there has been a major shift in development thinking. Post-structuralists have, with varying degrees of success, drawn on a Foucauldian approach to trace how knowledge generates power, and that one can see the process manifested in the relations between development discourse and development practice. They have illustrated how monolithic, 'top-down' methods of state intervention are often largely neo-colonial, imperialist modes of control which subject 'indigenous' populations to 'western' visions of development, often with disastrous results for those populations. Sachs (1992) claims, in *The Development Dictionary*, that "The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crime have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work" (1992:1). Agreeing, to greater or lesser degrees, with such nihilistic views of the development dream, a growing body of critics has sought to determine why development has been so contentious and problematic.

A good, and early, example is Ferguson's (1990) *The Anti-Politics Machine*. In his critique of the development enterprise, Ferguson documents the failure of development projects in Lesotho, effectively illustrating how development is "an interpretative grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us" (Ferguson, 1990:16). He shows how Lesotho was wrongly defined and categorised by the World Bank as "an aboriginal economy, that is a 'traditional' society somehow untouched by the modern world" (Ferguson, 1990:32). Indeed, already in 1981, in *Families Divided*, Murray had clearly shown that migrant labour was a 'way of life' in Lesotho, where a "process of fundamental transformation...has been taking place...for more than a hundred years, as a result of the penetration of capitalist relations of production..." (1981:174). Ferguson points out how, on the basis of the World Bank's erroneous conceptualisation of Lesotho, developers attempted to provide technical solutions to problems they had perceived, without fully taking into account the complex socio-cultural roots of those apparent 'problems'. Ferguson investigated "what happened when the plans produced by the development problematic... encountered the elaborately structured local livestock system" in Lesotho (Ferguson, 1990:170) or, as Grillo (1997:18) phrases it, "when 'rationality'

meets 'culture'". The argument is that there is often conflict when the protagonists of 'western knowledge' and those of 'indigenous knowledge' come into contact, and that, thereafter, resistance to development interventions on the part of local people is interpreted in the powerful western hegemonic discourse as reflecting ignorance. A consequence is that so-called indigenous knowledge is marginalised, undermined or ignored altogether and inevitably, it seems, insensitive outside interventions (or impositions) end in failure, if not catastrophe.

While the tendency of hegemonic discourse to disregard indigenous knowledge may inform a constructive argument for identifying conflicts arising from encounters of 'western' and 'traditional', such totalising polarities can also limit understanding in the sense that there is often a complex overlapping and blurring of the boundaries between the seemingly stable canons of knowledge. Indeed, it is highly questionable whether these are useful categories to employ at all, fraught, as they are, with political and moral assumptions and implications. In *South African Keywords*, Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) illustrate just how problematic the concept of 'tradition' and 'traditional' has been, particularly in the South African apartheid context. They describe how the notion of 'tradition' was used by the apartheid administration to justify the policy of separate development. They write:

The term 'traditional' has long been used as a euphemism for the labels 'uncivilised', 'primitive', 'pre-literate', 'tribal' or 'non-western'.... [Black South Africans could hence be] ...seen as 'conservative', 'backward', 'pre-rational' and therefore fundamentally unable to compete with 'modern', 'progressive' or 'developed' people (1988:40-57).

Gupta (1998) also warns of the dangerous pitfalls that are necessarily associated with the use of such totalising categories. He highlights how, particularly over the last few decades, there has been a growing inclination within development discourse to over-emphasise the notion of 'indigenouness' as a discrete sphere deserving of an unchallenged 'privileged' positioning within hegemonic development discourse. He advocates the need for anthropologists to employ what he calls a cultural theory which takes into account the post-colonial condition – a condition within which the "hybridities and impurities that are the legacy of colonialism and global capitalism" (1998:22) are fully recognised. Such a cultural theory needs not only to embrace

hybridity, but to recognise that it is in a constant state of flux, subject to the multiple, changing influences that come with globalisation. Gupta argues that:

‘Indigenous knowledge’ is not a static or closed system but is itself heterogeneous, hierarchical, and infused by relations of power and inequality; that ‘indigeneness’ is a conjunctural location rather than an essential identity; and that the effectiveness of ‘indigenous’ identity depends on its recognition by the hegemonic discourses of imperialist nostalgia, where poor and marginal people are romanticised at the same time that their way of life is destroyed... (1998:22).

Escobar (1995) also advocates an approach to the local that embraces hybridity.<sup>55</sup> He argues that the ‘Third World’ has been constructed by development discourse. Not unlike the insights gained from Ferguson’s view of development as an ‘interpretative grid’, Escobar comes to a conclusion that development discourse “has created an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World” (1995:9). He therefore calls for the deconstruction of the development paradigm in its entirety so to create space for the ‘unmaking’ of the ‘Third World’, where ‘hybrid’ societies can clarify and strengthen identities, embracing cultural, social, political, and even economic differences and thereby fulfil a potential “for resisting and subverting the axiomatics of capitalism and modernity in their hegemonic forms” (1995:225). Escobar suggests that it is only possible for ‘the local’ to engage with ‘the global’ on a basis that can be insightful, productive and illuminating when local identity has been reclaimed, reshaped, owned and ‘defended’ in its specific context and locality, and when a “collective construction of alternatives” to hegemonic discourses has been effectively produced (1995:226).

Fairhead and Leach (1996), in *Misreading the African Landscape*, present a particularly vivid example of the ability of hegemonic discourse to create false knowledge and thereafter exercise power, based on that false knowledge, over specific local situations or populations. They show how over the last century scientists and policy makers have fundamentally misunderstood, misinterpreted –

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<sup>55</sup> Escobar draws his definition of ‘hybridization’ from Garcia Canclini’s (1990) work. Escobar uses Latin America as his example: “Neither on the way to the lamentable eradication of all traditions nor triumphantly marching toward progress and modernity, Latin America is seen as characterized by complex processes of cultural hybridisation encompassing manifold and multiple modernities and traditions.... Within this view, the distinctions between traditional and modern, rural and urban, high, mass, and popular cultures lose much of their sharpness and relevance.... The hypothesis that emerges is...of a hybrid modernity characterised by continuous attempts at renovation, by a multiplicity of groups taking charge of the multitemporal heterogeneity peculiar to each sector and country” (Escobar, 1995:218).

misread – the landscape of Kissidougou in Guinea. That landscape comprises grassy savanna with patches of semi-deciduous forest surrounding most villages. The assumption that administrators made, supported by data provided by ecologists and scientists, was that those patches of forest were the last ‘relics’ of what had once been a completely forested landscape. The hegemonic belief was that the forest had been systematically degraded and destroyed by local land use activities. Through their fieldwork, Fairhead and Leach found that according to local knowledge the climax vegetation of the area was, in fact, savanna, not forest. Through specific socio-cultural land use practices, villagers, rather than deforesting the area, had created and maintained the forest islands around their settlements. However, hegemonic knowledge reigned supreme, and land use policies were drawn up and implemented in accordance with that knowledge. The power of the hegemonic discourse was its ability to ‘silence and subjugate’ the local residents’ views.

Yet, rather than being merely the passive victims of outside interventions, Kissidougou villagers succeeded in developing avoidance mechanisms which helped render those intervention strategies ineffective. Indeed, Fairhead and Leach document a long history of effective local resistance to a string of inappropriate interventions, such as the banning of bushfires which, ironically, would have increased the threat to those forests the policy makers were trying to protect. Again it is evident that power does not reside solely with those operating within the hegemonic discourse arena. Local residents also wield and appropriate power, but perhaps in less visible, more subtle ways. Fairhead and Leach conclude:

Kissidougou provides an extraordinary example of the production of erroneous knowledge concerning landscape history and the degradation problematic. While perhaps extreme, it does show that even the apparently most secure analysis and received wisdom can be challengeable, and exemplifies relationships between power and knowledge ... (1996:291).

Critics such as those cited above reaffirm the need to be ready to question, deconstruct and subvert hegemonic development discourses, to address issues of power in those discourses and in development practices, how it operates but also how it is often obscured. As the above examples demonstrate, such processes illuminate how power is manifested through dangerous tendencies to create knowledge and

misleading representations of the 'Third World'. Said (1978) concluded his *Orientalism* with the following:

The worldwide hegemony of Orientalism and all it stands for can now be challenged, if we can benefit properly from the general twentieth-century rise to political and historical awareness of so many of the earth's peoples. If this book has any future use, it will be as a modest contribution to that challenge, and as a warning: that systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions – mind-forg'd manacles – are all too easily made, applied and guarded.... If the knowledge of Orientalism has any meaning, it is in being a reminder of the seductive degradation of knowledge, of any knowledge, anywhere, at any time (Said: 1978:328).

Said's hope that action would follow the rise of political and historical awareness was perhaps overoptimistic. Nearly thirty years after he published *Orientalism* the insidious relationship between knowledge and power operates as persistently as ever, as I strive to demonstrate throughout this thesis with the Madikwe example.

The deeply destructive tendencies within the development arena to generate deceptive over-simplifications and misrepresentations of 'the local' have generally, if erroneously, been associated with 'top-down' approaches to development whereby interventions are imposed on local populations by exogenous agents. Yet, despite a major shift in development thinking and practice that, at least since the 1980s, has resulted in the creation of the more populist paradigm of 'bottom-up', 'grass-roots' solutions to underdevelopment, the consequences of the knowledge-power relationship are as pernicious as ever. The Madikwe case, as I shall show in the chapters that follow, provides a clear example. But first let us consider briefly the genealogy of 'bottom-up' approaches to development and how they have been received, understood and internalised in the 'development industry'.

## **New Paradigms But an Unchanging Story of Development**

With his *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*, Robert Chambers (1983) was one of the earliest critics to systematically challenge the top-down hegemonic approaches to development that rendered the rural 'third world' misperceived and local knowledge misunderstood, marginalised or ignored altogether. He wrote:

It is a truism that knowledge is power.... Those who are powerful and dominant have the greatest accumulation of wealth, a centralised and interconnected system of communication, an ability to determine what new knowledge shall be created, and

control over flows of information from the centre to the rural periphery. The association of outsiders' modern scientific knowledge with wealth, power and prestige generates and sustains beliefs in its universal superiority, indeed beliefs that it is the only knowledge of any significance (1983:75-6)

As the title of his book suggests, Chambers argued for bottom-up approaches to rural development, where participatory methods for implementing development projects could upset the hegemonic operation of power and thus create a space for local people's voices and knowledge to shape and dominate development interventions and their outcomes. This, he argued, was the only viable route to empowerment. Over the years he has been a great advocate for Participatory Rural Appraisal which he defines as "a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act" (Chambers, 1994:953). He thus called for a 'new professionalism' that could embrace multiple disciplines, and for a reversal of the way development operates, in particular for a reversal of analyses from top-down to bottom-up. "The top-down mode," he says, "starts with disciplinary specialisation and uses its tools to examine rural situations. Bottom-up analysis starts with the condition of poor people, their resources, aspirations and problems.... it entails trying to see from within" (1983:184).

Over the two decades since *Putting the Last First* was published, there has been a steady flood of critiques of development programmes, projects and initiatives that have advocated grass roots, people-centred approaches. Concepts that may have been relatively novel and challenging in the early 1980s have since become routine and commonplace, and have been absorbed into a paradigmatic discourse that has lost its vigour because the rhetoric often has little bearing either on the idiosyncrasies within specific local contexts or on the realities of development practice. As Henkel and Stirrat say: "It is now difficult to find a development project that does not in one way or another claim to adopt a 'participatory' approach involving 'bottom-up' planning, acknowledging the importance of 'indigenous' knowledge and claiming to 'empower' local people" (2001:168). Yet those claims so often are nothing but rhetoric precisely because on-the-ground agents are expected, and prefer to work with, ready-made models. Consider the redolent language of a NWP&TB brochure which outlines the Board's 'partnership' with what it calls the local communities:

To secure the communities' full participation in and 'ownership' of the project, Madikwe [Game Reserve] needs to be truly integrated into the local communities and economy. It is critically important, therefore, that communities are actively involved with the project as a major partner from 'day one'.... The Parks Board has facilitated the establishment of a community support and empowerment programme [the Madikwe Initiative] to develop capacity in the communities... and ensure equal participation (Davies, 1997).

It is clear from the above<sup>56</sup> that the NWP&TB's stated approach conforms with now conventional people-based development paradigms, concerned with empowerment, capacity building and participation. Yet, it is equally clear from the post-development literature outlined earlier that rhetorical claims to significant changes in approaches to development do not necessarily mean those changes have occurred on the ground, or that the eventual outcomes are ultimately substantially different from those associated with top-down development interventions. Hence, phrases such as 'full participation in'; 'ownership of'; 'truly integrated'; 'actively involved'; 'equal participation'; and 'major partner from day one' need to be treated with caution and scepticism. As post-development literature shows, adherence to paradigmatic models that encourage generalisations and the generation of false or misleading knowledge about local situations serves only to widen the gap between stated objectives and actual outcomes.

Furthermore, as some of the post-development critiques outlined in the previous section have demonstrated, fundamental elements of what Henkel and Stirrat (2001) call the new development orthodoxy have proved to be highly problematic.<sup>57</sup> In a similar vein James (1999) says, "Even in its currently fashionable style of allowing for 'community participation', empowerment, a 'people-focused approach' and 'listening to the voices of the poor', development discourse rarely engages with the human realities of the situations in which it is employed and applied" (1999:13). Behind the heady, appealing rhetoric of concepts such as 'empowerment' and

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<sup>56</sup> See also the quote at the beginning of this chapter – and, indeed, evidence presented throughout this thesis.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Henkel and Stirrat point out that 'empowerment' has become a vigorously contested term because it is often poorly defined. They write: "Usually, although not always, it is argued that people are poor because they are disempowered. Through empowerment people will escape poverty. Precisely what empowerment involves is frequently unclear, and at the same time empowerment often becomes the objective of development rather than the means towards development" (2001:171). Hence, the concept of empowerment is misunderstood and it becomes yet another catch phrase inflating the rhetoric of so-called bottom up development projects. The result, more often than not, is that those projects fail, or fail to reach their potential, as was the case with the Madikwe Initiative.

'participation' hegemonic power is exercised as vigorously as ever, reinforcing power imbalances that maintain the marginal, subjugated position of those at whom development interventions are aimed. Cooke (2001) points out how participatory development is dominated by what he calls a 'proselytizing euphoria' when what is needed is a critical understanding of the dangerous limitations of participatory processes which, he argues, are often little more than coercive persuasion.<sup>58</sup> He writes:

Coercive persuasion suggests that participation can indeed be co-opted for a range of agendas other than those with the needs of the poor and oppressed at heart.... It also suggests that participatory development with an espoused and genuine commitment to meeting the needs of the poor and oppressed and to raising their consciousness on the part of the change agent are not in themselves... a safeguard against disastrous outcomes from participatory development (Cooke, 2001:121).

Yet, despite such warnings of how grassroots, participatory approaches to development can (and have) become a new tyranny (Cooke and Kothari, 2001), they continue to be employed, often uncritically, by numerous development interventions. Even early critics such as Chambers (1983) stressed the importance of not merely adopting bottom-up discourse as though it were gospel, an all-purpose blue print. An emphasis on flexibility and capacity to accommodate the multilayered, ever-changing complexities of local situations has been highlighted repeatedly in people-based development literature.

Facilitating development interventions to reflect such principles has proved to be a different matter. As Henkel and Stirrat say:

While Chambers is remarkably open about the provisional nature of his methods, not so many of his followers, who have in effect 'routinized' the teachings of the prophet. This involves a stress on formulaic performance of particular methods and of arguments between those who can claim an immediate position in the apostolic succession and those whose relation to Chambers is less direct. Even mild questioning of Chambers' teaching can produce the most extreme reactions on the part of his followers and the damning of the heretic (2001:178)

Although Henkel and Stirrat focus specifically on Chambers in the above, their argument is pertinent to the broader grassroots, people based development arena.

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<sup>58</sup> Cooke, drawing on Schein's work on Maoist China, defines coercive persuasion as a type of brainwashing whereby participatory processes become merely a 'technique' for 'consciousness-changing'. Project outcomes are shaped by the interventionist. "Grassroots, participatory, peasant-orientated rhetoric... [resulted in] an ideological unanimity that facilitated Maoist oppression and, it can be argued with hindsight, development programmes that led to devastating famine and authoritarian oppression" (2001:120).

Indeed, the theological language they use is apt. It reflects the pervasive power of hegemonic discourse to attract compliant, unquestioning converts to a new orthodoxy.

One of the most problematic elements of such wholesale adoption of people-based development approaches is its tendency to encourage the utilisation of generic frameworks. Such frameworks seem inevitably to promote binary thinking, particularly as the paradigms of grassroots, people based approaches to development grew from a reaction to top-down institutional model-based approaches. Because they did, they reflect the binary opposites that created them. They inform what is, therefore, a fundamentally reactive discourse that depends on a vocabulary of extremes – bottom-up/top-down, for example, or democratic/autocratic, which is a major preoccupation of chapter four.

Dramatic shifts in the conceptualisation of approaches to development have thus not meant that the negative manifestations of power within hegemonic discourse have abated. Notions of participatory development and empowerment, which focus on the local and putting local people and local knowledge first (Grillo, 1997:8) have, rather, the potential to create another, more insidious form of power and control to that produced by top-down approaches. It is a power that is intensely political, yet obscured because it utilises liberal democratic language that appears ‘people-centred’ – despite the evidence that development interventions rarely result in those at whom initiatives are aimed gaining greater autonomy or becoming more empowered or less marginalised to any truly significant or lasting degree.

### **The Flattening Tendencies of Paradigmatic Models: The Absent Community**

As illustrated earlier (pp 71; 79) with quotes from its literature, the rhetoric of the NWP&TB conforms to the paradigmatic discourse of people-based approaches to development. A consequence, as I shall show, is that it suffers from the problems one often sees when paradigms are adopted as models. Those problems manifest in two major, interconnected concerns that, the data below will illustrate, have had a highly negative impact on the development process at Madikwe. One arises from paradigmatic models’ effacement of specificity and from the generalising tendency of

the rhetoric that is created on their basis. The other lies in the propensity of paradigmatic models to create the 'mind-forg'd manacles' to which Edward Said, drawing from Blake, referred already thirty years ago (1978:328).

In the context of post-colonial theory, Homi Bhabha writes of what he calls the fetish, or stereotype, that "gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in the recognition of difference and the disavowal of it" (1994:75).

He argues:

The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations... (ibid).

There is a similar weakness within the development arena. It is a weakness that enables some theorists and many practitioners to deny difference (albeit unintentionally) through generating and circulating fixed designations which seem to accommodate and articulate that difference but which actually become generalised categories. These categories grow to be more powerful and persuasive than the reality they (attempt but fail to) represent. For example, even when academic analysis refers to 'hybridity' in contexts of development, there is a danger of that concept, too, becoming merely another generic, non-specific category: the very act of assigning to 'Third World' populations new 'hybrid' identities can, paradoxically, lead to a flattening and merging of the differences and complexities that those same theorists – and consequently, more often than not, practitioners – who are protagonists for such hybridity seek to express. 'Hybrid' thus becomes another label or stereotype, a generalised identity, albeit one attempting to highlight difference, diversity, complexity and multiplicity. Moreover, it has the potential to lead to understandings of particular cohorts of people as homogenous, and then as constituting distinct 'communities'. Such labels, through their tendency, in the ways they are used, to create arrested, fixed representations, have a similar effect to that elucidated by Bhabha: it is the effect of obstructing the generation of deep and meaningful dialogues of identity and difference. Even when an aggregation of people is labelled 'hybrid', it is still often recognised by the outsiders who give it that label as 'a

community', and as such can be, and commonly is, then approached as if it constituted a distinct and distinctive group of people, the complexity of whose interactions and diversities then disappears.

That such an unenlightening approach to 'the local' is assumed time and time again within the development arena indicates the presence of the other major problem associated with paradigmatic models: the 'mind forg'd manacles'. It is a predicament frequently seen not only in development but within the social sciences in general, corrupting and contaminating the acquisition and operation of knowledge. Said (1978), as noted above, repeatedly highlighted and warned against "the seductive degradation of knowledge", of passing on knowledge unthinkingly. He wrote: "The trouble sets in when the guild tradition of Orientalism takes over the scholar who is not vigilant, whose individual consciousness as a scholar is not on guard against *idées reçues* all too easily handed down in the profession" (1978:326-327). He commends Berque and Rodinson for conducting their work with "...a direct sensitivity to the material before them, and then a continual self-examination of their methodology and practice, a constant attempt to keep their work responsive to the material and not to a doctrinal preconception" (ibid).

Yet Berque and Rodinson, with their sensitivity and responsiveness are, it seems, the minority. It is as though there is an inherent flaw within the epistemologies of social science. That flaw is the perceived need to adopt and use paradigmatic models, models which inevitably flatten and obscure the complexities of that which they seek to address. It is as though both theorists and practitioners become captivated and entranced by a new idea, or model, that seems to offer solutions to all the tiresome old problems – a bottom-up approach will remedy all the problems that arose from top-down development – to the extent that it becomes impossible to see beyond that model. In consequence, theories and methods cease to be sensitive and responsive to the material, or people they aim to empower. In this way, paradigmatic models tend towards taking on a particularly powerful life of their own – and, in the development industry, always at the expense of those at whom development interventions are aimed.

Let us now consider the extent to which use of such paradigmatic models has affected the development effort in Madikwe. From the start, as is illustrated in the opening quote to this chapter, the NWP&TB conceptualised the three villages' residents as constituting a 'community' – a single, coherent, bounded social entity with shared values that could be labelled a 'stakeholder' in terms of a people-centred development model.<sup>59</sup> This conceptualisation had its roots in a socio-economic policy drawn up by an independent consultancy firm commissioned by the then Bophuthatswana Parks Board.<sup>60</sup> The policy reportedly recommended that the Board should deal with democratic, representative committees rather than with traditional leaders because of the risk of powerful individuals appropriating all the profits (interview, former NWP&TB Resource Economist, 11 June 2007).<sup>61</sup> Nothing was done until 1994 when, acting on this recommendation, the new NWP&TB created Community Development Organisations (CDOs) in each of the three villages. It then grouped the CDOs together under a single CDO forum.

The park warden told me in several discussions that the CDOs had been intended to act as unifying committees that would comprise people who represented all socio-economic and political categories and sectors within each village. However, as I shall show in chapter five, rather than operating as neutral bodies, the CDOs came into conflict with other committees that were already present in each village. This was largely because they were heavily aligned with the chiefs and Tribal Authorities. For example, as Chief Matlapeng of Molatedi said, "with the CDO there were representatives of the Tribal Authority. Now, with the new structures, there are no Tribal Authority representatives.... With the death of the CDO we no longer can say what is going on..." (interview, 5 July 2000). Indeed, of the fifteen members of the Molatedi CDO, all were described as 'elder people' (in general, my Molatedi field assistant explained, that meant over fifty years old) and only two of them were women (interview, sixty-three year old woman and former Molatedi CDO member,

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<sup>59</sup> Needless to say, the concept of community has been thoroughly problematised, in the context of the development arena and beyond, by many academic critiques. See, for example, Cohen, 1985; Thornton and Ramphele, 1988; Oomen, 2000 and Hulme and Murphree, 2000. I do not expand on that literature here because it says little other than to offer the kind of critique I am here developing.

<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, as far as I could find out, there are no copies of the original report and recommendations still existing, nor could any respondents remember the name of the consultancy firm.

<sup>61</sup> As another NWP&TB-linked respondent said to me: "It's okay if the chief takes a back seat, but if you get one of those dictators you've got a problem" (pers.com. – the respondent chooses to remain anonymous).

28 April, 2000). At least four of the male members were ward heads and the chairperson was the chief's uncle.<sup>62</sup>

In practice, rather than unifying the villages and easing communications, the CDOs created rifts and divides in each of the villages.<sup>63</sup> The CDOs were formally disbanded within four years of having been created, following recommendations made following a survey (Magome and Sentle, 1998). That survey found that the CDO model, wrongly assuming as it did that each village constituted an homogenous community, had failed (Koch, 2000:5). But by then, as I will show in chapter five, the CDOs had become institutionally entrenched in village politics.

It is important to note (particularly as it starkly exposes the disparity between rhetoric and practice) that in their paper *Challenging Eden*, Koch and Massyn (1999), two of Mafisa's directors, thoroughly critiqued the NWP&TB's CDOs and problematised the notion of community with which the Board was working. The paper addresses people-based approaches to development focussing particularly on issues in community-public-private partnerships. Koch and Massyn there discuss key differences between the situation Mafisa experienced in Madikwe and that which it encountered during its work with the Makuleke people in the Pafuri region of the Kruger National Park. The paper describes how, in 1969, some 3000 people of what Koch and Massyn describe as the Makuleke clan<sup>64</sup> were forcibly removed from their land to make room for what became part of the Pafuri area of the Kruger National Park. In 1998 these people's representatives, now calling themselves 'the Makuleke', won what was then the largest land claim in South Africa (24,000 hectares) (Kaplan, 2000). The Makuleke claimants, having been successful in their claim, committed the land to remain inside the Kruger National Park and (like the NWP&TB's stated objectives for Madikwe) intended to use nature tourism as their main vehicle for

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<sup>62</sup> The village was administratively divided into wards, and the ward heads report directly to the chief. See chapter two where I cite Schapera's (1953) explanation of the ward system.

<sup>63</sup> I return to CDOs and the divisive role they played in village politics using the example of Molatedi village in chapter five.

<sup>64</sup> Much South African writing has confused the political units comprising persons of various clans and named for the chief's clan as the named clan itself. A clan is not a political unit; in southern Africa's predominantly patrilineal kinship system, a clan is a genealogically related set of putative agnates said to be descended from a common ancestor. In all recorded cases, political units (chiefdoms, tribes etc.) comprised members of diverse clans if for no other reasons than that wives were commonly from clans other than those of their husbands and that patrilocality was not an unbreachable rule (cf. Wilson and Thompson, 1969).

development, economic growth and job creation. Collective ownership of the land, as well as commercial rights<sup>65</sup> in the Kruger National Park, were formally and legally held by the Makuleke Communal Property Association (CPA).<sup>66</sup>

Under the Communal Property Association Act (no. 28 of 1996) 'communities' were enabled to form legal entities known as Communal Property Associations (CPAs).<sup>67</sup>

According to the Act, the motivation behind it was that:

...it is desirable that disadvantaged communities should be able to establish appropriate legal institutions through which they may acquire, hold and manage property in common; ...It is necessary to ensure that such institutions are established and managed in a manner which is non-discriminatory, equitable and democratic and that such institutions be accountable to their members; And ...it is necessary to ensure that members of such institutions are protected against abuse of power by other members... (The Communal Property Association Act no. 28 of 1996).

While such legislation provides a necessary framework where the presently more marginal of South Africa's citizens, in particular, can begin to claim legal, albeit collective, rights over land ownership from the state, the reality of implementation of such a process is far from simple. The Makuleke CPA is, in fact, a good example. While initially it seemed that it was a shining success story (as Koch and Massyn's (1999) *Challenging Eden* describes), it has recently become evident that internal squabbles and the misuse of power have compromised the CPA's efficacy (pers. comm. with a development consultant who had been working in the area, February, 2006). Similarly Robins and van de Waal have found in their recent fieldwork that: "there are indications of growing tensions around decision-making and representivity. This has been especially evident in relation to the spending of CPA money" (2006: 12). Such evidence highlights how, in practice, CPAs can be problematic in local circumstances.

It is also worth noting that, in contrast to Koch and Massyn's (1999) confidence in the integrity and centrality of the CPA in the Makuleke case, a recent article (January

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<sup>65</sup> The conditions for exercising commercial rights were that actions and policies be consistent with the terms of agreement set up by South African National Parks and a Joint Management Board, made up of representatives from the Makuleke villages and the conservation agency, to govern the way in which wildlife is protected in the area (Koch, 2000).

<sup>66</sup> A similar arrangement was made for claimants of areas of the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Reserve in northern KwaZulu-Natal (Walker, 2003).

<sup>67</sup> In this way, CPAs have become a means of legally defining a 'community' in South Africa, which is in itself highly problematic but not within the scope of this thesis to discuss.

2006) in *Sawubona*<sup>68</sup> reports Makuleke spokesperson Gibson Maluleke to have said “it’s no secret that the success of the Makuleke people is because we work with our chief, and we respect him and our origins. That is our roots and our chief is our leader because of his birthright. That is how we do it here, and it works very well for us” (Harvey, 2006:80). It is important to point out that since the Makuleke CPA won the land claim, neighbouring Chief Mhinga has lodged a counter-claim to the land on the grounds that Chief Makuleke was not a chief but merely a headman, and subordinate to Chief Mhinga. In light of this counter-claim, the political strategising evident within Gibson Maluleke’s comment is striking. As Robins and van der Waal say, it indicates how “the language and legacies of the Tribal Authorities established by the architects of apartheid are far from dead and buried. Both the Makuleke and Mhinga communities have sought to strengthen and reposition their respective Traditional Authorities within the new political landscape of post-apartheid South Africa” (2006:6). It is evident that political expediency has much to do with Makuleke representations of solidarity (see also Friedman, 2005; Fay, 2007 and Whande, 2007). Indeed, the view of the Makuleke as a socially cohesive group united under the CPA is not as unshakable as it seems in *Challenging Eden*. The example shows that even where legislated structures are drawn upon to underpin ‘community’, local diversity, political expediency and particular interests may disrupt the process.

In contrast to the Makuleke people with their (at the time reportedly effective) CPA, the residents of the villages around Madikwe did not have any right to legal ownership of assets, land or resources in Madikwe Game Reserve, nor were they likely to obtain such ownership rights through the kind of land claims process used in the Makuleke case.<sup>69</sup> The land and infrastructure was state-owned (with an estimated value then of R90 million), and the lodges with their infrastructure (valued at between R264,000 – R400,000 per bed) were private sector owned through lease agreements (Davies 1997). According to Koch and Massyn: “Since the property rights of *the community* were not defined their investment cannot be quantified, and thus their tenure is weak” (1999:14 – italics added). Again, the implication is that if the local

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<sup>68</sup> The South African Airways inflight magazine.

<sup>69</sup> There were two pending land claims for parts of Madikwe, but none, while I was undertaking research, came from residents in the three villages that were the focus of the Madikwe Initiative (interview with Park Warden, 21 September, 2000).

residents had managed to form a CPA, they would have been in a much stronger position to reap substantial benefits from Madikwe Game Reserve.

The key point to stress here is not that Koch and Massyn's claim that "the Makuleke community is characterised by a high degree of internal social cohesion. Its members have effectively combined their traditional structures with new civic bodies" (1999:6) may have been proven to be inaccurate. Rather, there is an uncomfortable inconsistency in their critique in that they have simultaneously questioned the effective empirical community and homogeneity of so-called communities in the Madikwe area, while celebrating the supposed social cohesion of the Makuleke community and the efficacy of their CPA. They say, for example:

As is often stated, often rhetorically rather than with serious regard for the analytical and strategic consequences, groups of people are frequently described as a 'community' even though they are no such thing....The assumption... that the three villages surrounding Madikwe formed a cohesive 'community' with a common set of interests was misplaced.... The anecdotes of fragmentation and fissure – evidence of complex social issues ignored by the assumption of cohesion that determined the early approach to development at Madikwe – could go on endlessly (1999: 11-15).

Yet, on page 14 of the same document Koch and Massyn themselves refer to the villages as 'the community' (italicised in the excerpt quoted two paragraphs above). Apart from being blatantly contradictory, the logic they offer in the document is decidedly circular: they argue that it was that 'social cohesion' which helped enable the Makuleke not only to be successful in their land claim, but to control and potentially to realise their economic interests in nature tourism within the Kruger National Park. Yet, in the same paper, they thoroughly interrogate and reject the concept of community and the implied social cohesion:

The evidence from southern Africa suggests that the 'C' in Community Wildlife Management does not exist as an entity. It is nebulous, fluid and elusive, and often a figment of the imagination of project managers and donors seeking quick fixes. A common belief amongst donors and project managers is that it saves time to group people together, because of the simplicity of 'working with' fewer groups. Our findings suggest the opposite: if the groupings within a community and the differences between groups, are not well understood and taken into account, then conflicts emerge which are difficult to heal (1999:16).

It is thus apparent that overall Koch and Massyn's well substantiated position is that the notion of community is thoroughly misplaced, if by 'community' what is meant is a neatly bounded, tight-knit and homogenous social aggregate; and that interventions

are doomed once they attempt to impose social group boundaries. It was, or should thus have been, entirely unsurprising for Mafisa, given the well critiqued experiences of conservation-related development interventions, that the villages adjacent to Madikwe should not have been labelled 'the local community'. Yet, Mafisa's experiences with the Makuleke people, as outlined in *Challenging Eden*, illustrated how working with a single committee apparently effectively and democratically representing a seemingly socially cohesive group of people, was so successful. There lies the inconsistency within Koch and Massyn's critique, an inconsistency that is far from unusual within the arena of people-based development (cf. Barrow and Murphree, 2001; Jones, 2001; Njaya, 2003, for example). It is a contradiction that comes from highlighting and decrying notions of community for their falseness and propensity to iron out the wrinkles of difference, while at the same time calling for democratic, representative bodies (such as the CDOs described earlier and again in chapter five) as a central requirement to effective people-based development interventions.

Koch and Massyn's argument about the importance of locally-based representative committees resonates with Barrow and Murphree's (2001) call for local populations to have local representative bodies if they are to profit from development interventions. In their critique of community-based conservation initiatives, drawing respectively on their experiences in East Africa and Zimbabwe, Barrow and Murphree stress that for people in rural areas to benefit from natural resource management it is imperative for them to form an 'organizational vehicle'. They argue that: "effective community conservation involves collective action, effectively organized" (2001:35). And they go on to assert that "any organizational vehicle for such collaboration is likely to require four characteristics: cohesion, demarcation, legitimacy and resilience" (2001:26). By cohesion they mean "a sense of common identity and interest which serves to bring people together for collaborative action, and leads them to collectively differentiate themselves from others [so that it]...sets social boundaries and determines membership". Demarcation "sets the boundaries of jurisdiction for the collective regime". Legitimacy they define as "an internal legitimacy, endogenously derived but also sanctioned by the state" and resilience is "the organizational capacity to adapt in content and structure....The ability to accommodate change" (2001:26-27).

Lekgophung was the only village where there was a committee with any semblance of such an organisational vehicle. There, seventy-two of eighty respondents in my survey stated that the village's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) forum<sup>70</sup> was the successful and legitimate committee representing the village.<sup>71</sup> This statistic indicates that it therefore had 'internal legitimacy, endogenously derived', a finding supported by in-depth interviews and conversations where comments such as the following were common: 'The RDP are the ones that are successful in representing our village in the Reserve'; 'We are informed of everything that is happening in the Reserve, even if we don't have the opportunity of going there, because the RDP always calls a meeting'; and 'The RDP is helping us. When there is a problem we can go to them and [discuss it]... Then they are repairing everything that is not in good condition in the village'.<sup>72</sup>

However, in both Molatedi and Supingstad the RDP forums were not effective and there was a conspicuous absence of CPAs or, indeed, any other elected entities that were simultaneously legal, legitimate and representative and had the ability to create village cohesion. Assumptions that such organisation could be achieved by a simple process of instituting representative democratic committees were highly problematic, as illustrated earlier through the example of the CDOs.<sup>73</sup>

Given that Mafisa's directors, Koch and Massyn, had thoroughly deconstructed and problematised the notion of 'local community' in the Madikwe area, and had also warned of the damaging consequences of such assumptions, what is remarkable is that their argument seemed to have had little impact on the public rhetoric of the NWP&TB. Rather than commenting on internal discussions to which I have not been privy, I am referring to the language NWP&TB uses to represent the Madikwe project to the outside world, which is awash with phrases celebrating the community as 'a

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<sup>70</sup> The RDP forums were established through central government legislation in 1994 and intended as vehicles to facilitate development and promote participatory democracy at local level throughout the country. See chapter five, pages 132- 134 for more details.

<sup>71</sup> I offer a more thorough treatment of Lekgophung's RDP forum in chapter five – see the section *Lekgophung's RDP Forum: Democracy, Strategy or Apathy?*

<sup>72</sup> Interviews held with Lekgophung residents on 14 May 2000; 26 June 2000 and 5 June 2000 respectively.

<sup>73</sup> In chapters four and five I provide a detailed exposition of democratic processes in a development context.

key partner'; 'an indispensable player'; 'a major stakeholder'. Moreover, the practices of the Mafisa-implemented Madikwe Initiative did not appear to be substantially influenced by their critique.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the then CEO of the NWP&TB told me he had never seen a copy of *Challenging Eden* and was not even aware of its existence (pers. comm., 21 May 2001). This 'discussion paper' was not disseminated to the NWP&TB nor drawn upon to structure Mafisa's agents' work, which underscores, once more, a seemingly inevitable dislocation between discourse and practice.

Such a situation again highlights the problematic nature of knowledge, particularly how practice can come to be so inconsistent with rhetoric. As I shall show in detail in chapter seven, the Madikwe Initiative projects were top-down, tightly controlled interventions. In interview after interview respondents involved in these Mafisa-led interventions stressed the dependent, unsustainable aspects of the projects: 'we are unable to do things for ourselves'; 'Mafisa is very important. Once they are no longer here I am not able to say what may happen'; 'we are dependent on the Reserve, we are dependent on Mafisa, and we are always dependent on funding'.<sup>75</sup> Through such comments, terms such as development, upliftment, empowerment and participation became discursively bankrupt, condemned by respondents' commentaries to a growing wasteland of failed promises.

Koch and Massyn's (1999) analysis of 'community', and their calls to create more fluid definitions of the local which could encompass notions of complexity and diversity, did not lead to a change in how the villages were conceptualised and approached – either by the NWP&TB<sup>76</sup> or Mafisa agents. Thus, while the theoretical positioning of the managing NGO's directors was strongly centred in 'people-based' development discourse, such a positioning had no impact on on-the-ground developmental practice. In this way, notions such as diversity and difference within supposed communities become absorbed into a simple designation that remains

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<sup>74</sup> Although the Community Development Organisations (CDOs) which the NWP&TB set up to facilitate liaison between the Reserve and the villages, but which in fact ignored intra-village tensions and hence contributed to social fragmentation, were eventually seen, by Madikwe Initiative consultants, as having failed, and were therefore disbanded (Koch and Massyn, 1999:15).

<sup>75</sup> In order of citation above, interview with theatre group, 25 September 2000; Molatedi herbicide operator, 14 September 2000 and Lkgophung bush clearing contractor, 26 August 2000.

<sup>76</sup> As is apparent from the NWP&TB literature cited earlier and from evidence generated through interviews with NWP&TB personnel, such as the park warden's comment on page 71.

firmly in the realm of rhetoric and then loses its integrity simply – and sadly – *because* it becomes just another label or category (like ‘hybrid community’), that is seemingly constructed and used to conform to rhetorically approved (bottom-up, local-people-take-centre-stage) approaches to development.

However, as the following chapters show, in all three villages the post-apartheid government initiated processes of ‘restructuring social relations’ had fuelled important debates centring around chiefs, tribal authorities, local government, empowerment, power and equal rights. None of the villages was a static, closed, ‘traditional’ society, the passive object or victim of dominating hegemonic discourses.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, my fieldwork evidence suggested that the majority of village fieldwork participants I spoke with were not merely downtrodden, passive victims of hegemonic power plays. To the contrary, I heard many remarks such as the following:

- ‘they didn’t want to listen to our ideas’;
- ‘they have their own agendas’;
- ‘projects that are initiated are very foreign to us’;
- ‘these people [the consultants] should not be going past our chief or we don’t know what ever may be happening. They must take these initiatives through the proper channels’;
- ‘the people were not consulted’;
- ‘they are not taking project initiatives via the community’;
- ‘handouts make fools of people’ and
- ‘the chiefs have been made redundant’.<sup>78</sup>

Such comments imply that many villagers of diverse local categories were actively engaging with meta-narratives of democracy, traditionalism, modernity – and with the power imbalances that had become evident within the development encounter – and which the stakeholder/stickholder image with which I began this chapter had first

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<sup>77</sup> Even the fact that my survey found that 71% of employed people across the villages were migrant labourers working in metropolitan areas such as Johannesburg, Soweto and Rustenburg indicates that endogenous discourse is far from unexposed to outside influence.

<sup>78</sup> In order of citation: middle aged unemployed woman in Lekgophung, 28 August 2000; young unemployed man in Supingstad, focus group discussion, 1 September 2000; middle aged woman, Molatedi, 4 September 2000; older man and ward leader, Molatedi, 6 August 2000; Chief Matlapeng, Molatedi, 5 July 2000; *ibid.*; Chief Suping, 29 August 2000; *ibid.*

revealed to me. Rather than indicating powerless subjugation, or an outright rejection of the whole development enterprise, such statements reflect active engagement, and engagement from a critical perspective that resonates with the post development position outlined at the beginning of this chapter, and whose protagonists are at pains to affirm rather than submerge the agency and power of local people.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Politics of Avoidance: Chiefs, Tribal Authorities and the Development Process**

I now build on the argument introduced in chapter three: that people-based approaches to conservation are fundamentally constrained, if not flawed, by their tendency to presume the validity of generic knowledge even when that knowledge is inapplicable to specific local circumstances. The present chapter illustrates how this tendency can forestall interventionists' access to local knowledge and priorities, which can then result in the development process underplaying or even bypassing local inequalities and power relations. The chapter focuses on the relations between Chief Suping of Supingstad and Madikwe Initiative agents, showing how their interactions resulted in an impasse that left all the players on the Madikwe stage at a disadvantage.

Madikwe Initiative agents invoked a powerful democracy/autocracy binary to explain the impasse and, as I shall show, such binary thinking justified the so-called democratic Madikwe Initiative refusing to work with the person its agents saw as fundamentally autocratic, Chief Suping. As a result, the entire village of Supingstad was excluded from the direct attentions of the Madikwe Initiative. Through presenting empirical data concerning the impasse, the chapter aims to illustrate that autocracy and democracy are not the antithetical, discrete spheres they may seem to be, and that binary thinking based on an assumption that they are is thus not only reductionist but also severely hinders the process of accessing, assessing and understanding local situations and conflicts.

Drawing on empirical evidence describing villagers' attitudes towards chieftainship and democracy, I argue that, in the context of conflicts regarding the governance roles of chiefs and their traditional authorities in post apartheid South Africa, democracy is a highly contentious and problematic notion. In order to contextualise this argument, I devote a significant section of the chapter to an overview of the political history and broader theoretical debate about the changing roles of chieftainship in South Africa.

According to one Mafisa respondent, the impasse began in earnest at the start of 1998 when Mafisa agents went to Supingstad village to conduct preliminary interviews with prospective candidates for the Madikwe Initiative's internship programme.<sup>79</sup> In order to find applicants, Mafisa had approached the Tribal Authority some weeks earlier and asked for permission to advertise in the village and for help with sourcing candidates. But when the Mafisa selection team returned to the village to meet the applicants they found that every person named on the list drawn up by the Tribal Authority came from the Suping family. Unwilling to support what appeared to be blatant nepotism, the selectors decided that none of those applicants would be chosen to participate in the programme. They asked the Tribal Authority to put forward alternative candidates but were met with an edict from Chief Suping stating that if Mafisa did not work from the original list then it was not welcome to work in the village at all (interview, 6 April, 2000; 5 May 2000). The outcome of the ensuing conflict was that five internship candidates were chosen from Molatedi, three from Lekgophung, and none from Supingstad.

Within the first few days of my arrival in Madikwe one of Mafisa's directors told me that Mafisa had had a standoff with Chief Suping ever since the trouble with the internship selection process in Supingstad. He suggested that it would be useful if in my work in the villages I could try to open communications with Chief Suping, to see if there was a way to get him more involved in the Madikwe project. Thus, overcoming the impasse became a part of my original terms of reference with Mafisa, a part I was never able to fulfil. For Chief Suping's antagonism toward Mafisa was extreme. In his view Mafisa had hijacked the whole Madikwe project. He said:

I was a co-founder of the original concept of Madikwe Game Reserve. The first plan was to establish a trust fund for the three villages. But then they moved away from the original plan. The ODA [DfID] came with an initial four million rand for the Madikwe Initiative to establish a trust fund. But then things changed with the introduction of consultants. Who appointed this Mafisa? There has never been any link between the community [of Supingstad] and the park about them. There was no consultation.... I don't know what this Mafisa is. They are supposed to guide us in development. But I am sorry: they didn't... they haven't. What have they done? Where is the empowerment? Where is the partnership?... (Chief Suping, 29 August 2000).

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<sup>79</sup> A programme which sought to train eight young people from the villages in all aspects of lodge management, tour guiding and game ranging. See chapter seven for more details.

Worse, he levelled harsh accusations at Mafisa about its use of Madikwe Initiative resources:

Outside consultants with good intentions are welcome. But let me be honest: They benefit a lot. They are paid even when they do nothing. They are squandering money. All they are doing is building up capital for NGOs and they are the ones benefiting most at the end of the day. Little or nothing has been done. In Lekgophung there are a few things like the resource centre, but to me, after so many years, it is very little....Where are the initial [financial] records? DfID initially gave R4 million. What happened to that money? I have not seen anything happening and I think we need an enquiry into their activities. If people have handled projects that involve funds, and nothing has been produced, there must be an enquiry into how those funds were used (Chief Suping, 29 August 2000).

When I reported back to the Mafisa director, relaying a diluted version of Chief Suping's views about overpaid consultants and unseen financial reports, his fury was palpable. He said he had gone out of his way to make sure Mafisa's operations were transparent and that each Tribal Authority was kept up to date with financial records and progress reports. Chief Suping, meanwhile, was adamant that Mafisa was determined to avoid him:

From the beginning they preferred to come and have a meeting when I am not here. They seem uncomfortable, like I am embarrassing them with questions.... They are prejudiced towards me. I am too talkative, or else I am too intelligent for Mafisa (Chief Suping, 29 August 2000).

And so the impasse continued. Chief Suping's antagonism was not only with Mafisa. He also had a poor opinion of the NWP&TB's Community Liaison Officer (CLO) – not just because of the Officer's connections with Mafisa, but because he failed to liaise with the chief or the Tribal Authority and thus jeopardised communications between the village and the Reserve:

That CLO, I don't know. I have reservations.... To me he is part of Mafisa - he dances to their music. How often does he come to Supingstad? I don't know. What does he come here for? An emphatic I don't know. He should keep the community conversant with MGR affairs and to do that he must start with the head – with me. The gate to communication is here. But does he? No (Chief Suping, 29 August, 2000).

Private sector lodge respondents were also aware of the impasse with Chief Suping.

We have been here nine months.... We had to get the lodge up and running the way the owner wanted it. Now that we've done that our priorities would have been with the communities. But sadly we are leaving. Hopefully whoever is taking over from us will have the same philosophies and will turn their attention to the community. Even in a small way. I don't have a specific plan, but my intention has always been to make specific contact with Chief Suping and find out what's going on there.... Either he has

been left out [of the Madikwe Project], or there has been more favour towards Molatedi.... I think it is important to just get Chief Suping in here and get to know him. Take him on a game drive, sit and have a sundowner with him. Talk to him. Ask what his problems are and what he expects from us: 'As the general manager of Tau, what do you expect of me?' Whatever it might be.. at least make contact. Why has he been left out? (interview with general manager of Tau Lodge, 23 August, 2000).

During my fieldwork period no lodge management employees ever did attempt to bridge the divide between Chief Suping and the Madikwe project. The impasse persisted undiminished and Supingstad residents were thus excluded from the Initiative. The NWP&TB-employed park warden's view of the situation was unequivocal. He said:

The people have been empowered. If they allow themselves to be led by men such as Kgosi [Chief] Suping, that is their choice. They have been empowered by national legislation that has established democratic district councils, but they feel oppressed. It is this traditional concept of allowing it to happen to them. They should organise themselves into pressure groups. We are a game reserve, a government structure. The district councils are the ones to deal with this. But there are definite traditional leadership rights and national government is struggling with what to do. Really we do not have the mandate to get involved (interview, 21 September, 2000).

The warden's opinion was typical of a tendency from all NWP&TB respondents to distance themselves, and the Board, from the conflict. His words also raise another problem that impacted on the development process in the Madikwe area, one that, at the time of writing, still rages throughout the new 'democratic' South Africa. It was about the conflicting roles of 'traditional' tribal authorities and the recently established, 'democratically' elected district councils. It highlights a contradiction in both the 1993 Interim Constitution and the Final Constitution of 1996.

The 1996 Constitution and its Bill of Rights legally define the fundamental principles according to which South Africa is governed; principles that are supposedly democratic. Yet the Constitution also recognises the institution of (unelected) traditional authorities (South Africa, Act 108, section 211). People living in areas governed by such traditional authorities – although they have the right to vote for local government representatives – have therefore remained 'subjects' of hereditary chiefs.<sup>80</sup> The rest of the population comprises fully entitled citizens of South Africa's

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<sup>80</sup> According to the *White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance* some 14 million people live in areas falling under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders (2003:33). Graham (2004) asserts that there are some 840 traditional authorities in South Africa, which have influence over 15 to 18 million people (2004:1).

new democracy, enjoying proportional and, in the case of metropolitan areas, constituency-based representation at all levels of government (see Mamdani, 1996 and Ntsebeza, 2002).

Mamdani's (1996) view of post-colonial African countries as bifurcated states, split along rural/urban, tribal/racial lines that serve to hinder and frustrate democratisation processes, uses a valuable lens through which to understand the inconsistencies within national legislation in contemporary South Africa.<sup>81</sup> Such inconsistencies create highly complex conflicts between competing local governance structures. Tensions are intensified because South Africa's Constitution does not clearly define and distinguish between the respective roles of traditional authorities and district councils.<sup>82</sup> But it is the inadvertent consequences of those conflicts that are of particular importance to the argument of this chapter, particularly how they may have contributed to the creation and justification of an apparently all-encompassing binary understanding of democracy/autocracy – at least from the perspective of Mafisa's agents and officials of the NWP&TB.

### **The Madikwe Initiative and the Politics of Democracy**

When Madikwe Game Reserve was established in 1991 there were no (formal) local government structures in the villages.<sup>83</sup> The area was still part of the Bophuthatswana homeland and each village was governed by a chief and traditional authority structures that were part and parcel of the Bantustan administration. All initial dealings between the then Bophuthatswana Parks Board (now the NWP&TB) and the villages consequently went via the chiefs. But, as I explained in chapter three, soon after the establishment of the Reserve, the Bophuthatswana Parks Board contracted a consultancy firm to draw up a socio-economic plan. In 1994, acting on the consultancy's recommendations, the NWP&TB set up a Community Development Organisation (CDO) in each village. The idea was that the CDOs would be

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<sup>81</sup> For a more detailed treatment of Mamdani's argument about the citizen-subject conundrum see the section *Collaborators or Administrators* in this chapter.

<sup>82</sup> Because of their critical impact on the Madikwe Initiative development process, those conflicts are a main focus of chapter five.

<sup>83</sup> By (formal) local government structures I mean, following the language of the new South Africa, local government structures elected democratically, as opposed to the earlier traditional Tribal Authority structures, established formally during apartheid rule by the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act.

democratic, representative committees through which the Board would be able to access majority views and priorities in the villages, rather than channelling all its dealings through the chiefs. Thus, from the outset, the NWP&TB's approach to the villages was informed by a policy of working with 'democratic' structures rather than 'traditional' ones (interview, former NWP&TB Resource Economist, 11 June 2007).

By the time the Madikwe Initiative became active in the villages in 1998, district councils had been set up under the Municipal Structures Act of that same year. According to one of the directors of Mafisa, "DfID insisted that we [the Madikwe Initiative] work with local government rather than the chiefs, that ownership of the projects, particularly the community lodges, must be by the community and not by the chief or traditional structures" (interview with Mafisa director, 7 June 2007). Hence, Mafisa's policy, as well as the NWP&TB's, was to liaise with the newly formed, ANC-linked, so-called democratic district councils rather than solely with village-based structures.<sup>84</sup> Such a liaison strategy played out in different ways in each village. In Lekgophung it was unproblematic as the village was effectively represented by the RDP forum which managed to cooperate with both the traditional structures and the district council.<sup>85</sup> In Molatedi, as I will show in chapter five, it created complex and often insurmountable problems resulting in those villagers more aligned with the chiefs and traditional authorities becoming alienated from the development projects driven by the Madikwe Initiative.<sup>86</sup> And in Supingstad, as this chapter illustrates, the whole village was excluded because Mafisa's policy alienated the chief. Indeed, in both Molatedi and Supingstad, relations between the chieftaincies and the Madikwe Initiative agents were tense, in part defined by conflicts that were rooted in the recent apartheid history (interview with Mafisa director, 7 June 2007).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> These structures included a variety of civic organisations, not just the chiefs and their tribal authorities.

<sup>85</sup> See the section *Lekgophung's RDP Forum: Democracy, Strategy or Apathy* in chapter 5.

<sup>86</sup> For a particular example of how such alienation occurred see the section *The Bopitikelo Centre: Focussing the Conflicts* in chapter 5.

<sup>87</sup> The largely ANC-led liberation struggles often clashed absolutely with the former homeland administrations that had collaborated with the apartheid government. The clashes were particularly intense in the case of the Bophuthatswana administration. Chapter two provides an overview of those clashes.

As explained in chapter two, until as recently as 12 March 1994 the Madikwe area was part of the Bophuthatswana homeland and, while some people were heroised in South Africa's new democracy for having fought for freedom and struggled against the brutal system of apartheid, others, who had collaborated with the South African government by supporting the homelands policy and accepting jobs within the homelands administrations, were not so well regarded. And, although the ex-president of Bophuthatswana, Lucas Mangope, and his administration of 'tribal' chiefs and headmen were still regarded by some as having been lawful leaders of the 'Tswana nation',<sup>88</sup> others saw them as having been 'Pretoria puppets', sell-outs who were directly responsible for the severe infringement of civil rights that was a result of apartheid legislation and the homelands policy.

Right from the outset, the players on the Madikwe stage thus fell into opposing camps. As I described in chapter two, both the NWP&TB and Mafisa had a hard core of 'progressive', left wing 'people-and-parks' type individuals at their centres. Many were ANC members and had fought against the policies of apartheid. The chiefs, on the other hand, had been collaborators in the Bophuthatswana regime. Indeed, Chief Suping, had been a minister in Mangope's government. Not only that, but as Minister of Internal Affairs, he had personally signed the deportation order from Bophuthatswana of the man who was the CEO of NWP&TB at the time of my fieldwork. When I arrived, it was only six years after South Africa's first democratic elections and Bophuthatswana's reincorporation into South Africa. Throughout my fieldwork I gained a strong sense that the views of many respondents reflected the tone of hopeful compromise, reconciliation and forgiveness which had become politically correct in the immediate post apartheid era. But that did not mean that less worthy feelings of confusion, suspicion, anger, pride etc. did not exist or become apparent. I found that they did, and that they often translated into wariness or avoidance, a tendency, especially on the part of NWP&TB and Mafisa agents, largely

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<sup>88</sup> Here, 'Tswana nation' refers to the Tswana people living within the apartheid-created homeland of Bophuthatswana, rather than to people living in the country of Botswana. See Lye and Murray (1980) for a detailed exploration of the problematic concept of population classifications (focusing on the Tswana and Sotho) and how such classifications defy nation-state boundaries as well as the boundaries of language, culture and economy.

to deny or ignore the political interruptions within development and to relegate governance issues to the far off realm of central government.<sup>89</sup>

### **Chief Victor Suping: An Autocratic Democrat?**

Although I had met Chiefs Matlapeng and Tsiepe in my first week of fieldwork, Chief Suping was a busy man, often away from the village, and some five months had passed before I set off for my first meeting with him. I was filled with trepidation after months of listening to stories and comments about the chief that had led me to expect a forbidding man, important, commanding and powerful, a man whose contempt for development consultants was well known and who had little time for foreign, white, non-Setswana speaking females, particularly those conducting fieldwork for selfish academic theses. On arrival at his house I was shown into a formal front parlour where I waited, listening to the loud ticking of a carriage clock and noting the plush furnishings. Some ten minutes later he strode in, bristling with impatience, brusquely asking me my business. I explained to him about the survey for the NWP&TB, independent research and my aim to determine local attitudes and perceptions towards Madikwe ten years after its conception. Soon we were deep in a discussion about development, his antagonism towards me visibly lessening as he became engrossed in what was obviously a favourite hobby horse:

What is development? To me, development is the spirit from *within* the people to progress in their lifestyles. But how is that done? How is this achieved? *That* is the question. The approach is my worry. If it started with training and then [was followed by] creating jobs, permanent jobs, through investment, to me *that* is the best method. Empowerment through training, and jobs through investment....But that is not happening with this Madikwe Initiative.... I have written to the park stating my views one after the other.... And what has happened to the trust fund?... Now I am bitter about the park. The philosophy is not what it originally was. It has been taken out of the people's hands (Chief Suping, interview, 29 August 2000).

Ironically, as I detail in chapter seven, the expressed developmental aims of the Madikwe Initiative were entirely in line with Chief Suping's own stated ideals of how development should proceed – through training, job creation and attracting private investment. Yet, despite both parties expressing similar developmental goals, there was still an unbreachable impasse between the two that precluded their cooperating,

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<sup>89</sup> A good example of this wariness is evident in the park warden's attitude towards the impasse with Chief Suping, cited on page 97: "...national government is struggling with what to do. Really we do not have the mandate to get involved...".

and also precluded any development interventions, certainly under the auspices of the Madikwe Initiative, being set up in the village where Chief Suping exercised authority. The tension, it seemed, lay in their conflicting understandings of the notion of development. Ferguson's insights from his work in Lesotho help to shed light on the problem:

In the first sense, one speaks of 'development' as a progression toward a known end point, usually modern industrial capitalism. Thus people speak of the development of the forces of production, the development of 'modern society', the development of capitalism, and so on. In the second sense, so much in vogue in the late 1970s, 'development' is taken to mean improvement in quality of life or standard of living, and the elimination or alleviation of poverty. It should be clear upon inspection that the development of capitalism and the elimination of poverty are, if not positively antithetic (as many neo-Marxists argue), at any rate not identical. But it seems to be a theoretical necessity in 'development' discourse... for the two to be co-present and even conflated (1990:55).

While Chief Suping was advocating development in what Ferguson (1990) describes as the modern capitalist sense, it was evident from the Madikwe Initiative-related literature I consulted that, despite the rhetoric propounding its democratic principles, the Madikwe Initiative was concerned with poverty alleviation and targeting the poorest and most marginal of the population – which meant those apparently most materially disadvantaged. An example was a rhetorical stress on the importance of applying what was called the 'wage mechanism': "Wages go directly into the household and – with affirmative gender and poverty alleviation criteria – can go to the most marginal groups in communities" (Koch, 2000:12). Such an ideological focus on affirmative action could not but contradict the Madikwe Initiative's ostensible calls for transparent and accountable democracy – which became another source of friction with the chief.

By the end of my first interview with Chief Suping I found myself developing an almost sympathetic understanding of his antagonism toward the Madikwe Initiative and his concern to retain village autonomy over local development. What, in fact, had the Madikwe Initiative achieved in its two years of operation? Certainly nothing in Supingstad. In his view, the village was better off without over-paid consultants imposing their agenda and undermining village autonomy. As the chief said: "In the past we have built schools, crèches and roads without outside help" (interview, 29 August 2000).

It can be no coincidence that Supingstad, with its powerful, well connected chief, was the only one of the three villages adjacent to Madikwe to have SABC<sup>90</sup> coverage and electricity as early as 1996. At the time of my fieldwork in 2000, Lekgophung, a mere stone's throw down the road, was still not connected and some thirty-eight houses in Molatedi were still waiting to be connected (interview, Molatedi ward head, 6 May 2000).<sup>91</sup> Chief Suping was undoubtedly a powerful man with considerable political clout on a national and regional level. He had been Minister of Internal Affairs in the Bophuthatswana homeland administration, right up until the last moment when Mangope was forcibly deposed and Bophuthatswana abolished. Then, in 1998 he was elected chairperson of the Council of Traditional Leaders, a national statutory body comprising eighteen members, three nominated by each of the six statutory Provincial Houses of Traditional Leaders.<sup>92</sup> While his political role on a national level meant that he spent much of his time away from Supingstad, he nevertheless managed to keep a tight hold on what was happening in the village, through the Tribal Authority and also through his brothers who acted as his representatives in village affairs.

Chief Suping presented himself to me and, I discovered, to others as playing a vital role as representative of his people. He saw that role as an essential go-between who would and could mediate between the village's residents and exogenous agents who came to implement local projects. "To keep the community informed" he told me, "you must start with the head. Then we can call our communities together and tell them what is going on" (29 August 2000). He added, with some emphasis, that he was accountable to his subjects and responsible for safeguarding what he called the community's interests.

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<sup>90</sup> South African Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>91</sup> By March 2006 those houses were still not connected (pers. comm., Molatedi resident, 23 March 2006).

<sup>92</sup> The Council of Traditional Leaders and the National House of Traditional Leaders were established on 18 April 1997. Its statutory role is to advise the national government on the role of traditional leaders and customary law. It also has the power to conduct its own investigations, advise the country's President on request and elect its own office-bearers (South African government.htm., 30 May 2006). Only six of South Africa's nine provinces have Houses of Traditional Leaders. This is because the other three, Northern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng, are jurisdictions in which there were no chiefs or traditional leaders recognised by the apartheid regime. This does not, however, mean that nobody in these provinces claims such status.

In an interview with the Namibian World News, Chief Suping is reported to have spoken of how, compared to the apartheid days when chiefs were 'more like executives', in South Africa's new democracy they were becoming increasingly active in their communities, driving development such as the building of schools and clinics, and settling disputes. "If the communities felt that the chief was acting above his powers," he said, "they would rise up and say 'no' " (7 April 2004). At least rhetorically for Chief Suping, and probably too for many other chiefs like him, the role chiefs must play in the new democratic South Africa is one that is in their subjects' interests and is constrained by those same subjects' ability to intervene if they act against those interests. This kind of leadership role, alleged by chiefs to be responsive to local demands, represents a type of 'working democracy' even if it precludes any real electoral representation process. That there is the possibility that chiefs actually may be upholders of some form of participatory and representative processes indicates that the democracy/autocracy binary is a gross simplification of a complex issue. Indeed, the notion of democracy itself is highly political and contestable, as the following section demonstrates.

### **Democracy: A Versatile Abstraction**

As we have seen, the Madikwe Initiative was not functioning in Supingstad because of conflicts between its implementers and Chief Suping. At the heart of the conflict was a clash over understandings of what constitutes democracy. While, on the one hand, Chief Suping saw himself as performing a legitimate democratic role (a 'chief by the people'), the NWP&TB and Mafisa considered him to be an autocratic ruler. Their perception derived from his refusal to work with their version of democratic principles. They could not tolerate or accommodate what they saw as his nepotistic tendencies and despot-like insistence on controlling development interventions in the village rather than allowing what they saw as grassroots initiatives to drive such processes. Consequently, they evoked the seemingly impregnable autocracy/democracy binary to describe the situation and justify the impasse they had reached. From an outsider's perspective, however, one can see that it was such binary thinking that led them to avoid addressing and resolving the conflict.

In contrast, Chief Suping, as illustrated above, considered the Madikwe Initiative's agents to be self-seeking outsiders who neither understood nor had the best interests of villagers at heart. It was therefore, he said, his duty to protect the residents of Supingstad and to ensure that, at least, they understood the agenda of these and other external agents. As shown above, his explicit argument for doing so was that his role was to safeguard community interests and thereby to ensure a form of what he saw as participatory or working democracy in the face of power-wielding, resource-rich outsiders.

The Madikwe Initiative consultants were not alone in their view of Chief Suping as an iron-fisted ruler. Within my first few interviews with villagers in Supingstad, respondents had begun hinting about the autocratic role played by their chief: "We have a chief who is running this village and, because he was fighting with this Mafisa, now no one here can be involved [in the Madikwe Initiative]" (interview, young man resident in Supingstad, 2 May 2000); "Our chief, whenever consultants come here, he runs them out of the village. He wants to do everything himself" (interview, young man resident in Supingstad, 26 May 2000); "This village is led by a chief, and everyone who wants to help the village must firstly contact our chief and make sure he is agreeable" (interview, middle aged woman resident in Supingstad, 25 August, 2000). What these quotes and many other unquoted comments suggest is that even if village residents had desired to become involved in the Madikwe Initiative they were forestalled by the chief's attitude and behaviour.<sup>93</sup>

Chief Suping, as I have illustrated, was deeply antagonistic towards the Madikwe Initiative for a range of reasons, village autonomy and financial transparency being central. But he presented an unexpected aspect to his hostility in populist terms:

Those saying they wanted to help came with their own concepts and projects and ideas. They didn't want to listen to ours.... I have been to see the chiefs of Molatedi and Lekgophung and I found they don't know what is going on. They have been made redundant. But this is not going to happen in my area. I am accountable to my people and I have to make sure that we are not sold a concept that we do not know. People must first understand all the options. They have to sit down and decide what can be done and what they want, not have consultants just come and tell us. Before, we did

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<sup>93</sup> In fact, the park warden's quote on page 97 suggests that they were also forestalled by the NWP&TB's laissez-faire attitude: "The people have been empowered. If they allow themselves to be led by men such as Kgosi Suping, that is their choice.... Really we do not have the mandate to get involved" (interview, 21 September, 2000).

everything on our own. Handouts make fools of people (Chief Suping, 29 August 2000).

The chief's apparently populist objections appear to centre on three main points: outsiders seek to impose projects in ways that seemed to him to be particular and self-seeking rather than altruistic; he therefore argued that it was his duty to struggle to retain his power in order that he could continue to protect the interests of 'his people' and their ability to reach autonomous decisions; and, perhaps most importantly, the chief emphasised a need to elicit informed, 'democratic' decisions regarding resources, thereby implying that Mafisa's methods were not democratic.

What is striking, and begins immediately to upset the apparent impregnability of the 'autocratic/democratic' binary, is the seeming absurdity of an unelected, hereditary chief presenting himself as an 'accountable' protector of what, as he describes it, is essentially participatory democracy (he says, for example, as quoted above: "people must first understand all the options [and then]... sit down and decide what can be done and what they want"). To give credence to his view is to shake the vision of an autocratic, oppressive tyrant denying opportunities to his downtrodden subjects. Instead, there is the *possibility* that he is effectively representing unwary villagers to sophisticated outsiders offering dubiously motivated 'handouts'.

In addition to respondents' accusations of autocracy, which were diametrically opposed to Chief Suping's portrayal of himself as a democratic protector of the people's rights to autonomy, some Supingstad residents also complained of the chief's tendency towards nepotism. For example: "Whenever there are any jobs or projects being promoted, the chief is always sure to push forward his family first" (interview, young mother, Supingstad resident, 15 July 2000); "Royalties [sic] are the people who are always involved in MGR. That is why we know nothing about what is going on. Elect people who we think can represent us, not their family, [who are] running after money" (interview middle aged woman resident in Supingstad, 27 July 2000). These views were echoed by the Mafisa consultant who told me about the fiasco with the Supingstad internship application process.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Outlined at the start of this chapter: Because Mafisa selectors perceived the candidate list to be nepotistic, no interns were recruited from Supingstad.

It was ironic that many village residents, particularly women and younger men (over seventy-five percent of the kinds of comments quoted above were made by people in one of these categories) expressed the same views on the chief's tendency towards autocracy and nepotism as did the Madikwe Initiative consultants. Yet, they were nevertheless punished by the Madikwe Initiative's selectors' decision and excluded from the internship selection process – even though they were effectively on the same side as the Madikwe Initiative in its conflict with Chief Suping. In this way, the Madikwe Initiative's notion of democracy was damaging even to those who agreed with it and whom it hoped to assist and support. That the development agents did not try to bypass the chief and work with villagers who were supportive of the Initiative indicates that the Initiative's agents' approached the village as if it were an homogenous community represented *in toto* by its single traditional leader. It is ironic that Mafisa's directors, Koch and Massyn, had already thoroughly problematised such an approach in 1999 with their *Challenging Eden*.<sup>95</sup>

The situation reveals a series of contradictions: on one hand Mafisa objects to autocratic traditional leaders who dominate their subjects; on the other hand Mafisa uses those same autocratic traditional leaders as brokers for access to those villagers – to the extent that a whole village's population was excluded because the village chief did not condone the Initiative and because the Initiative's agents disapproved of the chief's behaviour in his broking methods. And finally, Mafisa's own senior personnel write critically of approaches that fail to recognise the heterogeneity of all, but especially local, populations.

What becomes clear from the example of the internship selection process then, and what is most salient here, was that the Madikwe Initiative's definition of democracy ultimately resulted in exclusion, even of those its agents might have regarded as appropriate targets of their interventions. Because of the offending evidence of the chief's nepotism, the principle that the correct purpose of development projects was to target the most marginalised of a disadvantaged population, rather than people who, because of their surname, were presumed to be better off, eventually overrode the conventional orthodox belief in equal rights for all citizens. So deep was the belief

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<sup>95</sup> See pages 85-90.

Despite their accusations of autocracy and nepotism, in interview after interview often the same respondents indicated support for their chief as an effective leader and representative of the village.<sup>97</sup> Conversely, people were generally either negative or ambiguous about the local district council representatives for whom they had supposedly voted. I asked people what they felt the role of the district council was. In contrast to most respondents in Molatedi and Lekgophung who answered along the lines that it was to bring development to the villages, in Supingstad the vast majority either stated that they had no idea, or that Supingstad was not served by a district council at all. Indeed, other than in Molatedi (where a district councillor was resident in the village – see chapter five), a significant proportion of respondents from the other two villages claimed they did not know who their local councillors were. To put it bluntly, in a one-person-one-vote scenario, the evidence from my fieldwork indicated that there was a strong likelihood that the chiefs and their tribal authorities would win more support than the district councils for matters concerning village representation, were the issue to be put to a referendum that precluded campaigning.

What becomes evident here is that in such a situation there can be no consensus over the definition of ‘democracy’: is it democratic, on principle, to target the most marginalised rather than the population as a whole? Is it democratic to bypass and exclude a chief’s kin simply because of their kinship with that chief – particularly if they are themselves impoverished individuals? Is it democratic for a development agency to exclude one village entirely, for whatever reasons, while including its two neighbours – particularly when all three have been identified as potential beneficiaries? Is it paradoxical that an autocratic, unelected chief should present himself as a protector of democratic processes, while simultaneously being seen to favour his own family above the rest of his ‘subjects’?

Democracy is an ambiguous, elusive concept, difficult to define. Its meaning at a particular moment is dependent on the context in which it is used, and the socio-cultural and political influences which have shaped and informed that context. An

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<sup>97</sup> The situation is reminiscent of the struggles over the Makuleke land claim outlined by Robins and van der Waal (2006) as cited in chapter three whereby, in the face of counter-claims from Chief Mhinga, so-called Makuleke people have expediently sought to strengthen their colonially-instigated Traditional Authorities while at the same time claiming to be united in a post-apartheid legislated Community Property Association (CPA).

understanding of specific situations is therefore integral to understanding particular nuances of the meanings of 'democracy'. According to Peter Murphy:

Democracy is not a free-standing political culture. It is not an ideology in itself.... Democracy can only be a manifestation of more fundamental cultural and philosophical ideals [such as liberalism, republicanism, socialism or populism].... all of us, when we talk about democracy, have in mind a definite political and social regime. And on the substance of this regime, we will not necessarily be in agreement (1993:12-13).

Hence, in order to understand notions of democracy, especially in the complex socio-political context(s) of development in a situation such as at Madikwe, what is required is contextual analyses of the 'regime(s)', the actual substance and operation of the conflicting institutions of local governance (the 'traditional' tribal authorities and the district council structures), and the historical and political factors that have shaped them. This is important because the varying support for each institution came to be expressed within a straitjacket of an autocratic/democratic binary which rendered the conflicts one dimensional and obscured alternative notions, or motives, such as the operation of power to effect control. It was as though 'democracy' was the last word, a term that could be bandied about, requiring neither defining nor defending.

For this reason, democracy is a highly problematic term. It acts as a conceptual barrier, shielding difference. It is a powerful term, yet also an ambiguous one, because its meaning is changeable, dependent on the particular context and view point it is used from. Therefore, one person's notion of democracy may seem to be another's of subjugation (hence the impasse between Chief Suping and Mafisa as well as the lack of village consensus over governance issues). In this sense, appeals to a notion of democracy can have, and in the Supingstad case have had, the propensity to generate conflict and retard understanding of alternative interpretations of what constitutes individual liberty, freedom, community representation and effective, fair negotiation (or, in other words, what is said by many to constitute democracy). Such appeals also enable proponents of such democracy to loudly condemn apparent dissenters, without needing to recognise that the dissent may be due to differences of situation, interpretation and understanding. In other words, in a situation of conflict there may be multiple layers of reasoning (operating in the same context of power and control) that cannot be understood within the confines of a democracy/autocracy

binary, and especially not while one wears the moral blinkers frequently generated by contexts in which the dominant operation of power is concealed because it has been labelled democracy.

Support of chiefdoms may, on the surface, seem to fly in the face of particular notions of freedom and civil rights. It may seem to be illogical and contradictory, especially given, in Supingstad (and to a lesser extent in Molatedi), the strongly expressed accusations of autocracy and nepotism on the village chief's part. However, the negative indictments of chiefly conduct did not preclude many of those same people supporting their chiefs over issues of village representation – particularly when the alternative was an unknown outsider (such as the district councillors were in Supingstad and Lekgophung) ostensibly elected by popular vote.

An understanding of the broader political and historical background in the national context helps to shed light on the many-layered influences contributing to such apparent contradictions, such as the political expediency that can be seen in a concern to keep a hold over power and control in the village. It helps to explain how the institution of chiefs and tribal authorities has not only managed to survive South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy, but has retained (or, in some cases, regained) varying measures of legitimacy, both externally in terms of the policy of central government and internally in the eyes of a significant number of their subjects. At this point I therefore provide a brief overview of chieftainships and the shifting bases of their legitimacy, particularly in contemporary South Africa.

## **Negotiating Legitimacy: The Changing Face of Chieftainships**

The Tshidi hold that legitimacy is a negotiable value. Indeed, this underpins their theory of incumbency and is systematically expressed in a model which describes the relationship between the performance of a ruler and his legitimate power. According to it, the rights of an incumbent are not immutably predetermined; rather, he and his subjects are constantly engaged in a transactional process in which the former discharges his duties and, in return, is delegated the authority to influence policy and people. The degree to which his performance is considered to be satisfactory is thought to determine the extent of the office-holder's legitimacy, expressed in the willingness of the public to execute his decisions. This, of course, is a simplification: power is not allocated by popular consent alone and the chiefs do not watch impassively as their regimes are evaluated. Nevertheless, the incumbency model represents a medium through which debate over chiefly performance and legitimacy can proceed (Comaroff, 1978:6).

A central question to ask is 'what constitutes legitimacy'? Conceptually, is legitimacy separable from power and authority? Is legitimacy, as Comaroff (1978) argues above, a negotiable value based on performance? How did many chieftainships and their incumbents managed to hold positions of centrality to rural governance throughout the apartheid years? Did such centrality imply legitimacy? And if so, was that legitimacy drawn from below, in the form of support from their subjects, or was it more a form of tyranny, the operation of power and ostensible authority vested in them from above by oppressive colonial and apartheid governments? Indeed, can the authority of an intercalary leader in circumstances where there is an overarching power structure be 'legitimate' without support from both above and below? If the chiefs were held in position only through apartheid policies, is there not a contradiction in claiming continued legitimacy in the post apartheid era, rather than a new legitimacy deriving from their subjects' resistance to new forms of top down interventions?

These are complex, controversial questions. An important point to make immediately is that chieftainships were never uniform throughout South Africa, as is highlighted by the work of academics who have undertaken empirical research of specific case studies in different provinces. For example, Ntsebeza (2002) argues that in the Eastern Cape, particularly in the ex-Ciskei bantustan area, traditional authorities are "either weak or do not exist" (2002:358). Drawing on his fieldwork in the Xhalanga area, he says that because chieftainships were imposed under colonial rule they never established a strong foothold and therefore lacked local legitimacy. Resistance there to tribal authorities (each headed by a chief), particularly over land issues, became increasingly militant and, by the late 1950s, the government had resorted to "coercive methods" to quell opposition to them. In the early 1990s resistance again became highly visible, with "running battles" and calls for civic organisations to be established to replace the traditional authorities imposed under the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act. Such calls have re-emerged in the post apartheid period, fuelled by frustration over the confusion caused by the ill-defined roles of tribal authorities and elected rural councillors (ibid). To cite an extract from an interview between Ntsebeza and a resident of Xhalanga: "Rural Councillors run in circles. This makes us a laughing stock and divides us.... You end up going to the chief even if you don't want to.... Sometimes you may have spoken badly about the headman, and you end

up bowing down to it, as it is often necessary...[if you are to] get what you want” (interview, 9 September 2000 in Ntsebeza, 2002:369).

Oomen (2000), in contrast, found in her fieldwork in Sekhukhune, Limpopo Province that, despite ferocious campaigns against the chiefs during the 1980s anti-apartheid struggles, eighty percent of her respondents amongst the thirty-two chieftaincies in Sekhukhune supported a traditional leader at the time of her fieldwork (2000:18). She says:

The differences between ‘traditional authority areas’ often seem to defy either classification or generalisation.... Whether a village has strong civic organisations and powerless chiefs, or precisely the opposite; whether or not there are specific succession disputes; whether there is a lot of contact between chiefs and elected Councillors, or none at all: like local DNA, these factors shape specific political settings (2000:62).

More in line with Oomen than Ntsebeza, I found during fieldwork that relations between the chiefs in the three villages in the Madikwe area and their subjects were dynamic and changeable, and differed greatly not only between respective villages, but also within each of them. In Supingstad many respondents were highly critical of the chief, accusing him of nepotism and of being too controlling and hence denying them opportunities because of his uncompromising attitude to the Madikwe Initiative; yet many of those same respondents indicated that they would nonetheless support the chief over the district council or other civic organisations.

In Molatedi, attitudes were similarly ambivalent toward their Chief, but often for converse reasons: respondents expressed frustration that Chief Matlapeng was not pro-active enough, that he was not fulfilling his role in sourcing development opportunities and furthering the interests of the community. For example: “Our Chief, he is not as energetic and hands-on as one would expect. He doesn’t play his role” (interview, young man, 6 June, 2000); “The chief is hiding behind the old men. He is not understanding the young” (interview, young man, 23 June, 2000); “I don’t know whatever it is the chief is doing, but he is not helping us [with development projects]” (interview, middle aged woman, 8 May, 2000); “The chief is doing a good job. But he is still a young man. There [are] still many things for him to learn” (interview, older man, 6 April, 2000). Yet, rather than wanting to see Chief Matlapeng ousted and the chieftainship dissolved, those respondents still said the chief had an important role to

play, and that he simply needed to improve his performance. None indicated preference for a district council-led administration at village level.

In Lekgophung, nearly all respondents expressed support for their Chief Tsiepe, although this, in part, may have been because he took a back seat in village governance which, as I explained in chapter three, was dominated by the RDP forum. For example: “Our Chief, although he is not as educated as Chief Suping, we will stand behind him. We are Balete and we are happy he is our Chief. We don’t care; whatever the case may happen: he is our Chief” (young woman, Lekgophung RDP forum member, 26 August 2000).

Regardless of the varying levels and degrees of endogenous legitimacy bestowed on chiefs by their subjects, the fact remains that chiefs and their tribal authorities also have exogenous legitimacy. They are recognised in the Constitution. In terms of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (2003) they have a central role to play in local government in rural areas of what were the Bantustans, particularly around development and service delivery. They are, in many cases, a central and unavoidable feature of village life. They have power. They cannot be ignored. However, their presence reflects the history of apartheid and colonial rule, a history that has deeply negative connotations – particularly amongst those who see themselves as part of the vanguard of transformation towards ‘democracy’ – and it therefore had a great impact on perceptions of their legitimacy. This can be seen, for example, in the unwillingness of Madikwe Initiative consultants to work with Chief Suping, as much as in the ambiguous nature of villagers’ perceptions of him.

### **Collaborators or Administrators?**

Tracing the effects of colonialism on chieftainships, Mamdani (1996), in *Citizen and Subject*, argues that throughout Africa the most problematic and enduring legacy of colonialism is a society deeply divided along rural/urban and tribal/racial lines, what he calls a ‘bifurcated state’. Colonial governments, when faced with the question: ‘how can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority?’ (1996:16) found the solution, he argues, in combining direct and indirect rule. Africans in urban areas were controlled through direct rule, ‘centralised despotism’, and those in rural

areas through indirect rule, 'decentralized despotism' (1996:8), in the form of tribal authorities, the 'long arm' of the colonial governments. Mamdani writes:

Organized differently in rural areas from urban ones, that state was Janus-faced, bifurcated. It contained a duality: two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority. Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition (1996:18).

Post independence African states, argues Mamdani, have tended to be trapped in imitation, to reproduce the colonial legacy of 'bifurcated' power. There are either liberals who champion civil rights and freedom, or so-called Africanists who argue that "Africa's age-old communities" should be at the centre of politics, that custom, culture and tradition must be defended. These contradictory positions, in Mamdani's view, constitute a "paralysis of perspective" and an impasse that can only be overcome through transcending and problematising each (1996:3-25). For, in order to achieve democracy, he argues, what is required is "the deracialization of civil power and the detribalization of customary power, as starting points of an overall democratization that would transcend the legacy of a bifurcated power" (1996:24-25).

Yet, as early as the 1980s in South Africa (and probably before with the revival of the labour movement in the 1970s), urban-based civil society ideas such as civil rights and participatory democracy had permeated through to rural areas. Migrant workers and especially their Trade Unions ensured that there were strong flows of information and ideas between the two spheres, which suggests that Mamdani's rural/urban bifurcation is perhaps too crude a model (cf. Fine and Webster, 1989).

It is evident nonetheless that the segregationist policies that led to the establishment of the native reserves (that subsequently became Bantustans), both in the pre-1910 Union Boer Republics and under British colonial administration, were a particularly effective underpinning to British colonial rule and subsequently also to apartheid rule and policies. Such policies appeared, and were claimed by the colonial administration, to be protecting and defending cultural difference. Yet they were also, if not primarily, being used as a tool for subjugation, the British colonial rulers' infamous policy of divide and rule. As Mamdani says:

Britain led the way in fashioning a theory that claimed its particular form of colonial domination to be marked by an enlightened and permissive recognition of native culture. Although its capacity to dominate grew through a dispersal of its own power, the colonial state claimed this process to be no more than a deference to local tradition and custom (1996:25).

As a result, under British colonial indirect rule, what came to be described as tribalism became a deeply rooted characteristic of colonially-instigated socio-political organisation in rural areas. The Cape Colony's Glen Grey Act of 1894 had been an early and critical piece of legislation promoting political segregation in what subsequently became South Africa. Local council systems were established which had the effect, amongst others, of reducing the scope of African political life throughout the 'native reserves' to local matters rather than encompassing the broader national sphere (Mbeki, 1992:5). Chiefs and their traditional authorities were encouraged to take up positions within the council systems. Appointed by the colonial authorities, they were never elected and had no term of office. To quote Mamdani again: "the tribal leadership was either selectively reconstituted as the hierarchy of the local state or freshly imposed where none had existed" (1996:16). Those chiefs who did not toe the line were dismissed and replaced with others; sometimes the replacements were men who had only remote chiefly connections, a factor which has had important consequences for claims of legitimacy based on tradition and hereditary lineage within debates circulating in South Africa today (Ntsebeza, 2002).

While it is questionable how legitimate these colonially appointed chiefs were to their subjects, it is also important to remember that, while many chiefs and their traditional authorities collaborated with the colonial state, some did not. Furthermore, as Bank and Southall (1996) argue, those who did collaborate managed to retain some measure of legitimacy because their roles were limited, their powers strictly subordinate to the colonial state. Ntsebeza (2002), however, takes issue with Bank and Southall (1996) by stressing that, from the late 1930s, traditional authorities came into increasing conflict with their subjects as they were forced to implement the government's much hated conservation measures, particularly Betterment Schemes<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Betterment was ostensibly aimed at addressing the crises caused by overpopulation in the 'native reserves'. Through the 1913 Natives Land Act, black Africans had been dispossessed of their land and restricted to 'Scheduled Areas' comprising only 7.3% of South Africa's total land mass, for 75% of the population. Under the 1936 Natives Land and Trust Act, this area was increased to 12.4%, which it remained until 1989 – for 28 million people (Sparks, 2003:49; Mbeki, 1992:20-21). The result was severe overcrowding and eventually a realisation that the reserves would not be able to sustain more

which included people being forcibly relocated to 'labour settlements' and large scale stock culls (2002:69). Because many traditional authorities had to play a central role in implementing these measures they came into direct conflict with their 'subjects'. Such conflict, argues Ntsebeza, "was a clear expression of the loss of legitimacy, especially on the part of those traditional authorities who were formally enlisted in the administrative arm of the state" (2002:69).

While many traditional authorities may have escaped being entirely discredited during the colonial years, after the advent of apartheid, and particularly with the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, they were forced to participate in tribal authorities and hence could not avoid being drawn into the apartheid administration (Ntsebeza, 2002:7). Govan Mbeki undermines any claims that chiefs may have succeeded in avoiding collaboration. He argues that through the 1951 Act "the nationalist [National Party] government revived chieftainship which had been utterly crushed and destroyed after the Wars of Dispossession" (1992:66), and that "Verwoerd drew a picture of chieftainship restored to its ancient glory before the arrival of the white man, and assured putative chiefs that the government would empower them with the authority that was theirs by divine right to rule over their people" (ibid.). The National Party also reorganised the local council system and, as Mamdani says, "the functionary of the local state apparatus was everywhere called the chief." But he adds the proviso: "One should not be misled by the nomenclature into thinking of this as a holdover from the precolonial era" (1996:23), thereby rendering highly contentious the argument that chiefly legitimacy can be based on some kind of unchanging tradition. Chiefs were direct employees of the apartheid government which remunerated them relatively generously and "raised their stipends to levels undreamt of before" (Mbeki, 1992:66). Furthermore, the new tribal authorities over which chiefs presided now had much greater powers vested in them than they had had in the colonial era, which resulted, according to Mbeki, in widespread corruption and bribery (ibid).

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than half their populations in the increasingly desperate conditions (Mamdani, 1996:19). The major and immediate problems were identified as the inability of peasant farmers to become self sufficient and the severe overgrazing of communal ground. Several short term policies were introduced through the Betterment Act of 1939, including the culling of stock and the removal of people without arable land to labour settlements (Mbeki, 1992:21). Both policies had a highly negative impact on the rural poor they were aimed at, and were intensely unpopular.

Indeed, throughout the apartheid era chiefs were, in many areas, often regarded by their 'subjects' as powerful collaborators to be feared, oppressors rather than legitimate rulers, or so certain critics of the institution argue. For example, Lye and Murray (1980) state emphatically that in Bophuthatswana "tribal chiefs... [were] merely part of an imposed administrative superstructure that ...[had] no popular legitimacy" (1980:98). In line with Comaroff's (1978) analysis of the South African Tshidi, Lye and Murray argue that the apartheid policy of separate development retained "the *form* of chieftainship but profoundly altered its *substance*" (1980:98; italics in the original) in that the processes of consultation and participatory politics were no longer central or necessary characteristics of chiefly performance, largely because chiefs, supported and protected by the apartheid administration, no longer had to worry about competition for their chieftainship or about being removed from office should their performance be deemed unsatisfactory by their subjects.<sup>99</sup> Yet, as Oomen (2000) found in Sekhukhune, and as I found in the villages around Madikwe, respondents indicated that on the whole, and despite the negative impact colonial and apartheid era governments had had on chieftainships, the chief was still the legitimate head of their village.

It is clear that there is no simple or unitary answer to what constitutes chiefly legitimacy. Ntsebeza argues, in the broader context of the limited success of state-imposed democratic institutions and the corresponding re-emergence of support for traditional authorities in many parts of (particularly Francophone) post-colonial Africa, that

the basis of chiefly power is defined in the negative, as a fallback position given the failure of the post-colonial state. It is as if the rule of traditional authority is seen as the lesser of the two evils. There is no suggestion in the literature that the re-emergence of traditional authorities is as a result of their legitimacy, or that they are accountable to and represent their subjects (2002:10).

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<sup>99</sup> Comaroff (1978) explains of Tshidi chiefs that although they cannot be deposed, should a chief's performance fall to a level regarded as unacceptable by his subjects, he may no longer be viewed as a real chief and his status may be reduced to that of a regent. He would then be expected to hand over to the 'rightful' heir, after a series of negotiations that re-opens the genealogical legitimacy of the incumbent's occupation of office (1978:15). In *The Tswana*, Schapera and Comaroff (1953) say that if a chief's "conduct was unsatisfactory, he could be warned or reprimanded by his advisers or at public assemblies; if he ruled despotically or repeatedly neglected his duties, the people would begin to desert him, or a more popular relative would try to oust him by force, or, in the last resort, he might even be assassinated (1991:46).

Contrary to Ntsebeza's claim, there is indeed literature arguing that traditional authorities draw their legitimacy from their subjects to whom they are accountable.

For example, according to Spiegel (1995):

In many areas of the country [South Africa] the only structure that many people respect sufficiently to grant it authority is the institution of traditional leadership.... Such respect for these institutions is frequently held primarily by otherwise marginalised people whose life experiences under apartheid have led them not to trust any other structure, among other reasons, for their harsh anonymity.... While many people (old people included) decry the practices of many incumbents of the office of traditional leader, they still value the institution – primarily for its role as intermediary between themselves and an anonymous and often intractable state administration (1995:4).<sup>100</sup>

Respondents in all three villages where I did fieldwork firmly stated their support for their chief – despite that support being coloured with criticisms regarding autocracy and nepotism in Supingstad or role fulfilment in Molatedi.

### **A Leader is a Leader by the People:<sup>101</sup> Traditional Leaders in a Democratic South Africa**

Increasing numbers of politicians and academics have been drawn into a debate over the role traditional leaders should play, or not play, in post-apartheid South Africa. One strand of the debate centres on notions of democracy and whether the very existence of the institution of traditional leaders is contrary to the spirit of South Africa's new democratic political dispensation. Another strand focuses on legitimacy. It draws variously on arguments about tradition and hereditary lineage; gender equality and representation; accountability and corruption. One argument holds that chiefs draw their authority and legitimacy from their precolonial roots; another that chieftaincy, as it exists today, is a product of colonialism and was, furthermore, thoroughly discredited through chiefs collaborating with the apartheid government; that chiefdoms and their incumbents are corrupt, feared and represent the antithesis of civil rights and freedom.

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<sup>100</sup> It is necessary to point out that Spiegel is writing polemically here, specifically to the Constitutional Assembly, in response to particular conditions in the immediate post apartheid period.

<sup>101</sup> I have borrowed this aphorism from Spiegel (1995) who says that it is one common to many southern African languages: "Sesotho: *Morena ke morena ka sechaba*; Xhosa: *Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu*; N. Sotho: *Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*" (1995:1).

Mamdani (1996) has been an influential voice in the debate. He stresses the importance of transcending the balance of power shaped by colonial rule. He argues that although Africans were excluded by race from civil society during the colonial years, they were still incorporated into the arena of colonial power through indirect rule in the shape of traditional authorities, concluding that "...no reform of contemporary civil society institutions can by itself unravel this decentralised despotism. To do so will require nothing less than dismantling that form of power" (1996:16). Following this line are those who argue that the very existence of autocratic, patriarchal traditional authorities in the political sphere compromises democracy (Bank and Southall, 1996; Van Trotha, 1996; Ray and Van Rouveroy-Van Nieuwaal, 1996; Ntsebeza, 2002). But as the previous section suggests, dismantling the institution is not only likely to compromise any sense of village autonomy, but could prove highly problematic, at least in the Madikwe area, given the evidence of chiefly support amongst villagers and given, at least in Supingstad and to a lesser extent in Molatedi, the lack of effective alternative administrative structures.

In contrast to Mamdani, other critics (for example, Sklar, 1994) hold that multiparty democracy and traditional authorities can indeed co-exist, that there is a political role for chiefs to play, as long as it is subordinate to that of democratically elected institutions. Some proponents of such co-existence argue (as Chief Suping himself did) that the institution of traditional authorities has democratic characteristics inherent to it, "elements of direct democracy complementing representative democracy" (Skalnik, 1996:111), and that it should therefore be incorporated into local governance, particularly because such a route would "strengthen rather than weaken current efforts to build a democratic culture among the African people" (Ismail, 1999:4). And while Mokogoro has argued that: "Should the hereditary undemocratic character and functions of the institution of traditional authority be left as intact as it currently operates, it will frustrate the very ideals of a new democracy" (1999:8), he still calls for its maintenance in a changed form. Others, too, believe that a political role is possible for the chieftainships, but only if the institution is first adapted and democratised, "transformed to meet the requirements of a modern, non-sexist and non-racial democracy" (Keulder, 1998:1), and with its role clearly defined (Walker, 1994; McIntosh, 1990). Indeed, the latter two points represent what the 2003

Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act has sought to do by introducing formal processes for creating tribal councils.<sup>102</sup>

It is evident that the debate over chiefs as 'traditional' leaders is contradictory and often highly controversial, enmeshed as it is in the fraught history of pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid politics. It is apparent in contemporary South Africa, where many areas' local government structures are weak and under-capacitated, that the chiefs and their traditional authorities have, on the whole and on the ground, survived the transition to democracy. Moreover, they have political representation and clout institutionally through the National House of Traditional Leaders,<sup>103</sup> and legitimacy from above through the Constitution and through national legislation. But, it is also evident, as the Madikwe example illustrates, and as Oomen (2000) indicates, that their authority and levels of support vary widely between and within different localities throughout the country, and that their subjects' attitudes towards them are complex, shifting and far from uniform.

How did the above debate manifest in the context of Supingstad and the Madikwe Initiative's concerns there? Considering the controversial polarities of the debate over chieftainships and legitimacy, it is perhaps understandable that the Madikwe Initiative consultants, having given up completely on securing Chief Suping's co-operation, sought to avoid addressing governance issues in Supingstad, and to relegate them to the realm of central government. It is understandable if one sees that approach as reflecting a strategic attempt to use resources effectively by ignoring the village which was led by what they saw as an obstructive chief, and then concentrating their energies elsewhere.

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102 For example, the Act stipulates that thirty-three percent of a tribal council's members must be women and that at least forty percent of its members must be democratically elected. The remaining members may be selected by the chief in terms of so-called 'custom' (Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003).

103 See footnote 92 for more details on the National House of Traditional Leaders. It is also important to note that under the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (2003), once the Premier of a Province has recognised a traditional community, that traditional community can establish a traditional council. The Act recognises tribal authorities as traditional councils. It states that they have an active and important role to play in local government development programmes and service delivery (Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003). Traditional Leaders are also represented through the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa).

The exclusion of Supingstad from the Initiative highlighted two main interrelated problems. One was the apparent ineffectiveness of the Madikwe Initiative's notions of democratic processes (in that, because of those notions of democracy, there was a notable absence of any of their democratically-based development interventions). The other was a failure on the part of consultants to succeed in 'putting local people and local knowledge first' as would be consistent with a 'bottom-up' approach to development, as propounded in the rhetoric to which they subscribed. Chief Suping had come to be seen as obstructing the developers' access to local people. Yet the chief, despite being active in national politics, was very much local and was clearly operating in the context of local knowledge, albeit a local knowledge embedded in a particular understanding of regional and national politics. In accordance with people-based development ideology, should his knowledge not, therefore, have been put above that of outside consultants? Or is there some reasoning in the discourse of 'bottom-up' development that precludes 'objective' outsiders from accepting the opinions of local elites as properly local?

Once again, what underpinned the power play at work in Supingstad was the democratic/autocratic binary which apparently shaped the external development agency's consultants' process of selecting the type of local knowledge they were willing to work with. Such an approach to development was certainly not democratic; nor was it properly 'bottom-up'. Yet, it was commitment to a discourse that celebrated and prioritised democracy and 'bottom-up' concerns that had led to the approach being adopted.

### **Power and Control: Who Holds the Project Reins?**

Were one to take various appeals to notions of democracy out of the equation altogether when viewing the development encounter in Supingstad, what would then be revealed is that the conflict, rather than being effectively diagnosed through the convenient 'democracy/autocracy' binary, is fundamentally about power and control. The ultimate developmental goals (empowerment, job creation, poverty relief) of both the chief and the consultants were similar, at least rhetorically. The situation could, therefore, more usefully be represented as a struggle over who was holding the project reins (and purse strings) rather than over the outcome of interventions.

A general manager of the NWP&TB explained his view of the situation as follows:

You have to understand that with Victor Suping there are complex political dynamics in play. He was Minister of Internal Affairs in the Homelands government and is therefore in conflict with the ANC... He is a strong person in the way he manages the village... He should be seen as appointing Mafisa to help his subjects, not the other way around... But there is another element of tension between him and local government, and as a government institution we have to work with local government. It is impossible for us to interfere.... One tactic is to invest more time with him, but maybe it is better to leave Chief Suping to his politics and concentrate on the more progressive ones who want to take the opportunities. We can't get entangled with local politics, but we must leave the door open for Chief Suping (interview, 25 July 2000).

The above suggests that the general manager's attitude towards Chief Suping was one of resigned forbearance mixed with almost patronising exasperation. The words 'he should be *seen* as appointing Mafisa' require attention. 'Seen' in whose eyes? Presumably in the chief's own eyes, and in those of his subjects. But such seeing is meaningless, nothing but wool over the eyes. For it is clear from the rest of the interview extract that, in the general manager's view, power was legitimately exercised only by the NWP&TB and the Madikwe Initiative, not by a traditional leader. The rest was operational 'tactics' which ranged from 'investing more time' in the chief to 'leaving the door open' and finally concluded with giving up on him altogether, 'leaving him to his politics'. Such a position brings to mind Ferguson's (1990) depiction of development as an anti-politics machine. He wrote of the development apparatus in Lesotho: "it is an 'anti-politics machine,' depoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power" (1990:xv).

Significantly, the general manager reached the 'leave him to his politics' conclusion through employing another binary, the persuasive local/national binary. He articulated the chief's obstruction of the development process in Supingstad as being essentially politically motivated, and about apartheid-era national politics at that, or as one person's (Chief Suping's) position within national politics. The sentence: "He *was* Minister of Internal Affairs in the Homeland's government and *is* therefore in conflict with the ANC..."(italics added) indicates that apartheid-era politics still heavily influenced the general manager's thought processes, this even though Chief Suping was, by then, chairperson of the post apartheid statutory Council of

Traditional Leaders. It was evident that the general manager had a fixed 'once a devil, always a devil' perception regarding Chief Suping, a perception that did not allow for the possibility that perhaps he only seemed devilish because his strategies and tactics were in opposition to the general manager's, particularly concerning the Madikwe Initiative. One result of this inflexibility was that the complexities of the situation were again reduced to oppositional binaries: Chief Suping "is a strong person" (i.e. autocratic), and to the general manager his strength far from equated with legitimacy – as is confirmed by the general manager's claim that the chief was not 'progressive'.

The general manager's view again highlights how politics and development are inseparable spheres and how so often, as Ferguson (1990) showed, development tries to work against that interaction. This is especially true in the immediate post apartheid South African context where many people still carry the memory of apartheid politics close to their hearts, as is evidently the case with the general manager. His words illustrate how, in his and other developers' views, development practice is firmly linked, if not subordinated, to national, local, and even personal politics, three realms that are also inseparable.

Mohan has argued that, in the context of participatory development, a heavy focus on the local "tends to underplay both local inequalities and power relations as well as national and transnational economic and political forces" (2000:1). In chapter three I pointed out how the term 'local' can thus become an all-encompassing, homogenising label, even when hybridity and difference are understood to be implicit in that label. While Madikwe Initiative agents were acutely aware of the influence of external forces as well as the presence of internal tensions, specifically the conflicts between local government structures and so-called traditional tribal authorities (the next chapter will demonstrate how that played out in Molatedi in particular), they still tended to avoid addressing those complexities, and therefore flattened and marginalised them. Responsibility was rhetorically passed to central government, which in turn prevaricated endlessly and failed timeously to clarify the Constitution with respect to traditional leaders,<sup>104</sup> and to clearly define the over-lapping and

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<sup>104</sup> The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act was passed only late in 2003, more than nine years after the installation of the first post-apartheid democratic government and only after much intense wrangling.

conflicting roles of traditional authorities and local government in rural areas of the country. Even the policy-specifying White Paper on traditional authorities was vague and unclear about these roles. It stated:

Potential investors are...awaiting the clarification of certain policies relating to rural governance. Rural development is a priority of government. The legacy of underdevelopment in rural areas will, through such discussions, be addressed to the benefit of all our people. It is only through unity in action for change that we will prosper as a nation (2003:74).

The point is that local/national binary thinking is just as unproductive and problematic to the development encounter as the blinding dualities arising from democratic/autocratic reasoning.

What became evident during my fieldwork was that awareness amongst NWP&TB officials of both potential and real local tensions and conflicts failed to translate into significant improvements in their practices when approaching a specific locality or implementing projects in an area such as Supingstad. Instead, when exogenous political influences interrupted what could be described as an essentialised and romanticised view of the local (for example, that it constitutes a coherent community) (Mohan, 2000:3), there was a standoff, a rejection, as witnessed in the general manager's statement quoted above: "leave Chief Suping to his politics and concentrate on the more progressive ones." In this context, progressive seemed to mean those who co-operated with the initiatives sanctioned by the external developers and funding agency, and which were seen to be in line with the developers' discourses about democracy and democratic principles, discourses that they understood were in line with national policies and all too often, therefore, at variance with local practices.

Their attitude of interpreting local resistance to Madikwe Initiative interventions as ignorance brings to mind post development literature such as Ferguson's (1990) scathing critique of hegemonic discourse for its tendency to interpret local resistance as ignorance. That is because the antithesis of what the general manager regarded as 'progressive' is backward, or at best stagnant, which implies a particular form of ignorance in a world where knowledge implies capacity to change and to move 'ahead'.

It is clear, from my analysis of Supingstad, that the chief's obstructive position was about power, not ignorance. Nothing he said in the interviews I held with him implied he did not want development in the village. On the contrary he repeatedly stressed that development, moving ahead, becoming modern, was his main priority. Rather, he did not want development projects that he could not control, and he justified his position by stressing that he was protecting the best interests of his 'subjects', that "handouts", if not fully understood, "make fools of people" (interview, 29 August 2000).

One could again argue, therefore, that by refusing to engage with the chief, the Madikwe Initiative, despite its rhetoric, was practicing variations of an hegemonic 'top-down' form of development that many theorists and practitioners have successfully interrogated and rejected. What was particularly unproductive and limiting about its agents' approach was their reluctance to engage with local political dynamics and with national and global processes which had an influence on those local dynamics. Instead, what were called political problems (such as the respective roles of traditional authorities and local government) were reduced to a category which floats under the general rubric of post-apartheid politics – a national, not a local problem – and as such were rejected by the Madikwe Initiative's agents. Hence, to reiterate the park warden's words, quoted at the start of this chapter: "There are definite traditional leadership rights, and national government is struggling with what to do. Really, we do not have the mandate to get involved" (21 September 2000). There is surely an uncomfortable irony in development interventionists refusing to 'get involved'.

In Supingstad, consultants' refusal to accept or involve themselves in the village's politics resulted in the exclusion of its residents from the Initiative's interventions. While the development interventionists were able to justify bypassing the village with its problematic chief through invoking the autocracy/democracy binary, in Molatedi, as the following chapter describes, they could not avoid becoming involved in village politics. As I will show, there, however, the developmental approach was nonetheless still unable to adapt to the inconvenient complexities of local realities, and

consultants' involvement ironically resulted in a high degree of alienation and consequent exclusion.

## Chapter Five

### Developing Democracy or Creating Conflict? Local Governance and the Development Process

A major contention of this thesis is that people-based approaches to development tend merely to be another form of top-down intervention characterised by an inevitable imbalance of power that ensures local people remain bottom of the hierarchy. I argue that seductive, utopian rhetoric conceals the operation of this power, however unintentionally, and even goes some way to disguising how interventions more often than not fail.

Chapter four has shown that people-based development seems unable to function independently of the hegemonic, paradigmatic discourses that produce such rhetoric. In consequence it becomes compromised. A case in point is the stand-off between Chief Suping and the Madikwe Initiative which was exacerbated through the latter invoking a deeply reductionist yet intensely powerful autocracy/democracy binary. Such binary logic led the Madikwe Initiative to justify excluding the entire village of Supingstad from the Initiative.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, in a manner which was another manifestation of the insidious operation of hegemonic power, the binary obscured the complexities of the situation and retarded, if not entirely forestalled, the generation of more accurate and sensitive understandings of the impasse.

The purpose of this chapter is to use the example of Molatedi to demonstrate how, in an instance where the Madikwe Initiative did intervene directly, a significant number of villagers became alienated from the development processes the Initiative instituted, primarily as a consequence of local political and governance-related conflicts. I show that these conflicts stemmed from the existence of several competing and conflicting forms of governance in the village: Chief Matlapeng and his Tribal Authority; the Community Development Organisation (CDO); the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) forum; the Molatedi Service Committee (MSC) and the

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<sup>105</sup> The evidence leading to this conclusion is presented in the preceding chapter.

Rustenburg District Council (RDC) with its resident councillor.<sup>106</sup> The different structures and committees fell into two main groupings: the RDP forum and the CDO were aligned with Chief Matlapeng and his Tribal Authority, and the MSC was aligned with the RDC, which had a strong presence in the village because of the resident councillor. Working with one meant almost inevitably antagonising the other.

There were several Madikwe Initiative projects functioning in Molatedi and a highly visible community centre had been (half) built by the time I left the area at the end of 2000. In the process of actually implementing projects, the Madikwe Initiative's development consultants had found themselves with no alternative but to liaise with one or other of the local governance structures. The one they selected ultimately was the RDC, as it was most closely aligned with the policies of national government having been established following the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998.<sup>107</sup>

Having described the complex governance-related conflicts in Molatedi I then offer a brief comparative discussion of Lekgophung, where there was a single committee representing villagers' interests and negligible tensions over local governance. The primary purpose of the Lekgophung example is to illustrate how the idea of what is 'politics' intrudes into how people construct local organisational structures. I show that while interventions proceeded relatively smoothly in Lekgophung, the Madikwe Initiative was unable to accommodate conflicts in Molatedi.

Another function of this chapter is to demonstrate how exogenously driven attempts to establish (or impose) so-called democratic and representative committees that could ostensibly transcend local political tensions through by-passing longer established local governance structures paradoxically focussed internal village conflicts. It thus shows how they served to further fragment and divide the local populace rather than to help develop an harmonious unity, built on representivity, that their initiators hoped would act as a stable foundation on which to ground their development interventions.

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<sup>106</sup> Although the RDP forum and the CDO had been formally disbanded by the time of my fieldwork, both committees still played a significant role in Molatedi politics.

<sup>107</sup> As I explained in the preceding chapter, Mafisa agents said that DfID had 'insisted' they work with local government rather than chiefs and traditional structures.

The problematic issue of representation highlights another major thread, first introduced in chapter three, that runs through this thesis: the success of people-based development is, I argue, compromised because of development agents' need for a representational structure through which to liaise and work with recipient populations. While chapter three focused on the NWP&TB's misconception of community and the ensuing establishment of the problematic CDOs, this chapter explores the tensions that arose between various governance structures in Molatedi because there was no single representational body capable of overriding all others. The chapter illustrates how these tensions were inevitably intensified by the development encounter – not least because the Madikwe Initiative was resource-rich with R6.4 billion from DfID. I shall begin by describing in more detail the different governance structures in the Madikwe villages, focusing particularly on Molatedi.

### **Inexorable Bureaucratic Tentacles**

This first section shows that there was a plethora of conflicting local structures and committees in Molatedi, with overlapping mandates and varying degrees of legitimacy, all vying for power and control over governance and development with its attendant resources. From the appointment of chiefs and tribal authorities as organs of local governance in the colonial and apartheid eras, to the creation of district councils and village service committees through the legislation of South Africa's new democratic government, these structures and committees have all been products of the top-down policies of the relevant prevailing ruling power.

A particular aim of the section is to argue that, contrary to the beliefs central to people-based development discourse that local autonomy should be strengthened if interventions are to reach their potential,<sup>108</sup> the Madikwe Initiative actually aided and abetted the encroachment of the state into the villages – all the while attempting to maintain a fiction of its being a non-political intervention organisation. Such a predicament is clearly not unique to the Madikwe Initiative. Indeed, the crux of Ferguson's (1990) argument was that he could see in Lesotho that "the 'anti-politics

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<sup>108</sup> See, for example, the archive discussion around the paper "Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Lessons for Southern Africa" which can be found on the PLAAS website.

machine' [the development apparatus] has been at work, as state power has been simultaneously expanded and depoliticized" (2001:263). Similarly, Spiegel (1995), in a submission on the role of traditional authorities to South Africa's then Constitutional Assembly, wrote:

A ...feature of much 'development' is that it requires and produces extensions of the bureaucratic tentacles of the state into areas and domains of life not previously intruded upon... [Development interventions] bring in their wake the unintended consequence of bureaucratic intrusions in local domains that were previously autonomous (1995:4).

A good example to illustrate the often intensely divisive repercussions of such bureaucratic intrusions lies in the Community Development Organisations (CDOs) initiated by the NWP&TB in 1994. As I explained in chapter three (see pages 84-85), the NWP&TB presumed, based on its view that the residents of the three villages adjacent to Madikwe each constituted a fixed, homogenous 'community', that it would be possible to create an effective representative body or, as Barrow and Murphree (2001) would say, an organizational vehicle through which to liaise with the three villages. Hence, the Board established a CDO in each of the three villages, all then supposedly united into a single CDO forum.

Three former CDO members in Molatedi did tell me that there had been democratic elections for the CDO. As one said: "When we were elected to the CDO we had democratic elections in the presence of the community. People are not so much interested in meetings, but anyone who wanted could go.... There were about 100 people<sup>109</sup> .... Everyone voted for individual members for the CDO (interview, 6 May, 2000). Yet other village respondents said that elections had not been democratic and that the CDO members had been appointed by the Tribal Authority. Given, as I explained in chapter three, that of the fifteen CDO members only two were women, at least four were ward heads, and the Chair was the chief's uncle, it is likely that there is much truth in the latter view.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Out of a total estimated population of approximately 2500, including children.

<sup>110</sup> Another factor that should be taken into account because of its impact on democratic processes is that across the villages only 12% of respondents in my questionnaire survey said they regularly attended village meetings, and 51% said they had never been to a village meeting. The two reasons most frequently cited for not attending such meetings were that the individual had not been invited to the meeting or had not heard about it; and that the meetings were considered a waste of time.

The NWP&TB envisioned that the CDOs would work in conjunction with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) forums which had been established through central government legislation and had been functioning in the villages since 1994. The RDP began as a pre-1994 ANC-developed plan that was intended to be implemented nationwide. Once the ANC-controlled government of national unity was in place, the RDP became policy. RDP forums were then established at local level throughout the country, with the intention of promoting participatory democracy. In Molatedi and Supingstad the process was effectively taken over, however, by the only well-developed locally legitimate structure in each village: the chief and Tribal Authority, with which the forums were closely aligned. I understood from my field assistants that in both those villages elections had not been democratic in any orthodox sense but that, in much the same way as the CDO later came to be established in Molatedi, the Tribal Authorities had heavily influenced the choice of members. A consequence was that women and youth were not effectively represented since they had not previously been part of the Tribal Authority structures in the two villages. Undoubtedly partly because the RDP forums had been ineffective in promoting participatory democracy in Supingstad and Molatedi, their success was limited.<sup>111</sup>

On a policy level, one of the main aims of the RDP forums had been to facilitate development and, through delivering, or facilitating the delivery of, essential services including health, welfare, education, housing, land and water, to address the severe socio-economic imbalances existing in early post apartheid South Africa.<sup>112</sup> Before the end of 1994 it had become apparent, however, that most RDP forums were failing to deliver. Indeed, a recent article in *Business Report* cites unnamed critics of the RDP as saying that its “redistributive promises” could not be met, and “having social democratic aims within a neo-liberal system is contradictory” (Bell, February 10, 2006). Such a contradiction again resonates with Ferguson’s (1990) argument that within development discourse there are two central aims: to develop capitalism and to eliminate poverty. Although these dual aims are often conflicting, they are nevertheless usually conflated within development rhetoric (1994:55).

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<sup>111</sup> See footnote 132 which explains that the Lekgophung RDP forum had succeeded in becoming a representative committee.

<sup>112</sup> See African National Congress (1994), *The Reconstruction and Development Programme: A Policy Framework*.

Partly as a consequence of the RDP failing to reach its potential, and partly as a result of neo-liberal global pressures, by 1997 national policy had changed direction: the RDP was replaced by the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution policy (GEAR) (Davenport: 1998:81-83). However, since only too often such national level policy changes do not necessarily lead to changes on the ground; by the end of my fieldwork in 2000, the RDP forums were still operating in the villages adjacent to Madikwe, apart from in Supingstad where its members had decided to disband.<sup>113</sup>

The NWP&TB's efforts to establish CDOs were an attempt to create the kinds of representative bodies that those who had designed the RDP and its forums had envisioned – and largely failed to achieve. As chapter three explained, the concept of the CDOs grew out of mistaken and highly problematic exogenous assumptions about representivity and about the feasibility of introducing ostensibly representative governance structures. It was not surprising then that the NWP&TB's CDOs were even less successful than the earlier legislatively created RDP forums. As Mafisa directors have explained after the event: "...the CDOs helped contribute to fragmentation and lack of cohesion... [because] in each of the villages they were set up in parallel to the local tribal authorities and RDP [forums]. Sometimes they operated in tandem with these other organs of local governance, at other times in conflict with them" (Koch and Massyn, 1999:15). This was particularly the case in Molatedi where I soon found that the CDO had worked closely with the Tribal Authority but, as I describe below, had come into conflict with the new government-linked structures, specifically the Rustenburg District Council (RDC) within whose nationally legislated jurisdiction the village lay, and with the Molatedi Service Committee (MSC).

As I explained in chapter three, although the CDOs were formally disbanded in 1998, they had by then become institutionally entrenched in village politics – as had the

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<sup>113</sup> When I asked Chief Suping what had happened to the RDP Forum he said: "They are not functional. They resigned out of frustration because those Mafisa consultants were squandering money. They [the Mafisa consultants] are paid even when they do nothing" (interview, 29 August, 2000). His view was in line with that of a former RDP forum member who said: "The RDP forum was [representing the village to the Game Reserve authorities] but it split because there was a lack of information and communication was not good. We were tired of unfulfilled promises" (interview, Supingstad, 26 August, 2000).

RDP forums – and, during my fieldwork, I found that, as they did in regard to the RDP forum, respondents in Molatedi still spoke of the CDO as though it was a functioning committee, with various individuals recognised as active CDO members.

Following the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 central government-linked district councils were formed throughout the country, the Madikwe area included. The CDO in Molatedi was thus replaced by the Rustenburg District Council linked village service committee (known as the Molatedi Service Committee – MSC). The intention was that the MSC would now represent the village and liaise between the Rustenburg District Council (RDC) and the chief and his Tribal Authority.

### **In Search of Democracy: Molatedi Divided**

The fundamental aim of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 was to promote representivity and democracy, particularly in South Africa's rural areas. Yet, Molatedi's Village Service Committee (MSC), which came into being as a direct result of this legislation, was the most problematic – or certainly the most openly criticised – committee in the village. From the very start I learned there had been problems with it, problems that revolved around issues of democracy and representation. Many village respondents, stretching across generational and gender divides, complained that the elections for the committee had been neither democratic nor transparent. Statements such as the following were common:

- I was not informed of any meeting for these elections (interview with older woman, Molatedi resident, 10 September 2000);
- As far as I can see, this committee was appointed by Rachel [the district councillor who had a home in Molatedi] without consultation with the community (interview, young woman, Molatedi resident, 3 October, 2000);
- It was the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1998 when that MSC was elected. I was away and only found out when I came back on the 18<sup>th</sup>. I remember because it was pay day for the old [pension day]. That was the first time I ever heard anything about those elections (interview, older man, Molatedi resident, 13 April, 2000);
- The CDO was elected by the village; the MSC was elected [sic; appointed] by the district councillor. We don't want the MSC. They don't talk and they can't think (interview, older woman, Molatedi resident, 3 May, 2000);
- The MSC was nominated by the councillor. That was not the agreement and [it was] not good procedure (interview, young man, Molatedi resident, 15 April, 2000);
- The selection for that committee [the MSC] was not successful. People were placed there according to the desires of the councillor, not because the people wanted those people. That is why it has failed to deliver anything to the people. And the CDO people have been alienated

because of politics (interview, older man, former Molatedi CDO member, 10 September, 2000).

It is evident from the quotes above that a popular conception in Molatedi was that the MSC elections had been masterminded by the then newly appointed district councillor. An important repercussion was that the MSC was widely viewed as little more than a puppet of the resident councillor. I asked the MSC Chairperson what had happened. She replied somewhat contradictorily: "I think the elections were democratic. But I wasn't there for them. The problem was that when the elections happened, they were short of members, so other members were called in by Mrs Matlapeng [the resident district councillor] afterwards" (interview, 15 September, 2000).

Given that the resident district councillor, herself having been appointed from a party list rather than directly elected as a constituency representative, had, of her own volition, appointed members to the committee, it is clear that the electoral procedure had not been democratic in any remotely orthodox sense. The outcome was that the MSC, rather than comprising members who were representative of the whole village, was, in practice, geared primarily toward youth and younger women. As such, it operated in parallel to the older male-dominated Tribal Authority, and often came into conflict with it not least because it had usurped the role of the CDO, which had been, as I explained above, heavily aligned with the Tribal Authority.

One respondent, an older man who was a member of the Tribal Authority as well as a former member of both the CDO and the MSC (the only Tribal Authority member to have sat on both committees<sup>114</sup>), explained his view of the roots of the conflicts:

After the elections [for the CDO] we needed training to guide us in our powers and duties to the community.... We had training in Pilanesburg for four days<sup>115</sup> after which time we came back and were applying what we had gained from the training.... We sat and identified what the community needed and called a meeting where 300 attended. We wanted to know what the people needed. We made a list with the six priorities.... We wrote letters applying for assistance to the mines and the big companies, etcetera. There were many regrets [rejections], but then Amplats [Anglo American Platinum Mines Company] called a meeting in their board room. Six of us went and drew up an agreement. They came to the village and ... agreed to pay the whole R32,975.... [to build five classrooms and some toilets. These were vandalised soon after the building

<sup>114</sup> He had resigned after a few months because, he said, he did not feel the Molatedi Service Committee was working in the best interests of the community (interview, 6 May, 2000).

<sup>115</sup> Organised by the NWP&TB.

had been completed]. We thought the [district] councillor had done it [orchestrated the vandalism], but we couldn't prove it. She was jealous of our success and [we believe she then] decided the CDO must be done away with. The RDC had their own committee [the MSC] behind the screen [sic; scene] [which]... they appointed [with the excuse that] government wants only one body to represent the RDC and the village. So the CDO was removed. We should have handed over all our documents to the MSC, but this wasn't done. We asked why. We were not saying that we wanted to remain, just that we wanted to hand over properly.... The VSC [village service committee] was not as trained and a little education is more than dangerous. I was trying to advise, but the VSC was misled by the RDC. They had not given us [the VSC] the correct way of dealing with the community. There is no information and no reports, even when the Tribal Authority wants to know what is happening (interview, 6 May, 2000).

In this respondent's view, the CDO had been a more effective committee than the MSC on all counts: it had been democratically elected by a village assembly open to all (albeit few attended); its members had undergone training; they had conducted a participatory needs analysis; they had successfully sourced funding and delivered development initiatives to the village. The MSC, on the other hand, under the poor guidance of the RDC with its locally resident councillor (who was suspected of sinking so low as to inflict malicious damage to CDO-initiated projects), not only lacked experience, training and capacity, but was failing to liaise with villagers, to communicate or to deliver.

Many other respondents were also highly negative about the MSC, giving examples of its failings such as the following: regarding the installation of water standpipes in the village, each household was supposed to be no further than two hundred metres from a standpipe, but some were over three hundred metres, and some as far as four kilometres. Another example of the MSC's failing was reflected in electrical installation which began in 1999. The process was coordinated by the MSC. Every household had expected to be connected, but Eskom (the responsible utility company, state-run) had left thirty-eight houses unconnected. This was seen as particularly unforgivable as all the houses in Supingstad, the village least linked to the new ANC-led structures, had been connected already in 1996. Such perceived failings on the part of the MSC resulted in a prevalence of negative opinions, particularly from village respondents:

- I can't recommend that MSC. They have made a lot of mistakes (interview, young man, 8 May, 2000);

- I think people should be appointed through the Tribal Authority, not the councillor, so they have the right visions (interview with young woman, clinic worker, Molatedi, 18 September, 2000);
- The only thing that is damaging for communication, from my point of view, is that committee [the MSC] (interview, older woman, Molatedi resident, 4 June, 2000);
- It is mostly young women on this MSC, which was prepared by the councillor beforehand. Before, the CDO and the RDP were a joint venture with strong bonding, committed to development in the village. But with the MSC the criteria [sic] was different from what we had agreed. Before, we used to do things for ourselves. Now [because of the Rustenburg District Council], development facilitating is used to deny us opportunities (interview, middle-aged man, former CDO member, 6 September, 2000);
- I don't know what goes on with that MSC. I don't want to lie. I don't know even if that committee is still existing... They never call me to their meetings – because there is a perception that I was supporting the old CDO. But me, I work for the community. I am a neutral person (interview, NWP&TB Community Liaison Officer, 17 April, 2000).<sup>116</sup>

Lack of representation, poor communication and inadequate capacity were the main underlying reasons for negative perceptions of the MSC. There was also an emphasis on the fact that it comprised mainly 'young women' – when it was established it comprised seven women (aged between 25 and 40) and three men (aged between 35 and 63). Only one member was also a member of the Tribal Authority, and – as we have seen – he had resigned after a few months.

Yet, regardless of its accuracy, local people's emphasis on its demographic composition illustrated the presence of yet another binary simplification: the MSC (and the RDC by association and because of the councillor) were equated with women and youth; the chief, the Tribal Authority and the CDO with older men. In Molatedi, the former had, thus far at least, demonstrated that they were not as effective as the latter; therefore older men were regarded as the better option in terms of a governance structure. The complex problems of local governance (which centred around issues of social capital, capacity, role division, communication and representation) were thus concealed and then attributed, instead, largely to generational and gender differences – which was also another indication of the problems resulting because the MSC members had not been 'democratically' elected through majority vote.

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<sup>116</sup> It is important to point out that the NWP&TB's Community Liaison Officer is here contradicting his position by being openly against the village's state-initiated structures with which it was the Board's policy to work. His words indicate a certain lack of understanding for local social and political dynamics, and go some way towards explaining why many villagers, as I will show in chapter seven, were highly antagonistic towards him. Comments such as: "[the CLO] may as well vaccinate all the animals, he is so bad as a CLO" (Molatedi resident, 14 September, 2000) were not unusual.

Furthermore, the local development process (by which he meant the upgrading of infrastructure, building of classrooms and so on), at least in the CDO member's view presented above, had formerly acted as a 'uniting' activity under the leadership of the RDP forum and then the CDO, both of which had worked closely with the Tribal Authority. Now, because local development was formally (in terms of national legislation) under the management of the Rustenburg District Council (to which the MSC was aligned), it was seen as being 'used to deny us opportunities'. The respondent intended the 'us' to refer to the village as a whole, rather than just the CDO or the Tribal Authority, but it is evident that the young women of the MSC were not part of that 'us'. He expressed the conflict in the language of exclusion, invoking an endogenous/exogenous binary: 'us', the village and the Tribal Authority and 'them', the RDC and the MSC. He employed an argument similar to Chief Suping's 'handouts make fools of people' saying that unlike when 'we used to do things for ourselves', 'outsiders' would never work in the best interests of the village. Yet, not only did the MSC comprise only village residents, but the RDC councillor herself was also from, and resident in, the village.

Although the CDO member expressed his view of the conflict through a series of binaries: endogenous/exogenous; male/female; elders/youth, which were clearly divided along the CDO/MSD and Tribal Authority/RDC lines, it was apparent that the conflict was actually about representation, control and delivery. It is possible, of course, that tensions would have been negligible, or at least democratically managed, in an ideal scenario where all villagers were effectively represented by the MSC and development had progressed smoothly. But it remains that the establishment of the MSC in Molatedi created greater societal divisions than before, rather than more effective representation.

The respondents' opinions cited above reveal, too, that many villagers perceived capacity to be a major problem with the MSC. According to a Molatedi businessman: "The local leadership is not exposed [sic]. They cannot drive the objectives of the government locally. They are struggling" (interview, Molatedi resident, 10 September 2000). Chief Suping had a similar opinion:

The snag is that, in these villages, you will find committees that have been elected, but they are not capacitated and empowered. They always wait to see what the *Kgosi* [chief] wants done: they depend on me. These committees need to be guided. They have no real knowledge and they don't know what they are doing. They literally do not know how to communicate with the Park [MGR]. You find a semi-literate person having to deal with a person like you, and it is very difficult for them to understand and communicate with you. Mr Leitner [the MGR Warden] can come and speak English, but they will not really understand (interview, Chief Suping, 29 August 2000).

A convincing view of the situation could be that such dependency on Chief Suping was because of his prior experience in the political sphere, because he was perceived as being part of the bigger 'outsider' picture. A former CDO member in Molatedi, and one who had undergone formal training in Pilanesberg also stressed that capacity, particularly in comparison with the CDO, was a central failing of the MSC:

They dissolved the CDOs and came with a new committee called the Molatedi Service Committee. But the CDO had been there for many years. They [the CDO members] had experience and know what they are talking about - why couldn't we just add youth or add whoever you want to add on that CDO committee? But the politicians weren't happy about that and said 'no, we want the people to elect a new committee.' ... To be honest they elected a lot of youth who were lacking knowledge as far as I am concerned, and some of them were not able to learn (interview, Molatedi, 11 September 2000).<sup>117</sup>

Recognising that the MSC needed training, the Madikwe Initiative added capacity building to its agenda, rather than looking for solutions locally. The training was carried out by the Pretoria-based DfID funded Centre for Opportunity Development (COD). But MSC members (who were the targets of COD's attention) were highly critical of its practices. For example:

That COD - they kept changing their training timetable, changing the dates and not turning up, or coming very late. It is unacceptable. They are being paid by DfID because of us. They come down here and get paid for doing nothing. Often they don't even bring their teaching aids, like flip charts and pens. It is frustrating (MSC member, 10 September 2000).

According to the MSC chairperson, the training was thoroughly unsuccessful. She said: "most of the information is useless, as we can't apply it" (14 September 2000), indicating that it is insufficient for 'outsiders' simply to descend from on high

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<sup>117</sup> In his work in the Eastern Cape, Ntsebeza (1999), too, found that problems with the capacity of new committees was not unusual. There were still Transitional Local Councils in the context he describes, which was the period before national post apartheid legislation had created a system of district councils: "Where rural people have been exposed to an alternative form of rural local government, it has been to the TrepCs [Transitional Local Councils]. However... capacity problems encountered by the TrepCs, coupled with the fact that they are not visible and available, have led many rural people to look down upon them" (Ntsebeza, 1999:62).

(Pretoria) and ‘capacitate’ people. Capacity building is a larger, longer-term process which needs to be locally driven and sustained by local knowledge and ideas (interview with Joel Bolnick, People’s Dialogue, Cape Town, 5 June 2002).<sup>118</sup>

Frequently, respondents explained that their major concern regarding the MSC was its demographic profile, heavily dominated as it was by women and youth. Given that initially the MSC comprised ten members, seven women and three men, such concerns were not unfounded. Of the original ten, one woman resigned due to ill health, and one man left, said the MSC chairperson (14 September, 2000), without giving a reason. The chairperson agreed that the predominance of inexperienced but aspirant youth on the committee was problematic. She said:

It’s true that many people [on the MSC] are very young, and they do not have all the necessary knowledge. The problem is that they may leave the committee because they want to find jobs. We had a misunderstanding when the committee was set up: they were told by the RDC councillor that they would be paid, but they never were. So now they want to leave, and that’s why young people are a problem. It would be better to mix them with old people, too (interview, 14 September, 2000).

Thus, acknowledged and recognised from within its own structures a pivotal problem with the MSC was, indeed, based on societal divisions – the age and gender of its members. This was compounded by a series of associated social structural constraints, the most pertinent being that the young members needed to seek wage employment, unlike the older men of the Tribal Authority and CDO, many of whom were state pension recipients. Similarly, while older men had had years of experience and training in administration and knew the social networks and how the whole administrative process worked, the youth of the MSC had no such experience. They were at a distinct disadvantage, a disadvantage that went well beyond the committee’s lack of representivity.

Moreover, as the chairperson added, representational failings were only the beginning of the problems the MSC had to contend with. Even more problematic for her was that the MSC did not have a clearly defined role and, rather than being delegated any power or control by either the RDC or the Tribal Authority, was continuously

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<sup>118</sup> I return to issues of capacity building and sustainability in the context of the Madikwe Initiative projects in chapter seven.

undermined by both, stuck in an intensely uncomfortable and awkward position in the middle of a conflict between the two competing forms of governance. She explained:

My job is very difficult. Everyone is always shouting at me.... like with the water standpipes - many of the connections never happened because the [resident district] councillor is in mourning so has to send someone else to the tribal office<sup>119</sup> to inform them that the house connections could start; but she still hasn't sent someone, and she is the only one to know the answer why. They started putting in the standpipes in August 1997, but then we were told in February 1998 that we'd have to pay suddenly a bill of R8700 divided amongst the whole village. Rachel Matlapeng [the resident district councillor] said the money [to pay for the connections] had already been allocated [elsewhere]. Some people who were away, living in Jo'burg as an example, were not using the water but had to pay still – R17 a month. In February 2000 everyone stopped paying, [saying] why didn't they have water in their houses yet? They were promised last year. So everyone is shouting at me about water, but it is all up to Rachel and there is nothing I can do. These are the services of the government and she is the representative of the government. If things went directly from the government to the tribal office and the MSC then things would be OK, we would have control. But it is not like that, so I can honestly say I don't know what is the reason for the MSC [s existence]. The only problem is the RDC. They want to get hold of everything and they don't want to tell the Tribal Authority. So they don't tell the MSC and then the Tribal Authority doesn't know – I do not have the correct information when they are asking.... The MSC together with the Tribal Authority should write to the RDC to tell them of all these problems. For example, the vending machine [for electricity coupons] is sitting there in Rachel's office, so no one can use it. But the Tribal Authority doesn't want to [complain to the RDC]. I don't know why not. Then with the roads, the MGR asked the government to pay for the roads to be improved, and the RDC is [has been] saying that the roads will be improved for a long time, but nothing happens, and I don't know why not, even when people are asking me (interview, 14 September, 2000).

The chairperson's frustration with what she saw as her thankless role was understandable. Her description of her difficult position suggests that the MSC was indeed little more than an ill-used puppet of the RDC's resident councillor – a position the chairperson seemed anxious to change as is evident from her stated antagonism towards the resident councillor and from the fact that she was attempting, she said, to ally the MSC more with the Tribal Authority than the RDC, even going as far as to suggest that the Tribal Authority and the MSC should write to the RDC together to complain about the councillor. Given its lack of autonomy and achievement it was also not difficult to see why the MSC attracted criticisms of the kinds cited earlier from village residents.

The resident councillor was undeniably a major factor that prejudiced many people against the RDC (and, by unwilling association, the MSC, too). I tried repeatedly, throughout my fieldwork, to meet with Councillor Matlapeng. I wrote several letters,

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<sup>119</sup> See page 142 for an explanation of customary law relating to mourning practices.

phoned her numerous times, and was finally rewarded with an appointment. But she failed to appear or to contact me to apologise. I redoubled my efforts to see her, was again given an appointment, and again was left knocking uselessly at her front door. The third time this happened, in September 2000, my field assistant could not suppress his sardonic smile: "That woman, she is most unreliable. She does not like to make herself available for people". It was evident that my own frustrating experiences in trying to meet with the councillor were far from unusual.

Less than a year before the commencement of my fieldwork the councillor's husband had died. According to my Molatedi field assistant, under customary law a widow and a widower are considered bad luck and therefore their actions and movements are restricted. They are supposed to stay at home, especially at and around noon. They are not allowed to enter the tribal court while in mourning – which lasts for one year. Many key respondents (such as the MSC chairperson quoted above) explained that, instead of sending a letter or a representative, the councillor used this customary law to avoid communicating with the chief or the Tribal Authority, which caused immense antagonism. According to Molatedi's Chief Matlapeng: "The councillor is a messenger of the chief. She must supply me with genuine information whatsoever the circumstances" (interview, 14 April, 2000). The NWP&TB Community Liaison Officer described his view of the situation as follows: "I know about the squabble as well between Rachel [the district councillor] and the chief. The chief says 'I own – this is my property' and Rachel says 'this is my area of jurisdiction'. So it is like two bulls in one kraal" (interview, 17 April, 2000).

Chief Matlapeng was adamant, particularly when it came to development interventions, that the Tribal Authority was the only structure that could guarantee effective representation and communication – especially when it came to liaising with development agents. Regarding the Madikwe project, he said:

At the very beginning, in 1991, when the Reserve was first established, who were they dealing with? The Tribal Authority. Then the CDO was started and they liaised directly with them. But Mr Thomas Matlapeng [a member of the Tribal Authority] was there [on the CDO] to represent us... But, from the beginning, they dealt with the Tribal Authority. So why then are they now asking who to liaise with? The Tribal Authority is the most immediate authority and no structure supersedes that. We are the custodians of community assets and aspirations. We need to be aware of what is happening.... Whatever information they have, they must communicate to us, in writing, because we have different departments and structures and agencies so they

must communicate with us and we can inform the community and invite all the different structures and tell them the information.... Don't go to the other structures or else the information will not reach the community (Chief Matlapeng, Molatedi, 5 July 2000).

It is clear that Chief Matlapeng saw himself and the Tribal Authority as the only effective conduit of information between outside agencies such as the NWP&TB and Mafisa, and what he regarded as the Molatedi community. His words mirror almost exactly those of Chief Suping: "To keep the community informed you must start with the head. Then we can call our communities together and tell them what is going on" (interview, Chief Suping, 29 August 2000).<sup>120</sup>

The evidence from my fieldwork suggests that there was much truth in the two chiefs' words. In all three villages, all respondents knew how to access the tribal authorities because they operated through an established ward system. For example, in Molatedi, one respondent explained how the village was headed by the chief, who had two advisors. The village was then divided into eight different wards, each subdivided into different groupings and headed by ward head advisors. The chain of communication was clear. Ward leaders report to the chief, 'clan' leaders report to ward leaders, and everyone else reports to their specific 'clan' leaders.<sup>121</sup> Ward heads met with the chief and his two advisors regularly, usually three times a week. Now and then the chief would hold a meeting for the entire village (about 3500 people), but usually only about a quarter of the population would attend (interview, Molatedi resident, 3 April 2000).<sup>122</sup> The system was tried and known.

On the other hand, many people were unclear about the communication channels to district councillors. In Supingstad and Lekgophung some people were even unsure who the responsible district councillor was, or whether there was such a person. In Molatedi, as I have shown, the locally resident member of the district council was

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<sup>120</sup> Quoted in chapter four, page 103.

<sup>121</sup> See note 64 above. I use 'clan' here simply because that is the English language term used locally to describe units below the level of ward – what Schapera (1953 [1991]:40) called a 'family-group'.

<sup>122</sup> See chapter two, pages 36-37 where I provide an explanation of the ward system in early Tswana chiefdoms. Schapera (1953) describes the system in detail.

often seen as obstructive and as contributing to information blockages between the RDC and the Tribal Authority.<sup>123</sup>

Such was the suspicion surrounding the councillor in Molatedi, and so negative were perceptions about the efficacy of the MSC, that the chief and the Tribal Authority were often viewed as the better governance option. The situation provides support for the point Spiegel (1995) made in his submission to the Constitutional Assembly regarding the role of traditional authorities: “the only structure that many people respect sufficiently to grant it authority is the institution of traditional leadership” (1995:4).<sup>124</sup>

In a context such as Molatedi, where there was a seemingly continuous progression of new committees, coupled with a definite lack of capacity in the newly created and supposedly democratic structures, it is unsurprising that people still expressed greater support for the chief and Tribal Authority than for the RDC or the MSC. One good reason given for such support was that when the CDO, firmly aligned as it had been with the chief and his Tribal Authority, had been coordinating development, it had succeeded in delivering highly visible projects, such as the classroom block, and had thus won local legitimacy. The MSC had no such obvious successes to its credit – and in fact was perceived by many to have failed not only in sourcing funding for village led initiatives but even in coordinating the delivery of government services such as water and electricity supply. Although development management under the CDO and governance under the Tribal Authority may have been far from ideal, many still viewed those structures as better and more effective than the combination comprising the resident district councillor, the RDC and the MSC – which were failing not only to communicate, but also to deliver, failures that were immediately noted. The chief

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<sup>123</sup> Indeed, by the time of writing, and after the 2004 elections, Ms Matlapeng no longer held the office she did during my fieldwork period.

<sup>124</sup> Latham (2004), drawing on his fieldwork in Zimbabwe’s upper Guruve and Zvimba, came to a similar conclusion: “The only institutions that are continuously present, and that have relevance for local communities, are those rooted in the indigenous system of governance... the resilience of the indigenous or customary institutions derives from two major components: first these institutions have congruence with the people’s worldviews and perceptions of governance of daily life, and with the management of resources; and secondly they are solidly based within the community, linked to the kinship system and their nested levels of jurisdiction. While it is undoubtedly true that central government, political parties, local governments and NGOs have disturbed and influenced these institutions... it is also true that this influence seems to have had remarkably little impact over a relatively long period... In most cases it is to the traditional rather than the statutory authority that community members refer and defer to” (2004:2).

and his Tribal Authority in Molatedi thus gained renewed support, albeit perhaps largely by default, with the formal replacement of the CDO by the MSC; and in the process any hopes outsiders such as the NWP&TB may have had of introducing new structures, that (to introduce one side of another binary) might supersede a supposedly pre-modern (chief-based) system of local governance, were further thwarted. Such was the situation in Molatedi when Mafisa began work there in 1998. The following section illustrates, through the example of the Bopitikelo Community Centre, and the processes that led to its (semi) construction, how the presence of the resource rich Madikwe Initiative intensified governance conflicts in the village.

### **The Bopitikelo Community Centre: Focussing the Conflicts**

In 1998, Mafisa initiated what came to be known as the Bopitikelo Community Centre in Molatedi. The project's aim was to build a community centre which could house various small businesses, be a place for villagers to meet, and act as a venue for cultural tourism, drawing in visitors from the Reserve. From its conception, however, the community centre project was caught up in the cross-fire of Molatedi politics. To begin with, Mafisa had liaised with the NWP&TB-instigated CDO (which, remember, was closely aligned with the chief and the Tribal Authority). The CDO had suggested the centre should be built on a site on a nearby hillside. But, before building had begun, the CDO had been replaced by the MSC which, as we have seen, was closely controlled by the resident Rustenburg district councillor. The RDC, through the councillor, advised Mafisa that a site closer to the village and alongside the Marico River would be more suitable. Mafisa accepted the opinion and building went ahead. Little more than the foundations and walls had been built before heavy rains came at the beginning of 2000. The Marico filled and swelled and eventually overflowed. The Bopitikelo Centre, perched on its RDC-chosen riverside site was severely inundated. According to one Molatedi resident:

When they [Mafisa] started, people did not really understand what was going on, why the centre was being built. It was not properly explained. The Rustenburg [District] Council advised Mafisa badly and the result was that the centre was built too close to the river. Then when the rains came the centre was terribly flooded. If they had explained things properly to the village this would not have happened. They should have asked the village where to build this centre. Now it is too close to the river. Who can make a business there? Why build a centre? When it comes to money, Mafisa are not doing a good job. They have done nothing to improve people's lives. The community centre should be finished. Instead it is half built. Now there is no money

left for it. Now it won't develop. It is nothing (interview with middle aged woman, Molatedi Resident, 8 April, 2000).

And another:

Mafisa wanted to build a cultural centre and the CDO chose a good site. Then suddenly the MSC came along and undermined the CDO. Suddenly the CDO were no more. They were told nothing. Suddenly Mafisa was with this MSC and they didn't even tell us they were no longer going to be with us. And then the RDC told them to build the cultural centre next to the river. No one paid any attention to the site the CDO had chosen. I can't say anything [more] about that centre: have you heard how it was flooded? (interview with older man, Tribal Authority and former CDO member, 13 April, 2000).

It is significant that both respondents expressed the conflicts as being fundamentally about autonomy, participatory democracy and representation. Both attributed the failure of the Bopitikelo project to Mafisa's choice of working with the exogenous RDC and the MSC. Indeed, not one of my many respondents<sup>125</sup> expressed a wholly positive opinion about the centre, and the majority blamed its failure on the RDC.

The situation illustrates how local governance, with the political tensions inherent in it, is unavoidably intermeshed with the implementation of development initiatives. The Madikwe Initiative could not but become involved in local politics because it was compelled to liaise with one structure or another. As implementers of what was essentially a government initiative, Mafisa consultants stated repeatedly that they were obliged to work with whichever committee was apparently most closely aligned to what they understood to be the nationally recognised democratic structures of local government, in this case, the RDC with its MSC. But in Molatedi it was difficult to do so without alienating other committees and local governance structures. Furthermore, as we have seen, it is questionable how democratic those recognised structures actually were.

Returning to the semi-constructed, much contested Bopitikelo Centre, it was fortuitous that, the main conflict having been expressed in terms of the location chosen for it, the river then flooded. This demonstrated the apparent ineptness of those whose voices had been predominant in the decision. It thereby fuelled the endogenous argument that the RDC, considered locally to be external to Molatedi's

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<sup>125</sup> Either in the questionnaire survey or other interviews and conversations. They included members of the MSC itself.

affairs, could not know the village's situation and would therefore necessarily have 'advised Mafisa badly', despite the fact that one of the district councillors was from, and resided in, Molatedi. The Bopitikelo Centre thus became a locus for the expression of local conflict – with its internal and external political oars. It is indeed ironic that the building, intended to be a community centre, had come to be seen by many village residents as a product of insensitive, if not foolish, outside intervention that had bypassed community interests in ways similar to those described by Carter (1985, 1986) regarding the Steinkopf and Epeleleg Community Centres in Namaqualand and Jabavu, Soweto respectively, albeit during the apartheid era.

Soon after I left the Madikwe area, an article on the Bopitikelo Centre appeared in a built environment/landscape magazine. The article quotes the architect as saying that "Throughout the building programme we have worked through a process of consultation between the tribal authorities and the newly elected democratic structures of local government" (Urban Green File, March/April 2001:41). In no place in the article is that 'process of consultation' problematised. Nor is there any consideration of the limits of authority of any of the consulted structures, or that the fact that villagers were not represented by, or united under, any single structure might have been in any way problematic. On the contrary the article states: "Bopitikelo is the Tswana name for 'the place of wallowing'<sup>126</sup> ... The site has an understated tranquillity and the architecture is conceived to create a sense of place in sympathy with this" (Urban Green File, March/April 2001:39).<sup>127</sup>

In interview after interview respondents I spoke with in the village made it clear that the site was a place of overpowering conflict rather than understated tranquillity. It was intriguing that the governance conflicts, which had so severely compromised the success of the building's intended function, had not been recognised, nor seen as important enough to mention in the architecture magazine. According to Molatedi's Chief Matlapeng:

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<sup>126</sup> An unfortunate irony, given the centre's contested location 'wallowing' on the Marico floodplain. According to my field assistant in Molatedi, Bopitikelo refers to the place where herders would take cattle to be watered and where they would afterwards lie and rest.

<sup>127</sup> Again the similarities with the Steinkopf, Namaqualand project that Carter (1985) describes are resonant: there too the building design won architectural acclaim whilst the building itself was socially inappropriate.

With the Bopitikelo Centre, there is no resolution with the community. It is a white elephant. The people were not consulted. It is a political strategy of the RDC. The role of the RDC is to bring services to the people. But the community must initiate the development projects and then pass them to the councillor who can take them to her superiors. And, if the RDC can assist, the councillor must bring that information back to the community. But in Molatedi they are not taking project initiatives via the community. They are coming with projects and imposing them on the community and this is causing a lot of tension. The District Council seems to be putting political interest at the forefront of projects. They always say the government is ANC and says this and this. We are less interested in who is leading the country. We are not politicians and do not want to be. If you differ with them, they tell you that you are still locked in the old mentality of the previous government. So the people feel threatened by these things if they are a UCDP<sup>128</sup> member or National Party or what ever is the case. They must not politicise things (Chief Matlapeng, Molatedi, 5 July 2000).

It is significant how in line Chief Matlapeng's view is with that of Chief Suping which I presented in the previous chapter. Phrases such as 'the people were not consulted'; 'the community must initiate the development projects'; 'they are not taking project initiatives via the community'; 'They are coming with projects and imposing them on the community' indicate that Chief Matlapeng, too, upheld (rhetorically, at least) values of participatory democracy. He viewed himself as the protector of his 'subjects' interests. His words clearly demonstrate that as far as he was concerned he had a decisive role to play in safeguarding the villagers' welfare against external interference by outsiders who come and impose their ideas, ideas that often seem to be motivated by what are seen as political ends that are not clear, and ideas that bring interventions that are not in villagers' interests. It is pertinent, too, that the RDC's choice of site for the Bopitikelo Centre was accepted over the chief's, which goes some way to justifying Chief Suping's statement that "the chief of Molatedi... [has] been made redundant" (29 August, 2000),<sup>129</sup> but also must contribute to the chief's intensely negative opinions about the Centre.

Chief Matlapeng blamed the whole situation on what he described as politics, expressing the conflict as being impelled by national and regional government concerns versus the interests of village residents. In the process, Mafisa came to be seen by those in the chief's camp as linked to national and regional government and therefore, at least from Chief Matlapeng's perspective, as somehow not working in the best interests of village people. The chief interpreted outside interventions as

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<sup>128</sup> United Christian Democratic Party – the party now led by Lucas Mangope, previously president of the 'independent' Bophuthatswana.

<sup>129</sup> See pages 105 - 106 for the longer interview excerpt.

having what he suggested were political motives and biases that were ill-advised and inappropriate to local needs. He stated categorically that development should not be political. Yet it is evident from his views, such as those quoted above, that the bitterness of apartheid politics still strongly flavoured his reasoning. Phrases such as 'if you differ from them, they tell you that you are still locked in the old mentality of the previous government', clearly show the pervasive legacy of apartheid: the suspicion and distrust that make 'people feel threatened'. Such connotations translated into a tendency, both on the part of Mafisa and the chief, to label complex local governance issues as one-dimensionally political and to treat those political interruptions to local development processes as a product of central government concerns that were neither locally made nor locally held and therefore, not locally resolvable.

It is striking how closely Chief Matlapeng also seems to concur with the Madikwe Initiative's consultants' antagonism towards what they viewed as political interference in local-level development concerns. Both portrayed as 'politics' anything that they saw as disrupting their own particular view of what was needed for initiative implementation and local administrative consensus. While in certain respects each defined politics differently, both were referring to national-level party politics. Of particular significance here is that local political leaders (in this case, Chief Matlapeng) had also been drawn into what is essentially Ferguson's (1990) anti-politics machine.<sup>130</sup>

Yet, it was precisely through the conflicts they engendered or, rather, accentuated that the Madikwe Initiative development process came to be an arena of local political contestation, one that was then phrased in terms of national political antagonisms. A result, as the case of the Bopitikelo centre indicates, was that many residents became hostile to the whole Mafisa-initiated development process. Surely, then, the intervention agency's attitude, quoted at the end of chapter four, that 'we cannot get involved in local politics' was short-sighted and inappropriate – largely because such involvement was unavoidable, because the agency's very presence was construed locally as political and because its interventions produced local political

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<sup>130</sup> See chapter three, pages 73-74 and chapter four page 123.

reverberations. Moreover, the result of that local political involvement by the agency was the alienation of a portion of Molatedi village's residents; and that in turn undermined the original democratic principles of the agency's development effort, revealing yet another paradox.

The situation described above ultimately jeopardised the Bopitikelo project as well as the Madikwe Initiative's credibility in Molatedi. It also resulted in increasingly negative local views about the perceived success of other Madikwe Initiative projects. For Madikwe Initiative-linked consultants working on the Bopitikelo Centre, the situation was frustrating. Understandably, they would have liked to have seen a single committee representing the villagers' interests – such as it had seemed the Makuleke CPA was that they had worked with in the Kruger National Park.<sup>131</sup> My survey for the NWP&TB revealed that respondents in Molatedi and Supingstad were as concerned about representation and communication as were the Madikwe Initiative consultants.<sup>132</sup> Yet neither side in either village could offer a way out of the impasse that both recognised as blocking the kind of progress all would have liked to have seen achieved.

The case of the Bopitikelo Centre thus raises important issues centring around politics; village autonomy; participatory democracy; representation; communication; and, inevitably, power and control. It shows clearly that governance and development are inseparable spheres shaped and textured by politics, spheres in which development consultants could not and cannot avoid becoming involved. Rather than being non-political, the Madikwe Initiative, by working with the RDC, had a definite impact on the operation of state power in the village. Its very presence thus further aggravated internal village discordance – discordance that the Initiative was unable to ameliorate or accommodate and which ultimately jeopardised its success.

Importantly, as the following section shows, in Lekkophung there was negligible discordance: a single committee, the RDP forum, had succeeded in dominating the

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<sup>131</sup> I presented the case of the Makuleke in chapter four – see pages 85-89.

<sup>132</sup> Lekkophung's residents were successfully represented by their RDP forum. At the time of my fieldwork it was considered, by over ninety percent of village respondents in the questionnaire survey, to be the single committee effectively representing village residents as well as coordinating village development initiatives.

village's politics. Consequently, Madikwe Initiative interventions had proceeded comparatively successfully.

### **Lekgophung's RDP Forum: Democracy, Strategy or Apathy?**

Lekgophung's RDP forum, rather than being subsumed into the Tribal Authority, was neither gender nor generation biased, and comprised a wide range of people: six women and nine men, ranging in age from twenty-two to seventy-two. Although the chairperson was an older (business)man, there were also several extremely vocal, highly politicised women, who engaged with the national narratives of a 'new' South Africa which sought to empower those previously disadvantaged by apartheid. These women still lived in a village governed by a patriarchal chief and Tribal Authority system. Yet none seemed antagonistic toward the chief. For example, according to one woman whom I quoted earlier: "Our chief, although he is not as educated as Chief Suping, we will stand behind him. We are Balete and we are happy he is our chief. We don't care whatever the case may happen: he is our Chief" (young woman, Lekgophung RDP forum member, 26 August 2000). While Tribal Authority/district council conflicts were, for various reasons, rife in Molatedi, in Lekgophung the more directly government-linked structures functioned alongside and collaboratively with the Tribal Authority. The Central District Council (CDC), into the jurisdiction of which Lekgophung fell, was only ever mentioned in passing – indeed, most respondents did not know who the responsible councillor was. Unlike the RDC in Molatedi, with its highly visible (albeit inaccessible) resident councillor, it seemed that for Lekgophung the CDC was a vague, nebulous, unthreatening shadow in the background, one which was only ever mentioned, and then only by the few in the know, because it might one day run development initiatives when the Madikwe Initiative pulled out of the area.

According to several members interviewed, the Lekgophung RDP forum had, from the very beginning, sought to transcend gender, generational and political party differences, thereby to ensure that the majority of villagers were effectively represented. The goal of the forum had been explicitly understood to be to act as a uniting force able to push through development initiatives:

When we started building up the RDP [forum], the condition was to put every organisation in so that we don't have politics included. ANC, UCDP, Inkatha - whatever the [party] politics. We've got churches, youth organisation representative societies, sports, the works. We were trying to do away with [party] politics.... We've got a very good relationship with Mafisa, and very heavy contact. We pushed it so that we linked again with the CDC [Central District Council] so we are all one unit, whatever we do. Because, as much as we know, Mafisa will soon be leaving. When their contract is over, the CDC will be taking the responsibility (older man, Lekgophung RDP forum member, 26 August 2000).

What is immediately striking in the above is the way in which politics (I have myself each time inserted the word 'party') is conceptualised, yet again, as something to be avoided. Equally striking is the belief that the only way to transcend such political differences was to ensure that all factions were included and represented. It was a particularly effective strategy in that it forestalled the establishment of other, conflicting committees (at least at the time of my fieldwork), thereby avoiding the unproductive situation of having a proliferation of competing structures, such as in Molatedi. But, perhaps more importantly, Chief Tsiepe and his Tribal Authority in Lekgophung appeared to confine their duties to a more administrative role than did those same institutions in Supingstad and Molatedi. As a result, conflict between different forms of governance was not as problematic as in the other two villages.

Development interventionists, particularly given the reaction of the general manager of the NWP&TB to Chief Suping,<sup>133</sup> could interpret this as meaning that the village or, rather, Chief Tsiepe, was ostensibly more progressive than a man like Chief Suping, who, through his determination to retain control of his traditional role as leader, one that, in his case, was seen by many as autocratic leadership, obstructed Mafisa's development initiatives.

But there was an alternative view, one which I heard voiced by various respondents. It was that Chief Tsiepe was an older man who did not enjoy the best health. He was not well educated in a formal sense and could not speak English. He lacked the skills (and perhaps the youthful energy – and health) single handedly to control development in the village or to engage in politics at the wider regional or national levels. Indeed, when I first arrived in Lekgophung, I went to meet Chief Tsiepe in order to ask his permission to conduct fieldwork in the village. Although he

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<sup>133</sup> See chapter four, page 123.

welcomed me to the village, he did not express much interest in what I intended to do. Instead, he immediately referred me to the RDP chairperson.

In Lekgophung, the RDP forum was apparently better equipped to deal with development initiatives than was Chief Tsiepe, and was generally seen as working in the village's (and Chief Tsiepe's) best interests. This lack of conflict meant that Madikwe Initiative project implementation had been relatively unproblematic, with the consequence that respondents there focussed less on issues of power and control, of interpreting development interventions as threatening their autonomy, than did respondents in Molatedi. Lekgophung residents had succeeded, early on, in creating a representative structure, and the ensuing relative success of development interventions in the village<sup>134</sup> indicates why such a structure is a central requirement within people-based development discourse. However, given the less accommodating situations I have described in Supingstad and Molatedi, it remains an extremely challenging requirement – one with which development agencies seem all too often to struggle to come to terms.

Lekgophung's relative success with development projects leads one to ask how the village's residents had managed to succeed where the others had failed. One major reason was that Chief Tsiepe was, for various reasons, a weak leader. Another reason was that many residents of Lekgophung, such as the RDP members mentioned above, embraced the new hegemonic ideology of liberal democracy propounded by the Madikwe Initiative, particularly as Lekgophung had previously been the least developed village in terms of infrastructure and therefore had most potentially to gain. A further factor was that Mafisa's agents targeted them more thoroughly and sensitively precisely because their chief was apathetic and posed no direct threat to the development agents, and because their relative lack of infrastructure made them seem to be the poorest. Furthermore, the lack of 'political' conflict and tension over governance issues enabled the Madikwe Initiative to liaise with the Lekgophung RDP forum without villagers feeling endogenous integrity or autonomy was being threatened.

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<sup>134</sup> Madikwe Initiative project and their varying degrees of success are the focus of chapter seven.

## Representation, Communication and Enduring Conflicts

But, as I have shown, the lack of legislated clarity over the respective roles of traditional authorities and district councils, while unproblematic in Lekgophung, was highly problematic in Molatedi – and, as chapter four illustrated, also in Supingstad, although in very different ways. Tensions between the different governance structures in Molatedi were the product of a highly complex web of clashes and inconsistencies, in part a result of central government seeking to impose alternative, supposedly representative organs of governance on a rural village. That the representivity of those organs was also highly questionable, coupled with the fact that they were failing to deliver, heightened local negative perceptions about them. In the case of Molatedi, it is not difficult to see how, as Ntsebeza (2002) argues, chiefly support can come to be defined in the negative as a default position: that people may not so much be supporting the chief, as *not* supporting newer nationally legislated local governance structures.

One respondent suggested that the only solution to the conflict between the Molatedi Service Committee and the Tribal Authority, with its (former) CDO linkages, would be to establish an entirely new committee: “The chief, he thinks we should just take back the old CDO and add the MSC or whatever the case may be. But I say no way. There will be arguments and you will get nowhere” (older man, ward leader, 6 May 2000). Given that tensions clearly stemmed from the presence of too many overlapping committees and structures, none of which had succeeded in being representative, it seems unlikely that the establishment of yet another committee would suddenly have solved issues of representation in Molatedi.

The unresolved (and perhaps, within the framework of the kinds of local governance structures I have described, irresolvable) issues of representation and communication were put forward by 74% of village respondents<sup>135</sup> in Supingstad and 68% in Molatedi as the most detrimental factors hindering the possibility of villagers maximising – or even realising any – benefits from the Madikwe Game Reserve’s

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<sup>135</sup> In my survey.

presence on the borders of their villages.<sup>136</sup> For example, according to one young man from Supingstad:

I realise that our village hasn't got a relevant representative that can attend meetings with the Reserve [management] so that information can be heard. So we must not blame the Reserve alone. What we must know is who represents the Reserve to the village and then we can choose someone who will represent our village at the Reserve. Otherwise this [development process] cannot be a success (interview, 28 August, 2000).

The NWP&TB did in fact have a Community Liaison Officer, just as Mafisa employed a Field Coordinator, both of whom were supposed to reside and work in the Reserve. Yet, during my fieldwork I observed that both officers spent a significant amount of time away from the Madikwe area. To many village respondents these officers were as frustratingly absent or elusive as effective village representative committees were to consultants.<sup>137</sup> Yet, as the respondent quoted above said, without effective representation and communication, development 'cannot be a success'.

Once again it is difficult to avoid concluding that for development interventions to proceed smoothly their agents require a village-driven, representative organisational structure (such as Lekgophung's RDP forum) with which to work. But, as the situation in Molatedi illustrates, development agents may find, instead, several conflicting and overlapping committees and structures operating in a given locality, their very presence often a product of other development interventions. Furthermore, such tensions can become focused in the eye of the development encounter with its attendant resources. Ultimately, the success of the Madikwe Initiative's own interventions was jeopardised by its inability to accommodate governance conflicts, as case of the Bopitikelo Centre illustrated. By working with the RDC and its associated MSC,<sup>138</sup> Mafisa alienated those villagers who supported the chief, his Tribal Authority, the 'former' RDP forum and the local CDO, and thereby undermined the Initiative's original democratic principles. An ideological reliance on 'democracy' within people-based development discourse is thus deeply problematic,

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<sup>136</sup> As I have said, over 90% of respondents in Lekgophung said the RDP forum effectively represented the village. It was no doubt because of this that representation and communication were not put forward as problematic issues to any significant extent by respondents in that village.

<sup>137</sup> For more details about the CLO and Field Coordinator see the section *Absent Management and the Question of Autonomy* in chapter seven.

<sup>138</sup> Chosen ostensibly because according to statutory law they were the most democratic and representative local structures.

especially when that is read to mean cooperation only with nationally constituted formal structures on the grounds that they alone represent what is democratic.

A related irony is that many respondents themselves phrased their resentment about Mafisa's decision to work with the RDC in terms of appeals to and about democracy and autonomy. They claimed that the MSC had not been elected by popular vote (and was therefore neither democratic nor representative) and that the RDC was an exogenous committee which did not know the village and did not have villagers' interests at heart, a factor exacerbated by the fact that Rachel Matlapeng was an appointed member of the RDC, not a constituency representative. In this way, the interface between the Madikwe Initiative and its Mafisa and NWP&TB agents on one hand and many Molatedi residents on the other became an arena of local political contestation in which the Madikwe Initiative was revealed as not only undermining village autonomy, but also failing to implement its interventions along so-called democratic channels. It was not able to embrace or accommodate the heterogeneous diversity of Molatedi, and the result, yet again, was alienation and exclusion.

In the following chapter I show that it was not only the Madikwe developmental approach that caused such alienation and exclusion (as this and the previous chapter have illustrated), but it was also the very conceptualisation and management of the Reserve.

## Chapter Six

### **'The Far Side of the Country': Perceptions, Paradoxes and Miscommunications regarding the role of Madikwe Game Reserve.**

This thesis's opening epigram quotes the words of one of the few village residents who, at the time of my fieldwork, had secured permanent employment within the Reserve: "Madikwe Game Reserve is really most necessary: it helps to take the squash out of the past twenty years" (interview with a Jaci's Camp security guard from Lekgophung, 19 July 2000). Undoubtedly, Madikwe was a major, and highly visible, source of economic opportunity in this remote, rural area of South Africa. However, during my fieldwork I found that with fewer than ninety residents<sup>139</sup> from the three villages that were the focus of the Madikwe Initiative directly employed in the Reserve, and the Community Trust Fund<sup>140</sup> not yet functioning, most villagers had not experienced any tangible economic benefits coming from the Reserve. The situation had led another village resident, also a lodge employee, to reflect sadly: "a community like this, they are very much sidelined. They are on the far side of the country..." (interview, Maintenance Worker from Molatedi, Jaci's Camp, 21 August 2000). Yet, as this chapter will show, to the majority of my respondents in the villages the Reserve represented more than the possibility of economic development and immediate employment opportunities. It stood for the conservation of South Africa's natural heritage, a heritage with which many villagers wished to identify and wanted to experience first hand.

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<sup>139</sup>This figure includes employees who do not originally come from the area, but who had secured employment in the Reserve and were renting accommodation in one of the three villages. Excluded in the figure are people who come from other villages, such as Obakeng on the far side of Molatedi, which are also in close proximity to the Reserve and should therefore be considered 'local', but are excluded as they are not part of the 'local community' (Molatedi, Supingstad and Lekgophung) as defined by the Madikwe Initiative.

<sup>140</sup> Once the Reserve had covered its start up and operational costs and had started making a profit the original idea was that the NWP&TB would establish a Community Trust Fund into which forty percent of the Reserve's profit would go for community development projects. To this day no such fund has been established (interview, resource economist, June 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how the very conceptualisation and structure of the Reserve justified and perpetuated the exclusion of villagers from sharing in the natural heritage created through its conservation activities, rather than enabling that to occur. The chapter builds on chapters four and five which established that a high proportion of local residents came to be left out of the developmental drive of the Madikwe project because NWP&TB and Madikwe Initiative agents adhered to a developmental approach that was too inflexible to adapt to local idiosyncrasies. And it shows that that same inflexibility and lack of ability to understand local people's wishes and perceptions underlay the exclusion of local villagers from opportunities to share in the natural heritage that the Reserve represented.

A primary concern of the chapter is to discuss differing notions of participation and involvement between the components of the Madikwe project's so-called three way partnership.<sup>141</sup> I show that there was no unanimous understanding of the role the Reserve should play, and thus there were also considerably different perceptions as to its success. The resulting conflicts of view raise important questions, which this chapter will address, about how (and in whose view) success should be measured. Ultimately the residents of Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi remained, in the words of the villager cited above, "very much sidelined" and "on the far side of the country". Yet, as the preceding chapters have described, according to the NWP&TB and the Madikwe Initiative, the fundamental role of the Reserve was to render 'the far side of the country' a central focal point for economic development.

### **Madikwe: A Modernising Force *and* an Escape from Modernity?**

Within the Madikwe project's economic development objective there is an intriguing paradox: the main stated purpose of Madikwe is to stimulate a depressed rural economy, to develop (read: modernise) a cohort of previously marginalised villages and their residents to the point where they can function productively in a national (and global) market economy. The proposed and planned method of generating

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<sup>141</sup> As I have explained in the previous chapters, according to NWP&TB documents (see, for example, Davies, 1997) the Madikwe project was structured around a three-way partnership between the NWP&TB, the private sector and what was imagined was the local community – a misguided, highly problematic categorisation of the three villages that I addressed in chapter three.

revenue for that development process is ecotourism, which is dependent on wildlife conservation for the benefit of affluent tourists. As the managing agency, the NWP&TB's first aim, therefore, was (and is) to attract such tourists. And the NWP&TB worked on an assumption that tourists are attracted because Madikwe offers an escape from modernity, from the unrelenting pace and 'homogenising' tendencies of urban life. The Reserve, like other conservation areas, is thus marketed as an area of wilderness, an idyllic rural arcadia, a place to retreat from the banality of urban grind. One NWP&TB brochure reads:

The great, sun-drenched plains of Africa, pristine bushveld still populated by its original wildlife... This sounds like an ecotourist's fantasy – but it is in fact what the North West Province offers to vacationers, busy people in search of weekend relaxation.... An overnight stay remote from city lights and noises, with the sounds and wild calls of the African bush as backdrop, is an unforgettable wildlife experience.... The stinging glare of the windscreen, the rough, dusty trail, the dense, harsh bush, the clear, cobalt sky, the still, moonlit night, the crackle of the log fire, the crispness of the dawn, the dew on the spider web, the teem of crickets...if these are images which when conjured inspire you and entice you, then the North West is for you (NWP&TB: 1999).<sup>142</sup>

In effect, as far as advertising and tourist expectations go, Madikwe is a sanctuary *from* modernity. It stands for South Africa as it ostensibly used to be: a wild, indigenous, unspoilt landscape, where visitors can be at one with nature, where danger is a clean danger, expected from encounters with proud, fierce lions or majestically angry elephants, rather than the dirty dangers of urban life, social sicknesses such as rape, shootings and hijackings.<sup>143</sup> Madikwe is thus represented as a solid, tangible manifestation of a nostalgic longing for the (mythical) purity of a bygone rural past.

Yet, not much longer than ten years ago the land that today comprises Madikwe was what ecologists called an unhealthy landscape of degraded, over-grazed farmland.<sup>144</sup> Now, it is a carefully constructed, conserved 'wilderness' area. It is a representation of a chosen yet ostensibly timeless era, an era that pre-dates agriculture. It is a

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<sup>142</sup> NWP&TB has been prolific in its production of such passages. I feel it necessary only to quote the one, to which I will refer back later in the chapter, in order for the reader to understand the gist of the NWP&TB's depiction of Madikwe.

<sup>143</sup> I use terms in this paragraph, such as 'clean' and 'dirty' dangers and 'social sicknesses', in an ironic, generalised sense. I expect the reader to realise that I am aware that such terms are highly contested and problematic. They do not reflect my views on social issues, but neither is it within the scope of this thesis to enter into such an analysis.

<sup>144</sup> See chapter two, page 55 - 56.

landscape void of people, yet simultaneously a world encapsulated within electrified fences and patrolled by armed guards; an area where one roams from the safety of a modern game-viewing vehicle driven by a game ranger, and returns at night to the state-of-the-art comforts of a luxurious lodge. It is, essentially, a powerful contemporary representation of an imagined past.

## The Hidden Power of Landscape Representation

Before delving into the mechanisms that have produced Madikwe's landscape it is constructive to cast an eye over wider academic landscape scholarship, in particular post-structuralist approaches to landscape analysis (see, for example, Cosgrove, 1984; Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988; Baudrillard, 1987; Althusser, 1970; Barnes and Duncan, 1992; McGreevy, 1992; Smith, 1993). From a post-structuralist perspective a logical hypothesis to put forward is that a landscape such as Madikwe's is deceptive precisely because it seems to be no more than the sum of its visible parts: a wild, unspoilt piece of South Africa as it ostensibly always was. It appears to be natural and innocent (Duncan and Duncan, 1992), but it is what Umberto Eco (1983) might call a hyperreal landscape, a term that O Tuathail (1992), drawing on Baudrillard (1983, 1987) defines as "a condition where reality has lost its referent, and models, simulations or scripts of the real become more real than the real itself" (1992:157).

As I will show, Madikwe is undoubtedly a cultural construction with profound socio-cultural, political and ideological influences and underpinnings that function (albeit unintentionally) to exclude local residents. It is a landscape shaped, approached and understood by and through 'scripts'.<sup>145</sup> Madikwe has been scripted as wild, natural and pure – with its 'great, sun-drenched plains' and 'dense, harsh bush'.<sup>146</sup> The

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<sup>145</sup> O Tuathail defines scripts as "a set of representations, a collection of descriptions, scenarios and attributes which are deemed relevant and appropriate to defining a place..." (1992:156). In the context of US foreign policy towards apartheid South Africa (the hegemonic operation of power in the justification of sanctions), O Tuathail writes: "In helping to constitute a 'reality' scripts structure ways of seeing and admit only certain political possibilities as ways of responding to that 'reality'. They are propagandistic not because they manipulate some supposedly non-discursive real but because they constitute it and attempt to tie it into a persuasive story designed to explain the messy complexity of events in a simple fashion" (1992: 157-158). Apartheid South Africa, O Tuathail argues, was simplistically scripted as a 'morally repugnant place', 'the tragic continent and bleeding country'. In such a way, its socio-cultural, political, economic and historical complexities were 'disciplined' or swept away and US foreign policy was able to adopt an uncomplicated position of 'moral clarity' and 'unambiguous non-involvement' (1992:156).

<sup>146</sup> From the NWP&TB brochure quoted on page 157.

‘messy complexity of events’ that formed and shaped it has been tidied away, obscured by powerful but simplistic representations.

The metaphor of landscape as text is a useful mechanism for establishing an epistemological approach to deconstruct what often appear to be unquestioned, natural readings of landscapes.<sup>147</sup> Such an approach lends itself to unravelling and scrutinising the seemingly stable ideologies that inform landscapes. The inevitable power structures that lie behind landscape representations are thus revealed – the ‘dynamics of power’ shaping how we view the world (Barnes and Duncan, 1992). While it is important to bear in mind Bunn’s warning that it is all too easy to “settle into a narrow reading of landscapes as forms of ideological production and subjection” (1992:3), such deconstructions can nonetheless generate insights about cultural meanings and values.

Madikwe, as any deliberately contrived space, is a representation. To quote Daniels and Cosgrove:

[Landscapes] may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces – in paint, on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water, and vegetation on the ground. A landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem (1988:1).

The extreme example of the eighteenth century British landscape gardener, Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown is at the germinal point of landscape creation. His work, and how it is received and interpreted still today, informs my hypothesis of Madikwe as a hyperreal landscape. I therefore ask the reader to forgive a brief excursion into the example of rural England.

## **An Excursion to Rural England**

‘Capability’ Brown’s landscapes were obvious constructions, informed by prevailing notions of how the countryside should appear. Whole parklands were shaped by his art. Such obviously contrived landscapes, Bunn argues, were becoming increasingly

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<sup>147</sup> As Barnes and Duncan write: “... ‘text’ is an appropriate trope to use in analysing landscapes because it conveys the inherent instability of meaning, fragmentation or absence of integrity, lack of authorial control, polyvocality and irresolvable social contradictions that often characterize them” (1992:7) Similarly, according to Pugh, “How a landscape is ‘read’ illustrates the primary role that discourses of landscape play in the field of cultural contestation” (1990:2).

unpopular by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Notions of the picturesque were dominant and contrived landscapes often dismissed as the “despised ‘unnatural’ clumps and belts that made up the semiotic of a Capability Brown estate improvement” (Bunn, 1992:5). Yet they nevertheless retained a certain power to reconfirm false imaginings of what constitutes the countryside. They were and are solid and tangible manifestations of unrealistic representations.

Such representations have been informed by centuries of artists, writers and poets who have also ignored the harsh realities, the strife of agricultural life, and contributed to the myth of rural England.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, Pugh (1990) argues that: “The verbal interpolates the visual, ... [that] the discourse of ‘landscape’ and the ‘rural’ was first negotiated through verbal modes of representation” (1990:2-3).<sup>149</sup> How we experience particular landscapes cannot be divorced from, indeed is determined by, “descriptive language which modifies, even constitutes ways of seeing landscape” (ibid). Hence, on the basis of idealised representations, rural England is imagined as an idyllic arcadia, a series of bucolic landscapes where nature and agriculture coexist unproblematically and harmoniously.<sup>150</sup> Dryden wrote: “How blessed is he, who leads a country life, Unvex’d with anxious cares, and void of strife!”<sup>151</sup> while in Gray’s Elegy “Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife.... Drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds”. Capability Brown carried the penned images of poetry, paintings and romantic novels through to landscape gardening where he turned on-the-ground landscapes into concrete reproductions of graphic and poetic representations – the final irony being that it is landscapes such as those created by Brown that are highly valued by England’s National Trust, which, as Short says “not only evokes the past but also creates it” (1991:81).

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<sup>148</sup> Wordsworth, Browning, Scott, Turner and Constable to name but a few. See critiques such as *Reading Constable* (Birmingham, 1990) and *Aesthetic and Commodity: an Examination of the Function of the Verbal in Turner’s Artistic Practice* (Pointon, 1990) for detailed deconstructions of landscape art that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>149</sup> He uses literature, agricultural writing and ‘natural history’ as examples of verbal modes of representation.

<sup>150</sup> Somewhat tongue in cheek, I quote Oscar Wilde, who wrote: “...people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the mysterious loveliness of such effects. There may have been fogs for centuries in London. I dare say there were. But no one saw them.... They did not exist until art had invented them” (1954 (1987):79-80), and on viewing a particular sunset: “It was simply a very second-rate Turner, a Turner of a bad period, with all the painter’s worst faults exaggerated and over-emphasised” (ibid).

<sup>151</sup> In *To John Driden of Chesterton*.

Yet these representations and sentiments are dangerous in that they seem relatively harmless, easy to underestimate and dismiss with a tolerant 'it is only artistic licence' argument. However, it is those same false representations which have helped 'inform' public opinion and given rise to the huge controversies and conflicts over modern farming practices that rage in rural England today.<sup>152</sup> To quote Short again: "Behind the criticism [of modern agriculture] lies a disappointment with the failure of agriculture to meet the standards of the pastoral myth" (1991:39). It has therefore become imperative to the future of agriculture in England that the (socio-cultural and political) influence of such representations (particularly on popular opinion) is understood, although understanding will not necessarily diminish that influence. The dilemma lies in the power that inheres in misleading representations. It is a dilemma that mirrors almost exactly the potentially highly problematic condition in Southern Africa where powerful representations of 'the bush' can serve (and unquestionably have done in the past, as I will demonstrate) to encourage and justify the growing numbers of public and private game parks and nature reserves which have the propensity to further marginalise already underdeveloped, economically depressed rural areas such as the villages of Molatedi, Lekgophung and Supingstad.

### **The Myth of Madikwe**

For Madikwe is a crystallised myth, a myth, like that of the English rural arcadia, which is informed and perpetuated by centuries of travel accounts, art and literature, the media and public opinion. Furthermore, Madikwe's location, being as it is in a remote rural corner of South Africa's North West Province, helps to strengthen its appeal, an appeal which relies, in part at least, on the faithful concretisation of the myth. For example, when I have asked friends and colleagues in Cape Town and Johannesburg for their perceptions of the North West Province, I have received replies such as "I don't know anything at all about it. There is never much news from

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<sup>152</sup> The worst of the conflict is focussed on the Common Agriculture Policy and agribusiness: the industrialisation of agriculture, the loss of small fields and hedgerows and so on. But Williams makes an important point: "When I see the amount of work on urban parks and gardens publicly paid for as a matter of course, I wonder at the common urban blindness to all this work that actually produces and preserves much of the 'nature' that visitors come to see. If it were not for the farmers...with the hill-sheep subsidy and guaranteed prices, there would have to be wardens if much accessible country were to be left" (1990:17).

there” or “I have always thought of it as a wilderness place with no people” or “It is the *Never Never Land* of South Africa, the place where everything goes wobbly”.

In the South African popular imagination, too, the North West is the back of beyond, unpopulated and empty, the perfect location to attract urban escapists seeking an ‘at one with nature’ experience. An example of the strength of such national imaginings is the *Mail & Guardian’s* *Krisjan Lemmer* column which depicts the North West as the quintessential ‘nowhere’ of South Africa. The column features *Oom* (Uncle) *Krisjan Lemmer* sitting in his comfortable chair in the *Dorsbult* (Thirst Hill) Bar, drawing thoughtfully on his pipe and regaling readers with his satirical political views – wry humour possible only because *Oom Krisjan* is constructed as a modern day Oom Schalk Lourens.<sup>153</sup> He is speaking from beyond the peripheries, and appealing to a collective national past (one that is literary rather than political, and therefore tolerated with an amused smile) that can drift, unanchored, preserved and protected in the timeless, mythical Herman Charles Bosman country which is the North West, the ‘far side of the country’.

Duncan and Duncan have said that, “By feigning naturalness or innocence, myths depoliticize the world” (1992:22). Madikwe is one such myth, albeit one created in response to specific demands (conservation, rural development, ecotourism) in a specific socio-political environment (the end of apartheid) and historical context (pre-colonial to post apartheid). As I have been arguing throughout this thesis, it is also a highly charged political project. Yet it is presented as an unproblematic natural space, a stable and unquestioned real rather than constructed landscape. As the NWP&TB brochure (cited on 157) asserts: it is a “pristine bushveld still populated by its original wildlife...” and thus, with just eight words, strips it of centuries of history, politics and context.<sup>154</sup> In this sense, Madikwe’s is an empty, depoliticised landscape. But, as de Certeau has said, a landscape, being visible, “has the effect of making invisible the operations that made it possible” (1984:97). Its very existence as a kind of myth inscribed on the earth’s surface enables Madikwe to float in blissful calm above the

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<sup>153</sup> A character created by Herman Charles Bosman (1905-1951), drawn from his one year’s experience of living in what was then the Marico District, an area not far from where Madikwe is located.

<sup>154</sup> See chapter two for an overview of the complex socio-cultural, political and historical processes that have shaped the area that is today Madikwe.

everyday political economy of its context and its creation, all the while appearing to address those very contested conditions.

In order to ground Madikwe in its socio-political context it is useful to trace the operations that made the establishment of the Reserve possible and desirable. Therefore below I provide an overview describing how approaches to conservation have changed, particularly between the colonial and post apartheid periods. The overview is intended to contextualise the rhetoric of the NWP&TB in the political environment that engendered it.<sup>155</sup> But first, the following section brings to the foreground the divergent, opposing perceptions and expectations among the diverse partners in the Madikwe project.

### **Conservation: A Hallowed Ideology**

A particularly prominent fieldwork finding was the extent to which villagers embraced the ideology of conservation: over ninety-five percent of survey respondents stressed that, on principle, it is essential to protect wildlife and that nature conservation is of paramount importance. Statements such as the following were common:

- Nature needs protection from people who kill it unnecessarily.
- There are many people who do not know about wildlife and nature things, so if we do not protect it, our children can never hear of these things.
- Wildlife beautifies nature; without it, we have nothing.
- It is very important to protect those animals so if we ever have a chance of going to the Reserve they will be plenty in number for us to see.
- We need wildlife for our hearts and our souls.

What became evident, as fieldwork progressed, was that many villagers were interested in the concrete role Madikwe was playing in conserving South Africa's natural heritage for present and future generations. They were drawn to the ideology of conservation. Few (less than five percent) were critical of Madikwe's conservation operations and, of those, most comments were about loss of local autonomy rather than censuring of actual practices. For example: "They [the Madikwe Initiative

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<sup>155</sup> See chapter two for more background and context.

agents] claim that bush clearing is empowerment, but to me it is not. We have been doing this all our lives. We grew up clearing the bush and we were not even taught it - we just copied our fathers” (interview, Lekgophung resident, 26 August 2000).

I found it even more striking that there was a greater prevalence of comments heralding the importance of conservation than those expressing economic concerns – although given that villagers had been living in a state of so-called underdevelopment more or less since the villages were first established (see chapter two), and economic benefits coming from the Reserve had already proved to be minimal at most, perhaps this was not so surprising. Indeed, the majority of respondents (approximately eighty percent in my questionnaire survey) claimed they had never even heard of Mafisa or the Madikwe Initiative.<sup>156</sup> Many interviewees said they were therefore not in a position to comment on projects and development initiatives. However, every respondent, without exception, had an opinion about the actual Reserve, and nearly ninety percent of questionnaire respondents said that wildlife conservation was the best land-use option for the farms comprising Madikwe.

These respondents’ interest in the Reserve were not dissimilar to those of tourists: they had the same desire to see wild animals and to experience the kind of supposed spiritual gratification found from a sense of being in what they too saw as the wilderness. But, as I established in chapter one, despite the fact that conservation and ecological objectives are undoubtedly the central attraction for all those who have access to the Reserve (the ecologists, rangers, NWP&TB personnel, lodge management and tourists), according to the *rhetoric* of the NWP&TB economic profit and rural development are the primary concerns of the Reserve – not conservation. Villagers were thus denied access to the Reserve largely because the NWP&TB and its private sector partners found exclusive tourism to be the most effective way of generating sufficient income to be able to realise profit.

One of the biggest areas of contention, raised by nearly every respondent in each of the three villages, was that Madikwe Game Reserve was inaccessible to them. That

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<sup>156</sup> This percentage does not reflect respondents who were aware that consultants had been coming to the villages and, especially in Molatedi and Lekgophung, were aware of the existence of projects without being able to put names to them.

inaccessibility was the single greatest factor contributing to their disillusionment with Madikwe and the way it was run. As one young mother said: "What is very discouraging is that this game reserve is very near our village but most of us don't know it at all. We have never even been to visit there" (interview, Lekgophung resident, 1 September 2000). Another villager said: "How can they say it is a partnership when we are not even allowed to go there?" (Lekgophung resident, 17 August 2000). A ceremony celebrating the incorporation into Madikwe of a 1500 hectare farm, known as Sentellies (farm no. 93 on map 5, page 41), provides a poignant example of village exclusion.

On 9 June 2000 Sentellies farm (see map 3), owned by a fourteen member syndicate based in Johannesburg, became part of Madikwe Game Reserve. This was the result of many months of negotiations and successful compromises and, for the NWP&TB, represented a major achievement towards realising its aim of expanding Madikwe through incorporating adjacent land. A date was set for a ceremonial lowering of the fence, and news agencies such as SABC radio were invited in order to advertise Madikwe's success to the outside world. On the day of the ceremony there was great excitement at Vleischfontein, the old mission station and now the NWP&TB offices in Madikwe. Most of the staff, rangers included, were excused from their usual duties in order to be present at the ceremony. Students from the Park's Ecological Services section were roped into manning the main gates to the Reserve, in order that the NWP&TB guards could attend the great event. Lodge managers and front office staff were invited. The Park Warden prepared a moving speech and stated in his welcoming address:

This land incorporation is the fruit of monthly meetings of the Madikwe Development Task Team. It has been a point of agenda for two years, and looked like a pipe dream which would never be realised. We have been looking forward to the first incorporation for a long time.

Even the NWP&TB's Chief Executive Officer found time in a busy schedule to travel from Mafikeng for the occasion. Revealing again the Board's commitment to development through conservation he stressed in his speech that "the most significant aspect about the expansion was job creation and community empowerment in that area" (NWP&TB news letter June 2000:3).

Yet, not a single person from what is probably best referred to as the 'last' sector of the three-way partnership, the 'local community' of villagers, or even their local leaders, was invited. To Chief Matlapeng in Molatedi, this was just another example to illustrate how the villages were excluded at every turn. He said, in heavily emotive sentences:

The community does not know about the Reserve because we have not been invited. We do not feel part of it. We cannot identify with it. The achievements and failures are not shared. If we are not part of it, how can we have its interests at heart? We do not want to interfere with the daily running, but we would like to be included in special occasions. Like with a new species, such as the wild dogs, we could be invited to the releasing ceremony. They invite people from America to observe and we are only three kilometres away but we are not invited...And when they dropped the fence just now, there was a big ceremony but again we were not invited (interview, 5 July 2000).

Phrases such as 'cannot identify with', 'do not feel part of', 'not shared', 'not invited' undermine the NWP&TB's claims to people-based conservation. The reference to 'people from America' being invited implies the persistence of a form of (neo) colonial invasion at the expense of local rights of access. Chief Matlapeng is, of course, drawing on powerful discourses of the controversial history of conservation, of fortress conservation and top-down development approaches, of (non) participation and exclusion. A middle aged man from Molatedi village reinforced this position:

Has a school child from Molatedi ever seen such beauty as that of Madikwe Game Reserve? No. But a child from Canada can come and behold this beauty. So only the chosen ones are allowed to go. The majority of people here do not know about the Reserve. It is only the international community with money who are chosen to go. The management should invite school children to come and drive through the park and know the animals and understand. They should have researchers to come and give a talk in the villages (interview 10 September 2000).

Such an argument raises several questions. If Madikwe is (in part, at least) about the conservation of South Africa's natural heritage yet villagers are denied access to it while the wealthy international community are the only ones 'chosen' to go, then, in reality, whose heritage is it? For whom is it being conserved? Is it only the privileged who have a right to access that heritage? What, actually, has changed since the days of apartheid, with its forced removals and anti-people ecology? In order to help answer these questions I now provide an overview of changing conceptualisations of conservation.

## **From Fortress Conservation to People-Based Conservation**

Conservation is not a new ideology. As early as the eighteenth century, concern for the environment had resulted in the creation of conservation areas, such as forest reserves in the West Indies. By the nineteenth century, formal conservation institutions had been established in Europe and North America, and the first national parks created (Adams and Hulme, 2001:10). Until the mid-twentieth century, global conservation discourse was informed by ideas that the natural environment and diversity of species must be protected from destructive human interference, the adverse impacts stemming from colonial expansion and the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

By the nineteenth century in South Africa there was another discourse which said that conservation was necessary to protect species and ecology not from colonialism but from 'the natives' themselves who were seen by colonial administrators as over-exploiting the land because they lacked an adequate understanding of ecological processes (cf. Carruthers, 1997; Honey, 1999). This exclusionary, preservationist approach has been called fortress conservation or the 'fences and fines approach' which, as Adams and Hulme say, "involved the creation of protected areas, the exclusion of people as residents, the prevention of consumptive use and minimization of other forms of human impact" (2001:10). The fortress approach to conservation was adopted throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa, heavily influenced by expatriate Europeans with their appetite for hunting<sup>157</sup> and their often misinformed notions of the wild African bush. As Bell argues: "...the western world gained a false impression of the 'natural' relationship between humans and their environments in Africa that has coloured western attitudes towards development and conservation ever since.... The west found in Africa the Garden of Eden of its romantic imagination"

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<sup>157</sup> There is a vast cannon of literature concerning hunting and the depletion of wildlife in the colonial era. Rather than entering into a long perusal of it, I will merely point out the obvious: that hunting, for a number of reasons (the most central being sport and trade in trophies), was intense and widespread. This, coupled with drastic solutions to rinderpest and tsetse fly (the slaughtering of entire herds), resulted in a massive decline in wildlife numbers and finally a recognition of the need to start conserving wildlife in order to sustain hunting. Inevitably, many expatriates blamed the decline on black African hunters, and the Game Laws (1886, 1889 and 1902), coupled with the Gun Laws effectively resulted in the exclusion of black Africans from hunting (MacKenzie, 1987:54-57).

(1987:89).<sup>158</sup> This reinforces how notions of the African landscape were (and still are) informed by representations in art, literature and the media. Adams and Hulme suggest that it was literature such as *Serengeti Shall Not Die* (Grzimek, 1960) and *SOS Rhino* (Guggisberg, 1966) which led to the portrayal of Africa “as Eden, humankind as its chief destroyer and conservation, through a protectionist strategy, its necessary regime of salvation” (Adams and Hulme, 2001:12).

Such portrayals have carried great weight in conservation discourse in South Africa and, throughout the colonial, the segregation and the apartheid periods, the creation of national parks was justified purely on the grounds of protecting (particularly from black Africans) depleting natural resources for the sake of the nation and the nation’s future generations. Yet, the notion of nation applied only to a white elite, a perspective strongly reinforced by apartheid ideology and policy. That elite’s members had exclusive access to the parks for leisure, game viewing, education and study (Carruthers, 1997, Stocking et al, 1995), the only black South Africans permitted there being those servicing the needs of the white elite visitors and those employed to help in the task of nature conservation. For many black South Africans, therefore, national parks meant forced removals or restricted and even total denial of access to the land and natural resources that had previously been where they had lived and farmed, and thus central to their livelihoods. Forced removals in order to make space for the construction of parks were seen to be necessary not only in order to create large stretches of relatively easily ‘recoverable’ land but also to protect that land from the ignorant ‘natives’ who were seen as having no sense of respect for the environment and were considered culpable in having contributed to environmental degradation through their purportedly backward farming methods (cf. Carruthers, 1997). In this way colonial and apartheid administrators managed to create a façade that justified taking land away from such people.

One of the earliest examples is the Sabi Game Reserve (which subsequently became the Kruger National Park), established in the Transvaal Republic in 1892. Three

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<sup>158</sup> The false impression, according to Bell, was a wrong perception of the balance between human, livestock and wildlife populations. He explains: “when Europeans first encountered Africa at the outset of the colonial era, they encountered a human population probably smaller than it had been since the Iron Age revolution... reaching its nadir between 1900 and 1930. The same is true of livestock which were drastically reduced by the rinderpest pandemic of 1890-1900. As human and livestock populations crashed, wildlife and its habitats expanded” (Bell, 1987:89).

thousand residents were forcibly relocated. Carruthers (1997) argues that the establishment of the Kruger National Park in 1926 was justified in part because of a general belief amongst white South Africans that wildlife conservation in itself constituted a legitimate and worthy form of land use, and in part to “the nascent rise of Afrikaner nationalism, the consolidation of a Voortrekker mythology and the search for a unified white South African identity” (1997: 5-6). The Kruger Park was therefore a site for a reconstructed, exclusionist, national identity, drawn in part from a nostalgia for a romantic rural past, “a place where manhood could be proved” (Adams and Hulme, 2001:11), and in part from a growing belief in the civilised virtues of conservation and environmental awareness.

The construction of identity, most post-colonial theorists would agree (see, for example, Fanon, 1969; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1988; Said, 1978), is a dialogical process, dependent on recognising difference from an obligatory Other. Bhabha wrote: “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image” (1994:45). Needless to say, the Other, in the context of the creation of South African parks, was the black person. And in that context, the white person became the conservationist, the legitimate hunter,<sup>159</sup> while the black person was usually perceived of as a threat to conservation efforts, the criminal poacher. Such propagandist designations gave birth to the inherent power structures that controlled (and often still control) the management of national parks, enabling conservationists to employ paramilitary methods of park policing, and to justify the exclusion of local, usually black, always poor residents from reserves and from access to natural resources within those reserves.

The hunting/poaching binary opposition has been pronounced within conservation discourse in South Africa, and has been a powerful tool for controlling natural resource management. It conceals an earlier and parallel history of how notions of conservation, since pre-colonial times, did exist in many black South African

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<sup>159</sup> As opposed to the bloodthirsty sportsman or the greedy trader, slaughtering vast numbers of animals to meet the insatiable demand for products such as ivory, skulls and skins, who are the imagined rhino- and elephant-slaughters of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

societies, where royal hunting reserves (such as those of Shaka Zulu) were established and rare species were often reserved for royalty (Carruthers, 1997, Kaplan, 2000, Jones, 2001). Through totemism, different tribal sub-groups were seen to respect and honour, and therefore protect, different wildlife species.<sup>160</sup> Tobayiwa and Jackson describe, in unashamedly sentimental tones, the cultural and social significance of the Shona totem system, claiming that:

the totem system in Shona society was developed through observation and profound appreciation of nature... [which] has been passed on in the form of inspiring praise poems that have, in fact, expanded further to include the history of a people... In a totem system like ours, nature is a part of one's being.... We have a project [the IUCN/WWF approved Mukuvisi project] designed to capitalize on the deep cultural involvement of the Shona people with wildlife and nature (1985:230-235).

Although the totem system was not unknown in the villages around Madikwe, where the clan-totem animal for the Batlokwa (predominantly in Molatedi) is the *aardvark* (or anteater), for the Bahurutshe (Supingstad) the baboon and for the Balete (Lekgophung), the buffalo, during my fieldwork I did not find evidence that the residents of the three villages were as passionate about the significance of these totem animals (as proof of an undeniable asserted oneness of Tswana people and nature) as the authors cited above suggest of the Shona. Rather, totem animals were seen more as a part of a distant cultural history than as a strategy for conservation.<sup>161</sup>

Despite evidence of certain direct and indirect ways of managing wildlife that existed prior to colonial rule (Jones, 2001), black South Africans were (and often still are) seen by conservationists as ignorant of conservation methods and in need of instruction. As a result of the colonial policies of exclusion, attempts to access wildlife, which, needless to say, was an important and valuable resource, were usually seen as 'poaching'. Carruthers (1997) argues that poaching often came to be employed as a form of resistance to colonial and apartheid-era conservation systems which denied black South Africans access to land. From a different perspective, black

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<sup>160</sup> Schapera and Comaroff explain of the Tswana: "There are special myths telling how each group acquired its totem, and people should not kill or eat their totem, nor touch its skin; should they do so inadvertently, they must undergo a purification ceremony to avoid illness or other misfortune" (1991:29).

<sup>161</sup> It is worth mentioning that it was cultural history that Madikwe Initiative interventions were tapping into. For example, the Mafisa-initiated theatre group in Molatedi was called the *Thakadu Theatre Group* (see chapter seven), *Thakadu* being SeTswana for anteater, and the film group was involved in a film entitled *The Meaning of the Buffalo*.

farmers have long resorted to what is effectively poaching, as one of the few available means of protecting their crops and livestock from wild animals. For example, Hulme and Infield (2001) write about Lake Mbuvo National Park where poaching was rife among local residents as well as staff of the former Game Department. They report that researchers<sup>162</sup> in the area had established that local residents poach “as a way of reducing damage caused by wildlife” (2001:121) and furthermore that the local authorities and local councils “do not accept any responsibility for preventing it” (ibid).

Since Madikwe’s inception, poaching has not been amongst its problems. Indeed, Madikwe respondents cited the absence of poaching as proof of the effectiveness of the Reserve’s people-based approach to conservation. For example, a member of Madikwe’s Ecological Support Services<sup>163</sup> said:

Almost everywhere else I’ve been [including Pilanesberg and Molohe] there has been a very negative feeling with the people outside the park. There was poaching... We don’t have poaching [here] and I have always put that down to the so called fantastic community relations - which may or may not be fantastic - that I don’t know (interview, 27 June 2000).

What is reflected in the above quote is a change from the earlier fortress style approach to conservation to one that recognises the importance of enlisting the support and sympathy of neighbouring people, of involving, rather than excluding, people living in and around wildlife reserves. Indeed, even the initial pre-feasibility study for Madikwe contains evidence of such tactics for including local people. It states that: “A Game Park would be acceptable to local communities and arrangements can be made to grant local herbalists controlled access to the park for the collection of specimens. Poaching is not foreseen as a major threat” (Setplan, 1991:17).<sup>164</sup> During my fieldwork I did not find any indication that the proposed arrangements had been made for herbalists. To the contrary, I witnessed one village resident, who had access to the reserve through employment with Mafisa, illegally stopping, with a shrug and a wink for me, to gather buffalo dung for a herbalist

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<sup>162</sup> The researchers were Namara and Infield (1998).

<sup>163</sup> While the NWP&TB managed the reserve in its entirety, the Reserve’s Ecological Services were concerned with the welfare of the wildlife, carrying out day to day monitoring and evaluations and veterinary interventions when necessary.

<sup>164</sup> The Setplan study is outlined in chapter 2, where I also cite, on page 58, its claim that a reserve would have the blessing of the communities.

friend. Nevertheless, by all accounts, unlike in other parks and reserves, there was no poaching in Madikwe.

A good example of the expediency of involving locals in conservation areas is provided by Jones (2001) who describes the changing approach to wildlife management at Kunene in Namibia. There, poaching was a major problem and, by 1982, the elephant population had been reduced to two hundred and fifty from one thousand two hundred in 1970. Jones describes how, in 1982, the Namibian Wildlife Trust hired Owen-Smith, who had formerly worked in the area, to help address the problem.

[He] used his knowledge of the area and relationships with traditional leaders to open discussions with residents about the poaching and decline in wildlife. He established that the headmen and others were concerned at the situation, but were helpless to halt the decline as they had no authority over wildlife as game belonged to the government.... Owen-Smith proposed to the headmen that they appoint their own community game guards. They were not there to apprehend poachers, but to monitor wildlife and any suspicious activities and then report to their headmen, who would decide on a course of action.... Over the next ten years, game guards played an important role in reducing poaching.... The support given to the game guards by the headmen during this period was considerable and came to symbolize community commitment to wildlife conservation (2001:163).

Key phrases here are 'authority over wildlife' and 'commitment to wildlife conservation'. They indicate the emergence – and employment – of a counter narrative to that of fortress conservation. It is a narrative which recognises that a sense of local ownership and control over wildlife is essential to enlisting the support of local residents, and hence to combating poaching, for example. The project has been so successful that it has also been introduced in Caprivi (interview John Hanks, a Peace Parks Foundation consultant, 22 December 2006).

The local equity narrative has become increasingly dominant on a global scale in part because, by the 1960s, there was growing international concern over conservation in Africa. "Africa was becoming independent, and political control was shifting as 'poachers' turned gamekeepers" (Adams and Hulme, 2001:12). The community game guard approach adopted at Kunene reflects the recognition of the necessity, and indeed pragmatism, of harnessing local support in conservation management. Furthermore, policy makers were coming to realise that fortress conservation was not

enough to sustain many of Africa's wildlife species.<sup>165</sup> Conservation "needed to reach out of protected areas into the wider landscape, and that landscape was increasingly densely inhabited" (Adams and Hulme, 2001:18). The new narrative was, inevitably, the so-called people-based conservation,<sup>166</sup> defined by Adams and Hulme as "those principles and practices that argue that conservation goals should be pursued by strategies that emphasize the role of local residents in decision-making about natural resources" (2001:13). The people-based conservation paradigm was developed and institutionalised through various global conferences, particularly in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy and the 1982 and 1992 World Congresses on National Parks (Stocking et al, 1995, McNeely and Miller, 1984, Kemf, 1993). Since then, it has come to dominate approaches to wildlife conservation. The examples are numerous, among them the 'Development Through Conservation' project begun in Uganda in 1988<sup>167</sup> and CAMPFIRE (1989) in Zimbabwe.<sup>168</sup> Initiatives, under the people-based conservation banner, range from local people being given full tenure and management rights over natural resources, to "glorified public relations exercises... which try to make local people feel less antagonistic towards exclusion from a protected area by social investment and 'education'" (Adams and Hulme, 2001:15).

## **The North West Parks and Tourism Board's Approach**

The question, of course, is where does the NWP&TB fit into the people-based conservation paradigm? According to the way it advertises itself, it is "a conservation organisation that is world-renowned for its pioneering approach to people-based wildlife conservation which it has practiced since the late-1970s" (Davies 1997:2). Yet, there is less to the rhetoric than meets the eye. Given that ownership and tenure are of central importance to people-based conservation, Madikwe was remarkable in that the residents of Molatedi, Supingstad and Lekgophung had no tenure and no legal

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<sup>165</sup> According to Adams and Hulme, research in conservation biology and the genetics of small populations of wild animals has shown that "large dispersal areas are needed so that species can move from 'island' to 'island' to feed, to ensure healthy breeding stock, and to respond to local extinctions and climatic change" (2001:18).

<sup>166</sup> There are a variety of terms, denoting a wide range of different projects, employed within this new discourse, including 'community conservation', 'people-based conservation', 'community wildlife management', 'collaborative management', 'community-based natural resource management' and 'integrated conservation and development programmes' (Adams and Hulme, 2001:13).

<sup>167</sup> See, for example, Adams and Infield, 2001.

<sup>168</sup> CAMPFIRE is one of the most well known and researched of community conservation programmes. Hence there is a great deal of literature on the different projects. See, for example, Bond, 2001 and Murombedzi, 2001.

claim to the Reserve's land. Unlike many people-based conservation projects, such as the Makuleke's in the Pafuri strip of the Kruger National Park (described in chapter three), the villages' residents were not forcibly removed from Madikwe.<sup>169</sup> The land claims that were pending during my fieldwork came from two groups of people identified as the Barokologadi ba ga Maotwe and the Baphalane ba Sesobe who had been rent paying tenants on Kalkfontein (farm no. 111 on map 5, page 41) and Boschrand (farm no. 109) located to the west of Vleischfontein in the centre of the Reserve. When the farms became designated as 'white' areas in terms of the 1936 Trust and Land Act (see chapter two), these people were forcibly removed (Paul Daphne, pers. comm., May, 2001).<sup>170</sup> At least up to the time I completed my field work in 2000, they were living some distance from Madikwe and were outside the focus of the Madikwe Initiative. Hence, according to Madikwe's park warden at that time:

This (the Reserve) is a public asset, not a community asset and the communities [the populations of the three villages] must not feel that this is their piece of land. This is state land and there is an obligation to the state, not only to the communities in this area (interview, 21 September 2000).

In the absence of villagers' communal rights of tenure over Madikwe land, perhaps what is important is the logic behind the NWP&TB's approach, ostensibly to ensure that, as has become generally recognised amongst policy makers and conservation agencies such as the NWP&TB, local residents must reap substantial benefits from protected areas if conservation is to be justified. Yet, the political expediency, the power, behind the approach can clearly be seen in the NWP&TB's linking of the allure of conservation with the promise of rural development. In the political environment of post apartheid South Africa, such an approach is not only expedient, but necessary. Gone is the possibility of fortress conservation, which is proven to be neither sustainable nor politically acceptable. So an alternative that purports to be community and development focussed has come to replace it.

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<sup>169</sup> Chapter two provides an overview of the establishment of the villages and the ownership of the land that later became Madikwe Game Reserve.

<sup>170</sup> The Baphalane Ba Sesobe won their land claim in 2003 and were allocated 15 hectares of land in the Reserve on which to build and run a lodge owned by the Baphalane Community Property Association as well as 4 600 hectares outside the Reserve for farming purposes (Government Annual Report, June 2003/4). The Barokologadi ba ga Maotwe won their claim in July 2007. In terms of the land claims settlement the land will still be used for conservation and managed accordingly by the NWP&TB. Existing lodge operators have been approached to "enter into the game lodge business with the community" (*The Weekender*, July 7-8 2007).

In the process, as I established in chapter three, conservation rhetoric has become so fiercely dominated by the (politically correct) spot light of rural development concerns that the point of conservation, the ethics, principles and objectives (sustaining the nation's natural heritage), have become sidelined – that is, within the rhetoric, at least, of managing agencies such as the NWP&TB. In practice, conservation is nonetheless still the central concern, or attraction, for Madikwe's ecologists, rangers, lodge management, tourists and so on. But it is overshadowed discursively by the NWP&TB's emphasis on development.<sup>171</sup>

Post apartheid South Africa is concerned with addressing inequality and, from a political and public policy perspective, that inequality means economic inequality which must be overcome by economic development. Rhetorically, therefore, conservation has come to be a tool to achieve such economic development, and that is then seen to be the only end result with which the villagers around Madikwe need be concerned – at least according to the primary stakeholders within the Reserve (the NWP&TB and private sector management). Thus, it became clear through interviews with those personnel (who are also the people most able to exercise power), that their collective position was that underdeveloped, marginalised villagers need, first and foremost, money, not beautiful parks; jobs, not leisure; modernity, not escape from it; employment, not safari holidays.

A simple question arises: is Madikwe Game Reserve, as the NWP&TB suggests, merely a business much like any other, where the main goals are to create employment and generate profit, a portion of which will finance community development projects? Could it just as well be a mine, a casino or a factory, or is conservation important in itself? As quoted in chapter two, a general manager of the NWP&TB said that “we use conservation, as we would have used mining or agricultural practices... as the most efficient way to address our main objective, which is economic development” (interview, 25 July 2000). But Madikwe is not a mine, nor is it a factory. It is a game reserve, and that makes all the difference. In interview after

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<sup>171</sup> In her fieldwork in the Kgalakgadi Transfontier Park, Cassie Hughes (2005) similarly found that behind a façade of agreement to involve local people old conservationist attitudes nevertheless predominated amongst Parks Board employees.

interview village respondents (some eighty-eight percent of those surveyed) were adamant that the land Madikwe is on should not be used in a different way. For example: "Build a factory? No! Madikwe must stay! This conservation is very important to us. They must never close down the Reserve. They can find another site for a casino or factory or what what [sic]" (Lekgophung resident, 21 August 2000).

Again, what is highly evident is the problematic contradiction between claims to people-based conservation and the continued lack of local people's access to the Reserve. At this point I will return briefly to the fence lowering ceremony as it was one of the most blatant examples of villagers' exclusion from the Reserve. I found it particularly striking that nearly every one of my respondents from within the Reserve itself sympathised with Chief Matlapeng's sentiments (cited on page 168). The General Manager of Tau Lodge said: "Yes I agree with the chief. They should have invited him [to the fence lowering ceremony]. I was invited because I'm the General Manager of the biggest lodge, and there were various other people there... SABC radio, but no local dignitaries at all. I really think they should have been invited" (interview, 23 August 2000). A General Manager of the NWP&TB also agreed:

I think it was an oversight that he was not invited to the ceremony. We have a policy with all our parks that whenever there is any function we invite the chiefs and local councillors. Without making excuses, to us it was a small function. We were even debating if the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] should be there, but I said 'sorry this is the first of our biggest projects, the incorporation of land. He must be there' (interview, 25 July 2000).

The fact that such an oversight was possible reinforces the views of those villagers who believed they were very much sidelined (on the 'far side of the country') in and by the Madikwe project. What was evident, yet again, was a major difference in perception between the NWP&TB management and village residents of the meaning of terms such as partnership and participation. Should villagers' involvement be confined to a sharing of the end result (the economic benefits; the product) of the Reserve's business operations as a tourist-oriented wild life resort? Or should 'partnership' mean involvement in the *processes* of generating profit from conservation, as well as a sharing of the non-economic end results of those processes: the allure of the bush, the beauty of the natural landscape, the close encounters with

majestic wild animals, the sense of being 'at one with nature' that I raised in the prologue to this thesis?

According to Khumo from Lekgophung<sup>172</sup> the allure of the bush was of fundamental importance to her. She said that without wild animals and beautiful landscapes, 'life would be boring'. She had never been to the Reserve, had never seen an elephant or any of the Big Five and had never even been to Pretoria Zoo. Despite the extreme poverty of her household (with eight people living off a monthly income of R540, excluding subsistence activities) she said that the most important thing for her would be to go to the Reserve just to see what it is like, to see the animals in their environment. She said that her greatest hope was that she should be offered a job in the Reserve – but said she had no expectations or hopes of benefiting financially in other ways. She also admitted that she did not really expect to get a job, particularly as she did not have matriculation or any training or work experience. Thus, her greatest hope was merely to visit the Reserve.

The rationality behind expectations such as Khumo's was powerfully brought home by the school principal in Lekgophung:

Since its inception there have been so many promises which are never fulfilled. They promised empowerment and better conditions at the school; buildings and equipment, computers. We have got nothing. They should let the students go there for weekend excursions, to view the animals and nature. They [children] have an interest and this must be cultivated by adults. They know there is a reserve, but they have never been there. They think about something big, something they can never go to. To them it is not accessible. It is a place for adults. And then, of course, there is the colour line (interview, 21 August 2000).

Not only does the above highlight the friction that existed between the NWP&TB's rhetoric and its practice, but it shows the NWP&TB's approach to be essentially irrational. It again brings to mind Chief Matlapeng's words: "If we are not part of it [the Reserve], how can we have its interests at heart?"<sup>173</sup> But according to Madikwe's operational warden:

I do not think it will be feasible to bring school children here for educational tours. You need qualified teachers to teach them about environmental methods. I can see many clashes of interests if we bring in school groups. If we bring in one or two it will

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<sup>172</sup> Introduced in chapter two. See page 69.

<sup>173</sup> Quoted on page 168.

snowball over night and we will have clashes with our current operators.... I did this for five years in Pilanesberg: I know what I am talking about. We had endless problems: too many children and a shortage of man power. There were clashes with the general public because the sites were not big enough. I don't think Madikwe will ever cater for that sort of thing (interview, 29 August 2000).

Indeed, as chapter seven will explain, the NWP&TB instigated the Madikwe Initiative in order to help villagers maximise benefits from the Reserve. But the Initiative's (Mafisa and DfID-decided) priorities focussed on capacity-building projects and the creation of small spin-off businesses, not upgrading local school facilities let alone arranging regular access to the Reserve for school children from the nearby villages. The Initiative's interventions were aimed at adults, not children. Its projects targeted small numbers of individual residents rather than village infrastructure more generally. This was because of an assumption that it was only once the Reserve started making a profit, and the Community Trust Fund had been established, that more generalised, infrastructural development concerns could be addressed. Hence, at the time of my fieldwork, the majority of villagers had still not seen any tangible benefits coming from the Reserve, and that led to a growing frustration with the NWP&TB for failing to fulfil its promises. Respondents expressed their antagonism in increasingly negative terms. Particularly damaging, given the post apartheid context, were the accusations of racism such as the Lekgophung school principal's: "And then, of course, there is the colour line" and another: "that Reserve is only for the whites" (interview, Supingstad, 23 July 2000).

Such views again work towards undermining the NWP&TB's claims that its practices are in line with people-based conservation approaches. Returning to Adams and Hulme's (2001) characterisations of people-based approaches, not only is there a glaring absence of 'full tenure and management rights over natural resources' but the other extreme, the 'glorified public relations exercise' (2001:15) was proving to be decidedly unsuccessful.

The situation highlights the problematic nature of notions of participation.<sup>174</sup> In his analysis of development discourse in Sri Lanka, Woost (1997) explores similar issues of village-level participation in the methods of development. He writes:

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<sup>174</sup> For more on participatory approaches to development see the section *New Paradigms But an Unchanging Story of Development* in chapter three.

...participatory discourse, like the notions of community that preceded it, clearly has many different connotations, only some of which hold the possibility for a more 'bottom-up' debate about the social, economic and cultural arrangement of the present and the future (1997:230).

As with the situation in Madikwe, Woost found that in Sri Lanka the language of development had shifted to indicate a move away from top-down approaches to development. Participation and empowerment were the new catch-phrases there too. Yet, in practice, nothing had really changed. The objects of development interventions, that is, the economic upliftment of poor villagers, were not being realised and those same poor villagers still had no voice in the methods used by development interventionists. Woost concludes: "...within the dominant rhetoric of development in Sri Lanka, the vocabulary of participation has become one of subordination rather than of constructing an alternative to development. For, under its terms, to participate is to bend one's purpose, goals and strategies to fit the official mould" (1997:249).

Similarly, in the villages around Madikwe, people could only participate in the Reserve in the ways the NWP&TB identified as possible. Apart from two entrepreneurial businesses, those ways were largely restricted to small components: employment within the private sector lodges in the Reserve and the individual projects driven by the Madikwe Initiative. I discuss these in chapter seven. For the moment I wish to focus on the bigger picture, which is that ultimately villagers had little power, voice or access, either to economic benefits deriving from the developmental goals of the Madikwe enterprise in its entirety or to the NWP&TB's chosen route to development: conservation. In this sense, the development process in Madikwe was similar to that described by Woost in Sri Lanka: despite the rhetoric it was a top-down process, seemingly inevitably arranged in such a way as to preclude villagers' equal participation.

It would be facile and naïve to attempt an outright condemnation of the NWP&TB for being elitist and exclusionary in its management of Madikwe. It is apposite, nonetheless, to point out that during my fieldwork I found that members of the white farming community from nearby Nietverdiend to the south of the Reserve had been given day-visitor access to the Reserve while residents from Molatedi, Lekgophung

and Supingstad were not. According to one farm owner: "The Parks Board [NWP&TB] said they would give me free entrance, but when I go into the Reserve I can only stay on the main roads. But that is not what I want. We [white people from Nietverdiend] should be allowed to go all over" (interview, 18 September 2000, translated from Afrikaans). This unequal access was also noted by the head ranger, who said:

I never see these people [villagers from Supingstad, Lekgophung or Molatedi] around. But the Nietverdiend people come and utilise the park, so there is no reason why these people cannot [do so] as well, as long as it is all communicated the right way through the Community Liaison Officer. That is his job. Mine is to arrange escorts [rangers] (interview, 22 August 2000).

However, there were good reasons, practical, financial and theoretical, for restricting day visitor access to the Reserve. Firstly, the park warden claimed, areas of the Reserve set aside for day visitors had not been developed because of pending land claims. He said:

The planning for day visitors has been in from day one. Land claims soon came in and stopped the development. An area was already fenced off at Abjaterskop and is still fenced off. And an area in the southern area, for restaurants and picnic spots. The intention has always been there, but we are now limited to what we can do until the ownership of the land has been resolved. Land claims have made about forty percent of the park unattractive to private investors and it could be viewed as irresponsible for the state to invest major capital into such areas (interview with Park Warden, 21 September 2000).

Secondly, and at the risk of seriously labouring the point, I stress again that the NWP&TB saw the generation of financial profit as their major objective. Unarguably the Reserve could generate a greater profit through exclusive elite tourism than through catering for day visitors. According to the NWP&TB's Chief Executive Officer, the Pilanesberg National Park, also under the Board's management, was running at a loss because the large number of day visitors was not economically profitable (meeting, 21 May 2001).<sup>175</sup> Madikwe was geared to attract high-paying exclusive tourism, only possible because tourists could be guaranteed game viewing experiences without crowds of people upsetting the illusion that the visitor is alone in a pristine wilderness. One lodge manager expressed the situation as follows:

You can't just open the park up and have people drive through... You can't say if you open up the reserve to the local community is it going to be sustainable. If you

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<sup>175</sup> See also the opinion of the operational warden cited on pages 179-180.

make it like the Kruger Park where people can pay an entry fee and just drive themselves around, private lodges like ourselves will just fade away. The two can't co-exist. You've got to make it either one or the other. And this way I think generates more revenue and foreign currency. The purpose of the Reserve, I don't believe, is so that every child can know what an elephant looks like. The purpose of the Reserve is (a) to conserve nature, Africa's heritage, and (b) to provide benefits to the local communities in terms of spin-offs from the funds that tourists bring.... If you just open it up, very soon that will destroy the natural habitat and there won't be anything. On the other hand, you can't take a huge area of land, turn it into this pristine wilderness area for rich tourists to come to, when people around it are suffering. They have to benefit or it just won't survive (General Manager, Tau Lodge, 23 August 2000).

What is evident from the above is the lodge manager's purely financial notion of sustainability. For him sustainability referred primarily to his private sector interests: lodge management, a major and vital component of which was closely controlled game drives into the 'wilderness'. His operations would not be able to function profitably if there were large numbers of tourist roaming at will about the Reserve. To him the Reserve could only have the potential to be a sustainable business as long as high paying tourists continued to be attracted by its exclusivity. To put it bluntly, to the lodge manager, 'sustainability' was synonymous with 'foreign cash'. While such an impoverished definition of sustainability is at odds with populist notions of sustainable development which emphasise local empowerment, participation and capacity building, in the context of the neo-liberal market economy approach that the NWP&TB had adopted at Madikwe, it was entirely congruous.<sup>176</sup> But it does reveal yet another contradiction where the NWP&TB's people-based conservation rhetoric sits very uncomfortably with its management of the Reserve.

The 'foreign cash' definition of sustainability was dominant amongst my NWP&TB and private sector respondents. It explained and justified their using exclusive tourism to achieve such 'sustainability'. Yet its clashes with many villagers' perceptions of the role the Reserve should play for them were inevitable. To those villagers it was a role that went beyond the (as yet largely unseen) economic possibilities. The views of the majority of local residents clashed absolutely with the lodge manager's cited above: they wished to have access to the local repository of South Africa's natural heritage precisely in order to know what a wild elephant looks like in its natural

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<sup>176</sup> The literature emphasising the centrality of social elements of sustainable development is vast – see, for example, Honey, 1999, Gibbon et al, 1995, O'Hearn, 1999, and of course the Brundtland Report, 1987 and the Rio Earth Summit, 1992 – as are the critiques problematising it, as I discussed in chapter three.

habitat. It appears, therefore, that villagers defined what the lodge manager called their 'suffering' differently from how the other two partners of the Madikwe project did so. Most village respondents were not only concerned with economic development: increased employment and better roads, schools and services. They were also interested in experiencing the 'beauty of nature'. It is surely a particularly prescriptive (and un-people-based) kind of patronising which presumes that villagers' aspirations were, or should have been, limited to purely financial and material concerns. As Wells et al (1992:42) say "Local participation viewed as a process goes well beyond simply sharing in social and economic benefits". Thus, according to one respondent:

Parks Board should go back to the drawing board and think. They should share these important things [conservation] with the community....Rather than hiring a coach to go to Pretoria Zoo they [villagers] should rather pay an entrance fee for Madikwe and see wild animals in their natural habitats. This clearly shows that the public relations officer is side tracking important things and there is a break down of communication between the park and the communities (Lekgophung resident, Jaci's Camp employee, 21 August 2000).

And another:

According to my belief, the Reserve must help the community. But the community doesn't know anything about the Reserve. They know nothing about wild animals and if they want to know they must go to Pretoria Zoo, even though there is a game reserve nearby. They [MGR staff] are there to educate and empower the communities. They must invite the people to MGR to do game drives, so they will be able to develop an interest in the game reserve. That will lead to empowerment. Once a child develops an interest, they will choose courses at school which are related to the game reserve; then later they can look for work there and not be too far from home (Molatedi resident, 5 July 2000).

Central in the above is the argument that empowerment is only properly achievable through education (which in turn, it is implied, can lead to sustainable economic benefits such as employment). Similarly, the references to Pretoria Zoo, with the underlying message that 'if Madikwe won't help we will do it ourselves', emphasise the argument that a knowledge of the methods of conservation are equally as important as the economic outcomes of such methods (the generation of foreign currency), in terms of achieving 'participation' or 'empowerment'. Hence, according to the respondents cited above, Madikwe management had become 'sidetracked' and should have been rethinking their approach: the only way villagers could ever really benefit from the Reserve was through future generations becoming capacitated to command managerial jobs within conservation and private sector lodge operations.

This type of local diachronic understanding of the role the Reserve should have been playing for villagers contrasts strongly with the NWP&TB's particularly synchronic definition of development through conservation. I return to this point in chapter seven. Here, I emphasise that such views seriously undermine the NWP&TB's claims to be practicing 'people-based conservation'; and I suggest a counter-argument that, as with parks in the colonial and apartheid days, it was still only the privileged, both conservationists and tourist viewers, who were seen as the kinds of people who should have access to the nation's natural heritage.

Despite the radical change within hegemonic conservation discourse from colonial and apartheid-era fortress-type approaches to the people-based approaches prevalent in the new 'democratic' South Africa, local people were therefore still excluded. The NWP&TB's neo-liberal perspective obscured the operation of power that made such continuing exclusion inevitable – and (politically) acceptable, even in South Africa's post apartheid environment of supposed atonement for the injustices of the past. Again, what had made this possible was a power lying in the invisible operations (the conservation/economic development framework) that had led to the establishment of the Reserve in the first place. The power of such a framework is that, through divorcing conservation and rural development (in that villagers had no control over, nor any real knowledge of, the management of natural resources in the Reserve), it led to the exclusion of villagers from the Reserve. And it thus served to ensure the persistence of inequalities in the Madikwe project's so-called partnership.

Thus, when there were clashes of interest, the 'foreign cash' view of the sustainability of Madikwe, and its supposed potential to 'bring development' to neighbouring populations, took priority over any immediately realisable people-based developmental considerations. Both the NWP&TB and Madikwe Initiative rhetoric suggests that the Initiative was set up precisely to address such inequalities, to 'empower' and 'build capacity'. Moreover, the Madikwe Initiative's insistence on working with the most marginalised in the neighbouring villages (thereby excluding Chief Suping's relatives – see chapter four) indicates a particular determination to empower and build capacity from the bottom up. Yet, as the next chapter will demonstrate, the Madikwe Initiative actually reached only a minority of villagers and, by the end of my fieldwork, had done little to redress the imbalance of power between

the three Madikwe stakeholders. For the majority of villagers, as this chapter has shown, continued failure to grant them access to the Reserve impacted heavily on their perceptions of the success of the whole Madikwe project. To many, it was just a continuing story of exclusion, the pervasive condition of living on 'the far side of the country'.

## Chapter Seven

### **'Before, there was nothing': Knowledge, Power and the Madikwe Initiative**

Most of my people do not know the Reserve. It is amazing because, when the Reserve was first set up, it was stated [by the Parks Board] that the nearby village[r]s will be the ones who will know the Reserve and benefit from it... [Now] the Madikwe Initiative is succeeding to an extent. It cannot do everything at once, but everyone can see that things are better than they were before. Some things are happening at least. Before, there was nothing (interview, translated from Setswana, with Chief Tsiepe of Lekgophung, 2000).

At the time of my fieldwork, Madikwe Game Reserve had been running for nearly ten years. The NWP&TB had made much of the potential opportunities for 'community partnership and involvement' but, considering that most villagers had never been inside the Reserve and had not yet experienced economic benefits coming from it, it was evident that the Reserve was falling short of reaching that potential. Madikwe, rather than being viewed by the majority of village respondents purely as a source of economic opportunity, also stood for the conservation of South Africa's natural heritage. It was seen as a potential opportunity for them to experience the 'beauty of nature', to share in a part of the nation's natural heritage, a part that many felt they had a particular claim on given its proximity to the villages. But, because of the Madikwe management's economic priorities, and the Reserve's structure as an exclusive elite ecotourism destination, it was a heritage to which most villagers were denied access. Indeed, the very structure of the NWP&TB's Madikwe project reinforced and exacerbated the villagers' position as the weak partner. The Reserve was state-owned, and there was no local ownership of its natural resources or management rights over its conservation operations. To the majority of residents in Lekgophung, Supingstad and Molatedi, people-based conservation as practiced at Madikwe was experienced as little more than a continuing story of exclusion.

From the NWP&TB's perspective, Madikwe was essentially a business, and conservation was simply the means of generating financial profit. Villagers were expected, in turn, to benefit through institutions such as a Community Trust Fund, direct employment through the private sector, and through the creation of spin-off

business opportunities generated by the presence of conservation and ecotourism. Yet, in 1997, some six years after the Reserve had been established there were only two wholly successful entrepreneurial businesses functioning<sup>177</sup> and fewer than ninety residents from the three villages combined were employed in the Reserve. The so-called local community stakeholder was failing to reap significant benefits and was becoming increasingly marginalised in the Madikwe project as a whole. Recognising that the villages had largely been left out of the Madikwe project, the NWP&TB instigated the Madikwe Initiative which was launched in January 1998. In the words of the Board's Resource Economist:

In reality, the Madikwe project is held up by the two legs of the stronger partners, the Parks Board and the private sector. The weaker leg, that of the community, dangles along....The Parks Board recognises this and has facilitated the establishment of a community support and empowerment programme to develop capacity within these communities. The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) has contributed substantially to this programme to ensure equal participation, especially by the communities. This support should not be linked to or administered or controlled by the Parks Board, in order to ensure the communities are indeed independent and not threatened by withdrawal of support if they don't 'tow the line' [sic] (Davies, 1997:16).

Particularly striking in the above is the NWP&TB's imagery of itself and the private sector lodge operators as symbols of power and strength, carrying not only their share of responsibilities, but also shouldering the burden that seemed, both from Madikwe-related literature such as the above and the majority of interviews I conducted with NWP&TB management personnel, to be the Board's view of their local community partner. The community was the weak leg, little more than a crippled appendage, a dead weight unbalancing the entire project. Similarly, the insistence that within the development programme the so-called communities should be independent of the NWP&TB, so that support could not be withdrawn if the villagers failed to toe the line, further emphasised the Board's positioning of the villagers and their leaders as weak, marginal, burdensome.

Furthermore, prior to any significant input from, or involvement by, people from the neighbouring villages, the general Madikwe project (as distinct from the DfID-funded Madikwe Initiative programme) was already a tangible reality, a potentially lucrative

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<sup>177</sup> Only one of which, Mr Ramorula's of Molatedi, was based in one of the three villages immediately adjacent to the Reserve that were the focus of the Madikwe Initiative. The other was based in Obakeng, a village some 18 km away, on the far side of Molatedi.

business with its parameters clearly defined by the two self-styled strong partners. And it was they who assigned the local community a role, albeit unspecific, but nonetheless pre-determined by them in their assumed position as the stronger partners. Under such prearranged terms, external support, in the shape of the DfID-funded Madikwe Initiative, was essential if villagers were successfully to fulfil the developing stakeholder role, to grow into the shoes designed for them, and thus not be wholly amputated from the project.

Such a view indicates the existence of a pre-drawn, solid hierarchy into which the villages and their residents were placed firmly, and seemingly irrevocably, at the bottom. Within this hierarchical, marginalising view presented by the NWP&TB, the Madikwe Initiative was of critical importance if the local community partner was to be helped and guided so that it could strengthen its position within the Madikwe Game Reserve project, and breach the hitherto impenetrable fortress that was the Reserve itself. Yet, as my fieldwork progressed, it became increasingly clear that respondents in the villages were not merely the powerless, subjugated mass that the weak-leg approach to the Madikwe set-up suggested. Nor was the Madikwe Initiative viewed in the villages as an unproblematic, empowering saviour galloping to the rescue.

In my first months of fieldwork and data analysis I came to an initial conclusion that the Madikwe Initiative, like the NWP&TB and despite the rhetoric, was a purely and unashamedly top-down development intervention. As such its aims to render its projects independent and self-sustaining were unlikely ever to be realised. Just as villagers were marginalised regarding management rights and access to Madikwe and its natural resources, so, too, did they have little (or any) control over the financial resources or management of the Madikwe Initiative. Participation in the Initiative was controlled and constricted by an externally imposed framework: the projects and workshops predetermined by DfID as the primary donor agency and Mafisa Research and Planning as the consultant-dependent NGO implementing the Initiative. Yet, while conducting fieldwork in the villages, I met and talked with many forcefully eloquent people whose comments led me to see that it was grossly limiting to view the Madikwe Initiative simply as a series of burdensome externally imposed interventions. Rather, their commentaries revealed that the Initiative had had complex

impacts in the villages, both among project members and beyond, and particularly within village-level development discourse more generally.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore two-fold. Firstly, I look closely at the community support and empowerment programme known as the Madikwe Initiative, considering it both in terms of its structure and its aims to develop capacity: to provide the knowledge, skills and training that were deemed necessary by the implementers of the Initiative if local people were to seize the economic opportunities presented by the presence of the Reserve and ecotourism, and hence ameliorate their position as the weak leg of the Madikwe project. Drawing on empirical data from Madikwe Initiative projects, my second concern is to explore perceptions of project sustainability, ownership and local power balances. I demonstrate that in many cases the experiences of participating in projects helped generate a village-based discourse of pronounced binary opposition in which notions of self/other and endogenous/exogenous were pivotal in ongoing tensions concerning power and autonomy. The situation reveals how development interventions, rather than being linear processes, are multifaceted, with complex repercussions and reverberations, many of them quite unintended.

Early in my research it became evident that attitudes to Mafisa and the Madikwe Initiative varied widely from village to village. If there is such a thing as a village's attitude, and if that attitude can be measured by the degree of residents' involvement in projects, then Lekgophung, where there was both the highest rate of participation in projects, and the least conflict arising from that participation, seemed to have the most positive attitude towards the Madikwe Initiative. In Molatedi, from which a similar number of residents were involved in projects as there were from Lekgophung, there was a high degree of conflict and contestation over the role and value of Madikwe. The Molatedi attitude towards the Madikwe Initiative could therefore be described as somewhere between ambivalent and antagonistic. In Supingstad, where the Madikwe Initiative was not functioning at all, the village's attitude could be imagined as entirely hostile, characterised by a complete withdrawal from any contact with Mafisa. However, digging slightly deeper, it is evident that things were not quite so simple.

An important point to stress is that in the survey I conducted, only twenty percent of the two hundred and forty respondents drawn from the three villages (eighty from each village), stated that they had ever heard of Mafisa: thirty-three percent of respondents in Lekgophung; twenty-one percent in Molatedi and only eight percent in Supingstad. While the ability of such statistics accurately to reflect the reality they supposedly represent is highly questionable, they do indicate that, despite two years of Mafisa's presence, contact with Mafisa, or even knowledge of its work, had been extremely limited. This raises important questions such as: with whom did Mafisa work? How were project participants selected? Who had access to Mafisa projects? How far did Mafisa's influence actually spread? Addressing these questions preoccupies many of the following pages of this chapter. But the indication that so few people had even heard of Mafisa suggests that its Madikwe Initiative-linked development interventions were not as dominant in local experience and discourse as may be expected from Madikwe-related literature (see for example Magome, 1998; Koch, 2000 and Davies, 1996, 1997).

Considering the meagre number of villagers claiming even to have heard of Mafisa, this chapter, in part, focuses on a small minority, the few who were involved in projects and workshops initiated by the Mafisa-led Madikwe Initiative. In a broader sense the chapter is also concerned with the general condition of living next to an apparently lucrative ecotourism destination, a supposed source of economic opportunity that had failed, at least at the time of my research, to be realisable for the vast majority of villagers. It addresses, too, how many villagers claimed a dependence (real or perceived) on external interventions such as the Madikwe Initiative, if benefits were to be realised in the villages. For, to use the words of Chief Tsiepe of Lekgophung, 'Before [the Madikwe Initiative] there was nothing': nothing except a 65,000 hectare, big five, malaria-free game reserve attracting increasing numbers of high paying tourists every season; a well run, lucrative ecotourism operation that had already been operational for seven years.

It is useful to enter into a discussion of the role and effect of the Madikwe Initiative with an extract from an interview with Garth Kew, the manager of Jaci's Camp,

which was, in July 2000, one of only three commercial lodges in Madikwe.<sup>178</sup> At the time of the interview Jaci's Camp had been open for two months, but Garth had been overseeing the building operations and acting as manager since October 1999. Previously, he had managed Madikwe River Lodge, the first lodge to be opened in the Reserve, and was hence one of the people within the private sector most familiar with the Reserve and the area. Through his work at the two lodges, coupled with involvement in a community garden project while he had been at River Lodge,<sup>179</sup> Garth had also had more contact with residents in Molatedi<sup>180</sup> than most private sector employees who came from outside the area. In answer to a question about local residents' involvement in Madikwe, Garth replied:

OK, we've got the park running, we've got it known as an international destination. We've got hundreds of tourists pouring in here, brilliant.... But one thing that always stumps me is that these guys [village residents] are not creating some kind of curio or artefact that we can market here.... I would think that the best thing to do now is to go around to the local communities and say: 'hello everybody! Catch a wake up. Here is a gold mine on your doorstep. What are you going to do about it?' I think that would be the way to get them [villagers] involved.... Even if it's some twit who just wanders around and speaks to everybody and says: 'listen, this is what you can do and this is how you can do it. Here's a pamphlet. Go to that course on running a business, go to that course on running a food store.' ... I'm sure those things can be done. Maybe I'm naïve, but I would have thought, if I was living somewhere like Molatedi and I saw these fat cats driving past in their hired Mercs., I would think 'there goes an awful lot of money, how can I tap into that?' You could draw a big picture of an elephant and have elephant dung curios and collect elephant dung in the park and put it in latex or something doff! They'll [tourists] buy anything. But even if the guys [villagers] don't have that thought pattern, if there was just *someone* who wandered around and tapped them on the shoulder and said 'look you can do this, this is easy. Try this and this and this' (interview with Garth, the manager of Jaci's Camp, 4 July 2000).

The interview was conducted more than two and a half years after the formal launch of the Madikwe Initiative which, under DfID's original terms of funding, should have ended six months earlier. From the perspective of an experienced lodge manager, still nothing was happening to utilise the Madikwe commercial operation for local villagers' benefit: the villagers were failing to tap into the tourist market, to profit from the 'fat cats'. In his view, the logical way for villagers to benefit was through more or less direct interaction with the tourist market, through, for example,

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<sup>178</sup> There was also a bush camp and a number of small corporate lodges not open to the general public.

<sup>179</sup> The project had originally been funded by the Water Board, and had initially been successful, but, according to Garth, the funding stopped and "within two weeks we had a dust bowl instead of food gardens" (interview, 4 July 2000).

<sup>180</sup> Garth had worked with villagers from Molatedi rather than Supingstad and Lekgophung because of its relative proximity to both River Lodge and Jaci's Camp.

manufacturing curios and handicrafts. Hence, what villagers needed above all was a knowledge of that market and an appropriate 'thought pattern' with which to access it.

Garth's market-centred view was echoed in the villages throughout my fieldwork, where many village respondents asked me questions such as: 'Who are these tourists?' 'Why don't they come to the village and share ideas with us?' 'Maybe if we can meet the tourists we can find out what they like.' 'How do those people live in those countries?' 'Parks Board must help with educating people, old and young, in how to make products with their hands that they can sell to the tourists'. Such questions and comments emphasised the fundamental gap between villagers' knowledge and experience and tourists' expectations. In their paper on Pro-poor Tourism, Ashley et al. (2000) indicate that such a gap is not unusual. They argue that: "Particularly important skills in tourism include language, and an understanding of tourist expectations. Training for small-scale tourism often has to begin with 'what is a tourist?', because being a tourist is such an alien experience for the poor" (Ashley et al., 2000).

In the Madikwe context, the lodge manager's frustration with the dearth of local products available for him to market at Jaci's camp reinforced the point Ashley et al (2000) make. It was evident, to him at least, that without a basic knowledge of the markets they sought to target, the Reserve remained an impenetrable fortress for most villagers, particularly as far as access through the creation of so called spin-off businesses went, be they handicraft oriented or linked to servicing lodges.

As I indicate in chapter six, many village respondents, too, stressed the importance of education as the most important route to their realising benefits from the Reserve. The difference was that those respondents had a longer-term view of the significance of that education than the dominant partners of the Madikwe project; and they had different ideas about the meanings of notions such as empowerment and capacity. For example, according to the Molatedi resident (5 July 2000) cited at the end of chapter six, children needed to be exposed to the Reserve and its conservation operations in order to develop an understanding and interest in what it was all about. Such an interest could then encourage them to make educational choices which would

ultimately lead to their commanding significant jobs (rather than becoming cleaners, labourers and security guards, for example) within the Reserve's conservation and private sector lodge operations. For that respondent, capacity building and empowerment was a slow process which could be achieved only through investment in future generations. Similarly, according to school principals and teachers in the three villages:

The children are very interested in the Reserve because of the conservation we teach. But they have never been there. They see buses coming from Jo'burg, but never us. Even I have never been inside...It is so important for the kids' interest to be aroused. They have to see something – if they are allowed to visit then they can talk about it. At the moment the park is a sort of theory. The teachers try to teach them, but they are speculating really as they don't really know themselves (school principal, Molatedi, 14 September 2000).

They should let the students go there for weekend excursions, to view the animals and nature. They have an interest and this must be cultivated by adults. They know there is a Reserve, but they have never been there. They think about something big, something they can never go to. To them it is not accessible... (school principal, Lekgophung, 21 August 2000).

The Reserve would be much better for us if they gave education because there are many people who don't even know a single of the big five. Bursaries and scholarships are what we need in this village, and to build colleges where our children can study about wild life (school teacher, Supingstad, 14 September 2000).

The long-term vision of capacity building is critical in each of the above quotes. It contrasts significantly with that of the Madikwe Initiative, the fundamental concern of which was to establish businesses so that villagers could provide outsourced services to the Reserve and to create jobs so that villagers could be employed. The Initiative's interventions targeted adults and young people, not school children. But village respondents such as those cited above emphasise that it is their children, the future generations, they wished to see educated and capacitated so that they would be able to grasp top employment opportunities within the Reserve. There was one Mafisa-led project, the internship programme, that aimed to train eight young people in lodge management, tour guiding and game ranging. But, again, the project was characterised by the immediacy of its goals – to transfer the necessary skills to the interns within a very limited period, one defined by the funding available. The project was thus not sustainable over the longer term – most obviously because it was a training course and therefore entirely dependent on the NGO with its intermittent, exogenously controlled cycles of donor funding.

The presence of self/other binary thinking is also highly evident in the above quotes. The respondents show the 'other', the Madikwe project's strong partners, to be both irrational and contradictory. How can villagers' involvement and participation ever occur if the central elements of the Madikwe project's 'business' remained an inaccessible mystery? The dilemma again brings to mind Chief Matlapeng's words: "The community does not know about the Reserve because we have not been invited. We do not feel part of it. We cannot identify with it. The achievements and failures are not shared. If we are not part of it, how can we have its interests at heart?" (interview, 5 July 2000).<sup>181</sup>

The Madikwe park warden's view was that education was, of course, very important, but not, unfortunately, part of the NWP&TB's mandate. He stressed that access would not be possible until the day visitors' zone had been developed (if it ever was<sup>182</sup>) because of "potential conflicts with high paying visitors seeking exclusive game viewing experiences" (Park Warden, 21 September 2000). But what sort of organisation can claim, without appearing irrational and contradictory, that its goal is to empower the local community, while its mandate forecloses on the possibility of educating or promoting school children's interest in the conservation and tourism operations that are the core functions of its presence? When there were clashes with the economic aims of Madikwe, villagers were last in the pecking order, bottom of the hierarchy. They were the weak-leg in the partnership – both in practice and in how they were imagined by the dominant partners, which was more or less as dependents in need of succour.

The continued fundamental lack of benefits accruing to villagers (not least of which was access to the Reserve for school children), and of knowledge about how to realise such benefits, raises questions regarding the role of NGOs in general and Mafisa in particular. Was it Mafisa's role to bridge the gap between local residents, the private sector and tourists, to act as, to use the lodge manager's terminology, the 'shoulder-tapping twit' dispensing knowledge on how to access the Reserve's ecological or tourism operations? From Mafisa's perspective, its role was to empower and to build

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<sup>181</sup> Excerpt from the longer interview quotation reproduced in chapter six (page 168).

<sup>182</sup> As indicated earlier, the area set aside for a day visitors' zone had land claims against it and hence plans for its development had been stalled indefinitely.

capacity, which meant setting up 'real' businesses able to compete in a national and global market place. Hence, apart from a theatre and a film group and a lodge internship training programme (see below), Mafisa's interventions focussed on projects that, in 2000, were still largely not yet visible, either to tourists or to personnel in the private sector. These included brick-making, construction and bush-clearing teams, the Molatedi Bopitikelo Community Centre, a Lekgophung Business Centre, and small business and institutional support programmes.

According to Madikwe Initiative literature, the logic behind such initiatives was that privately owned small businesses such as the bush-clearing and brick-making teams "can effectively take advantage of business opportunities from wildlife areas and tourism lodges" (Koch, 2000:12); that through direct employment in lodges (for example, the internship programme) "the wage mechanism can often be the most effective form of delivering benefit into rural households from conservation areas...[as] wages go straight into households and are not easily intercepted by powerful groups in 'communities'" (ibid). While such small business initiatives are in line with the 'ownership' philosophy behind many contemporary people-based development models,<sup>183</sup> it is important to stress that at the time of my fieldwork, which was two and a half years into the Madikwe Initiative, not one of the Mafisa-led projects was independent or sustainable. Indeed, they were still referred to by Madikwe Initiative personnel as projects rather than businesses.

### **Good Capitalist Entrepreneurs**

It was perhaps ironic that the two village-based businesses that were successful in breaching the Madikwe fortress, and that were owned and run by local private entrepreneurs, were themselves not a part or product of the Madikwe Initiative. One belonged to Ms Madupe who was based in the nearby village of Obakeng; the other belonged to Mr Ramorula who also had a family-run general store in Molatedi. Both were involved in a variety of activities related to the construction and thereafter the servicing of lodges. Each had a contract to collect wood in the Reserve, at a rate of R20 per ton, which they then sold to the lodges. According to the manager of Jaci's Camp:

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<sup>183</sup> As I outlined in chapter three.

Ms Madupe...delivers wood and helps with cleaning up... When we need something done we call Ms Madupe. [During construction] every single Leadwood [tree] here was brought here by Ms Madupe, and every single rock in these walls. We used them extensively - everything that went into this lodge, and it's a lot. Thousands and thousands of Rand.... Mr Ramorula also supplies us with firewood and they do our garbage removal - and his wife is doing our laundry now.... All that's more than just job creation; that's empowerment.... Ramorula and Ms Madupe are terrific. They are so effective. Both of them are really good: capitalists to a fault but they know what they are doing and they're doing a good job of it (interview, 4 July 2000).

Particularly salient within the lodge manager's comment is his view that empowerment is synonymous with being a capitalist – which is not the same as having a job. Indeed, at the time of my fieldwork, Mr Ramorula employed four full time labourers and Ms Madupe three (both were also able to source extra labour at a moment's notice should the need arise) and had no qualms about profiting from employing that labour. As Mr Ramorula said: “You need to be well organised to make a business. This is my business and I am the one who puts in the tenders and grasps the opportunities. Anyone who wants to can make their own business” (interview, 21 September, 2000). He added “These Mafisa projects, like the brick making, they cannot be successful because they have no capital. They can't buy cement and sand. And who is going to pay them [the labourers]? This is not a business” (ibid). Such a view pointed to yet another inherent ambiguity within the Madikwe Initiative: Mafisa's role was to spend R6.4 million for the greater good of the so-called local community as a whole. Yet one of the main ways it attempted to do this was through trying to create independent, sustainable businesses or, rather, to create good capitalist entrepreneurs (‘capitalists to a fault’, to use the lodge manager's phrase) – who, by definition, are profit-driven rather than proponents of social welfare. But in order for a business to be sustainable it needs workers from whom to appropriate surplus value. Not everyone can be a business person: some people must be the employees. Or, to take Mr Ramorula's perspective, if everyone is a wage labourer ‘who is going to pay them?’

The Madikwe Initiative had not (yet) succeeded in creating sustainable, independent businesses among the minority of villagers participating in the Mafisa-led projects.<sup>184</sup> And it had certainly not achieved the near impossible feat of empowering the community as a whole to access opportunities in the Reserve. Furthermore, there

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<sup>184</sup> As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate.

were various local individuals and organised groups that fell outside the spotlight of the Initiative but which could well have been called upon to offer a service to tourists in the Reserve, thereby creating some income and a possible basis for longer-term sustainability. But the Initiative seemed to overlook, even ignore them. One example was a choir group in Molatedi, one of whose members said:

Since we started in 1998, we have not yet asked any help from any company, institution or business. We thought Mafisa would see us and because we are well known in Molatedi they will be interested in knowing more about our project. But we realised Mafisa are only interested in projects they [have] started and ignore others... We want to go and perform at the lodges but we can't get hold of the CLO [community liaison officer] or anybody who can help us with how to connect to the lodge management (choir member, Molatedi, 23 September 2000).

And in the words of another villager, this one a frustrated local entrepreneur:

They should create an opportunity for local investors to come in. I once went there [to the NWP&TB office] and asked if I could supply chickens to the lodges. I was told about health [regulations] etcetera, even before they said to come and talk. They never gave me a chance to explain what I wanted to do. I know health is important in that industry. I would have had the chickens slaughtered professionally and all those things. I spoke to [the CLO] about it but he was not interested in helping me. I also tried baking bread, but again all they spoke about was health, before even giving me a chance to speak. I know the customer sets the standard and it is up to the supplier to meet that standard, but how can you when they don't even give you a chance (middle aged woman, Molatedi Resident, 10 September, 2000).

Both stories illustrate, again, how inaccessible the Reserve continued to be for many villagers and, too, the Madikwe Initiative's complicity in sustaining that lack of access. Central to both is the pervasive self/other binary, the perception that no matter how hard they might try to do things on their own (I can't help but be reminded of Chief Suping's 'Handouts make fools of people' comment),<sup>185</sup> they are unable to breach the Madikwe fortress. Without acceptance and authorisation from the Reserve's insiders their efforts continued to be frustrated and they remained outsiders. Power in this arena rested firmly with the villagers' apparent other, the NWP&TB's community liaison officer, the lodge management and Mafisa. Hence, according to the Chairperson of the Lekgophung RDP Forum: "How can we get more benefits? It is a question of knowing what tourism is all about and, really, even I know so little. We are not exposed" (interview, 26 August 2000). Such a view echoes that of Ashley et al (2000) and of the lodge manager cited at the beginning of this chapter: what was still needed was what he called an 'appropriate thought pattern', a knowledge of how

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<sup>185</sup> Quoted in chapter four, page 105-106.

to access markets and a 'shoulder-tapping twit' to bring about both. Two of the interns put forward that same argument that what was needed above all in the villages was someone to go and explain the opportunities that could be grasped:

If only the people in the village could develop something - like there are a lot of young people and they could do something like the theatre group in Molatedi, or making African art - or traditional dancing. We should initiate this as we are the ones who have had exposure and can tell them what people are interested in. The problem is that we never have time. In the village, people lack contact with lodge management so they don't know what is expected. They don't know what is possible. But we don't have time to sit with them (interview, 14 September, 2000).

Yet, why was it that Mr Ramorula and Ms Madupe had had no such need of someone to explain the possibilities? They had both grasped every opportunity that arose from the presence of the Reserve. They had the correct 'thought pattern'. Indeed, the repeated opinion that villagers were dependent on external interventions if they were ever to realise benefits from the Reserve seemed to me to contradict the very existence of these two successful businesses. Mr Ramorula himself suggested that the reason more villagers did not manage to seize opportunities in the Reserve was based on a mixture of ignorance, cultural difference and laziness on the villagers' part:

I organised the rubbish collection by myself: I am a qualified [self-taught] salesman. If they want to, others [local villagers] can get involved. But they don't understand the procedure at Parks Board. Someone should explain it to them. There are many opportunities for everyone, like tendering for the fence maintenance. I have put in a tender. I can do all of it if I organise myself properly. I know people in the village don't like it that I am doing so much. But people in this village are lazy.... It is good that Mafisa comes here, but people here do not understand them. They just listen to the talking and the meetings, but they don't - It's African customs. People can preach and preach to them, but they don't do it. But also Mafisa people expect people to do these things when they don't get paid. But you can't do things if you are not paid (interview, 21 September 2000).

Such a perspective indicates that, as far as Mr Ramorula was concerned, what was needed was more than a workshopped transfer of knowledge. What was needed could well be described as a good mercenary 'spirit from within the people'. What was needed were the main ingredients of capitalism: freedom of choice, knowledge of market and control of resources - none of which, as will become clear from case studies presented below, had yet been provided by the Madikwe Initiative, even though such factors were central to its goals. What could not be escaped, therefore, was an inherent contradiction within the Madikwe Initiative: it was that of trying to target the most marginalised, the poorest of the poor, while simultaneously

functioning within a capitalist (or even imperialist) system of development that sought to turn all the villagers into good subjects of such a system.

## **A Culture of Consultants**

The very structure of Mafisa as an organisation further impacted on its ability to fulfil its aims – particularly when it came to establishing independent, stand-alone businesses. At its core were two main directors, one based in Johannesburg and one in Nelspruit. Then there were two people described as ‘associates of Mafisa’. In addition to their work for Mafisa, one was also doing a Masters degree in tourism and development and the other owned and managed his own ecology and planning consultancy business. A fifth person who was part of the inner circle of Mafisa, described as a tourism planner, was also an executive director of a tourism company. Beyond this core circle of directors and associates, other consultants were also employed by Mafisa to impart skills to the participants in the various projects the NGO managed.

Mafisa was therefore and fundamentally a loose network of consultants, each with various interests and commitments that went well beyond Mafisa projects. The consultants were brought into the Mafisa fold only when needed and called upon by the small unit of directors and associates – who themselves had interests and responsibilities that reached far beyond their Madikwe operations. The consultants were all based far afield, in places such as Johannesburg, Pretoria and even Cape Town. They would make flying visits to the Madikwe area, usually on a monthly basis (depending on what stage the project in question had reached), for a few days of intense workshops, meetings and planning. In order to keep tabs on what was happening in Madikwe while the consultants were focussing on other responsibilities in other areas, Mafisa also employed a field co-ordinator. This was particularly necessary as the consultants were paid on a daily basis so their visits were kept to a minimum in order to maximise the Madikwe Initiative funds. Such an arrangement inevitably created a particular set of problems and tensions that centred around project dependency. They are perhaps best described through looking more closely at a couple of the Madikwe Initiative projects: the theatre group and the internship programme.

## The Thakadu Theatre Group: Reinforcing Dependence

*Thakadu*, meaning anteater or *aardvark* in Setswana, is the totem animal of the BaTlokwa.<sup>186</sup> Mafisa initiated a theatre group project of that name in 1998, with the intention of promoting cultural tourism in the area and establishing an independent business that could service the Madikwe lodges.

Initially, the Thakadu theatre group seemed to have great potential for success. Its members had undergone professional training in acting, and their performances had met with a highly positive reception at lodges within Madikwe, from both lodge staff and guests. Yet, the project failed. Project participants perceived that this failure was largely due to their dependence on Mafisa, that they had not been empowered to access their own markets nor to function as an independent business. Such perceptions became a familiar thread running through many Madikwe Initiative projects.

The main aim of developing the theatre group project was to create a local dramatic performance group in order to access a potential market for cultural tourism within the private sector lodges. The Madikwe lodges were thus targeted as the theatre group's primary market. Mafisa brought in two professional drama school instructors from Gauteng as consultants, with a brief to train and direct the group. Originally the group comprised nine young people, three from Molatedi, four from Lekgophung and two from Supingstad. According to one member, advertising for actors in the villages was flawed from the start:

Mafisa didn't select the right people to be in the theatre. Mafisa never came to inform people in the village about the theatre, so people didn't know enough to get involved. So we didn't get all the right people and we ended up with only the seven. People thought it is not a man's job. Mafisa should have explained more. Then there would have been more than twenty [theatre group members]. Now we are having a problem finding replacements for the ones who are gone (interview, 25 September 2000).

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<sup>186</sup> The section on Molatedi in Appendix 3 provides a brief overview of the early history of the grouping of people known as BaTlokwa from whom the dominant leadership in Molatedi consider themselves descendants.

The first play developed and performed by the group was called *Modern Life*. It portrayed aspects of village life, culture and history. Six performances were staged, three of which were at lodges within the Reserve, before two of the members from Molatedi became sick, and one died. A second play, *Brother James*, was put together with the remaining seven members. It was also about Tswana culture and history but, at the behest of one of the consultant drama instructors, and in spite of the reluctance of several of the actors who found the subject matter 'colonial', 'irrelevant' or 'uninspiring', focussed mainly on the Anglo-Boer war and Mzilikazi, a nineteenth century leader of a group that came to be known as the Ndebele people, and who fled from what is now KwaZulu-Natal first onto the highveld and later to what is now Zimbabwe. From September 1999, the group put on a further nine performances, but only three of them were at lodges within the Reserve. The other six were at schools in the local area. Each performance at the lodges was met with a highly positive reception. According to one lodge tour-guide, who had been appointed the lodge's new general manager a few days before I interviewed him:

The theatre was brilliant. The guests loved them and there was very positive feedback. But they only came the once<sup>187</sup> and then never contacted us again. I can't believe we haven't had them back. They have got to sell themselves... They have to approach us (General Manager, Tau Lodge, 15 September, 2000).

Indeed, it became very apparent that the group's inability to source performance opportunities and to secure bookings was the major factor that led to its demise. The problem, again, lay in how the project was structured. Each booking within the Reserve was arranged by a Mafisa consultant, rather than by one or more members of the group themselves. Effectively this meant that the theatre group only performed in lodges when the consultant responsible had been in and around the area and had had time to focus on making bookings.

A further problem was the turnover of Mafisa personnel: there had been three different Mafisa field-coordinators when I conducted fieldwork in 2000. This meant that often the group was not entirely sure who was responsible for making bookings – a visiting consultant or the (also somewhat peripatetic) field coordinator. By the beginning of 2000 a Mafisa consultant had started negotiations for the group to sign a contract with Tau Lodge whereby they would stage two performances per month.

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<sup>187</sup> They actually performed twice at Tau Lodge.

The contract with Tau Lodge had not materialised by the time I left the area in October 2000. Theatre group members complained that they had no idea who was responsible for following up on it and one said: “I don’t believe that contract will ever be signed now”(interview, 25 September 2000). None of the members contacted the lodge directly. Rather, they waited for word from Mafisa, word that they said did not come.

To add to the sense of disillusionment with the Mafisa consultants’ failure to guide and capacitate the group’s members to a point where they were able to find themselves regular work, they were further upset to learn that the never formalised contract had, in any case, been one where they would simply perform at the lodge and be paid by the guests and at the guests’ discretion. In other words, rather than the lodge formally paying for the performances, the plan was that a hat would be passed around among the guests – a plan which theatre group members told me they took as a sign that the lodges did not value them: “The lodges have small interest in the theatre because they are not willing to pay for the performance. They take our business as if we are playing [rather than a serious, bona fide business]” (interview, 21 September, 2000).

One of the constraints on the group being able to arrange performances was, initially, lack of communication infrastructure. This was before an MTN (cellular phone network) mast was erected near Molatedi, a few months before my time in the field ended, providing reception for cellular phones for the first time. But until then the group had had no ready access to a telephone and, as there was only one Mafisa vehicle to be shared amongst all the projects, transport was largely limited to when a performance was actually booked. This was often given by group members as one of the main reasons it had had to rely on Mafisa consultants to organise bookings for them within the Reserve. Yet it was also evident that the group perceived itself as lacking the skills and knowledge to contact potential clients and secure its own bookings. It was a problem that they saw as going beyond communication difficulties to being a fundamental sign of their near total dependence on Mafisa. As the group’s treasurer remarked:

For the performances we have done we have never been invited to be part of the negotiations. We are too spoon-fed by Mafisa. But we need to learn so that, in the future, when Mafisa is gone we are able to do things for ourselves (theatre group member, 25 September 2000).

Members of the group expressed frustration at their own inability to break their dependency, and also that the structure of the Madikwe Initiative was ineffective in providing a way of addressing the problem. For example, representatives of DfID, the Madikwe Initiative's primary funder, came regularly to the villages to conduct evaluations of the projects. Theatre group members understood the evaluations to have been an opportunity for them to discuss problems they might be having with the project. Yet, according to the treasurer, the evaluation interviews were unhelpfully one-sided and succeeded in little more than emphasising the Madikwe Initiative's top-down power structure:

They only asked us who trained us and how many times we performed. They never asked us about problems we might have. They are just seeing projects started with their money. They are not interested in related problems. They never even think of hearing from the people, of asking if the project is progressing smoothly. They were too much in a hurry. They came late [for the meeting] and were rushed (theatre group member 25 September 2000).

Eventually, the limited number of performances scheduled in lodges, and the resulting insufficient and sporadic income, coupled with a certain disenchantment with the subject matter of the second play, created seemingly irresolvable frictions within the group and led to it disbanding. In the words of one of the actors:

To me it was a very important project. But it was very disappointing. We won't do any more plays now. The members are not co-operating. Some members wanted to be rich overnight, but it doesn't work like that. We would get R100-R200 for the performances in the lodges, and that would be shared between the seven. At the schools the students would only pay R1 or R2. So money was a big problem. Now the project will just fade out and finish. There is no future. One member has gone to Botswana to work in a tannery workshop. Even if a lodge said to come and perform tomorrow, we would have big problems getting the members together (theatre group member, 27 September 2000).

The case of the theatre group illustrates the project's utter dependency on Mafisa. Indeed, its participants suggested that the project was thwarted right from the start because Mafisa failed to explain what it was about and hence was unable to attract sufficient participants. But even once the small group was up and running, it was incapable of accessing its potential markets, of sourcing performance opportunities in the lodges. Mafisa's very structure – from its elusive consultants to its whole top

down approach – bred dependency. And, as far as the group was concerned, DfID's representatives merely reinforced a power structure which left the participants subjugated, their voices unheard.

The internship programme was also unsustainable. But, unlike with the theatre group, such lack of sustainability was only to be expected with a training course that was necessarily dependent on instructors and funding. What is particularly significant about the programme, as a closer examination in the following section highlights, was that it revealed an uncomfortable contradiction within the Madikwe Initiative's rhetoric of targeting the poorest of the poor – precisely because the programme could not reach that target group: the interns were selected because they were the best educated, most charismatic and self-confident of applicants, rather than because they were poor and marginalised.

## **The Lodge Internship Programme**

One day I was going to the shop to buy some bread and I saw this advert for tour guiding. I didn't know what this was but I just said to myself: 'OK, go for it. This is an opportunity.' There were about ninety people who applied. Only twenty-four got through to the next interviews, then fourteen, then eight. Many people, especially at the finals, were much more brilliant than me. I don't know why I was chosen. Maybe they just liked my smile! Before, I was doing nothing, just sitting at home. Now there are opportunities opening. So many!... I want to be a vet. I plan to generate income by ranging and then, before ten years, go to university and study to be a vet. And I want to travel – everywhere! (interview with intern, River Lodge, 22 August 2000).

I was in Mafikeng when my mum called me and said to me to come along because they were doing interviews for tour guiding and women could go too. So I went, and they liked me! It is such a pleasure being the only woman tracker here [at Tau Lodge]. I always thought it was a field only for the men. Being here I can see that anyone can do it. I am doing it! I think after five years of experiencing the bush [it] will be enough, and then in ten years I want to be running my own lodge, or managing something (interview with intern, Tau Lodge, 15 September 2000).

The Madikwe Initiative's lodge internship programme, launched in 1999, involved the comprehensive training of eight young village people (six men and two women, all in their early twenties) in all aspects of lodge management, tour guiding and game ranging. A selection committee, comprising Mafisa consultants as well as representatives from the local private sector such as the assistant manager of Tau Lodge, was established to interview prospective candidates. The candidates needed to be able to speak English and to have completed high school-obtained matriculation

certificates. The three village Tribal Authority offices were contacted to recommend names of applicants. Problems were encountered immediately in Supingstad where, as discussed in chapter four, only people with the surname of Suping were nominated. Under the terms of the Madikwe Initiative's mandate, participants had to be selected 'democratically' from amongst all village residents. Madikwe Initiative consultants said they felt they could not condone what appeared to be blatant nepotism. Yet, when asked to put forward names of people other than those called Suping, Chief Suping refused. The result was that five candidates were chosen from Lekgophung, three from Molatedi and none from Supingstad (interview with Mafisa Consultant, 15 April 2000). That was the first flashpoint in the conflict I described in chapter four between Chief Suping and Mafisa.

The aim of the lodge internship project was to train the young people to a point where they would be sufficiently enabled and capacitated to command top level jobs in lodges throughout South Africa and beyond. During my research, the project was often cited by those respondents (from lodges, villages and the NWP&TB) familiar with the Madikwe Initiative, as the most successfully empowering of the Initiative's projects, and one that constituted precisely the kind of opportunity needed in post-apartheid South Africa for people such as they. The programme's potential was reflected in the fact that discussions began for it to be run as a national pilot project with one hundred trainees being taken on as interns in game parks and reserves around the country and trained in much the same way as the Madikwe Initiative pilot had done for its eight interns. As the park warden of Madikwe said:

One of the most exciting projects is the Internship Programme which has now become a national thing... That is very important because the lodges all want to employ skilled people from the area. Now they can't use the excuse that there isn't anybody. There are trained guides that understand the whole lodge setup (interview, 21 September 2000).<sup>188</sup>

An important aspect of the project was that the interns lived and worked in Madikwe lodges and learned tracking skills from qualified rangers. In this way, they received first hand experience not only in tracking wild animals, but with tour guiding and

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<sup>188</sup> These discussions began as I was leaving the area and the future of the project looked extremely positive. Sadly, I recently heard that the national pilot never transpired. In fact, only one more internship programme was run, and that only because Mafisa managed to source private funding (pers. com. P.J. Massyn, 7 June 2007).

interacting with guests. Mafisa also secured the services of a number of consultants to teach the interns subjects such as history and literature pertinent to the area. This aspect of their training programme was co-ordinated by an historian from Cape Town. Projects included sourcing and researching local myths and stories to perform for tourists, in order to add a cultural element to the wildlife tourism that Madikwe offered.

Respondents from the lodges' management staff and rangers were generally very positive about the project, saying it was well run by Mafisa. Moreover, the interns were well received by tourists I spoke to, various of whom said they enjoyed the opportunity of talking to people from the local villages: "It's fascinating talking with these guys. I am really interested in the local culture. I don't just want to see the big-five. I want to know how the people live around here. For me that is the real South Africa, the whole experience" (interview with American tourist, 24 September 2000). Negative comments were few, flavoured with cultural racist/imperialist undertones, and came mainly from white lodge staff. For example, at Tau Lodge the head ranger voiced concerns about the interns' ability to converse intelligently with guests. He suggested, contrary to my own experience, that language was the crux of the problem:

The internship programme is an effective way of improving skills and knowledge. [Yet] There are problems. There is a perception that you can create a ranger over eight months and expect him to be safe in the bush with wild animals out there, and to be able to hold an intelligent conversation with overseas businessmen. Can he sit down at dinner and have a conversation with the chairman of Anglo American? It is difficult to do that sort of thing. You need to be a good host and I am a bit concerned about our trainees. The main problem is speaking good English. They come from a background of speaking only their own language and it is virtually impossible for them to speak good English in such a short time. They need to be sent to someone who can improved their language skills (Head Ranger, Tau, 15 September 2000).

The manager at River Lodge was even more negative:

The intern project is good and bad. If I want to learn something, I go out of my way. These guys are always complaining about the hours. It's a Tswana thing.... My immediate feel here is that they are lazy and don't want to work. When I studied I used to work after hours very late, and I had a part time job to pay the fees... These guys are too molly coddled (Manager, River Lodge, 17 September 2000).

It is necessary to point out that both times I met the River Lodge manager everything he said was coloured with highly racist comments. Most of the staff my field assistants and I spoke to, unlike in the other two lodges, were not happy working there, complaining of being badly treated. For example: "The most difficult things

here are coping with racial discrimination, having low wages and eating food that is not good. There are no good aspects at all” (interview with a house keeping worker, River Lodge, 22 August 2000). I was not surprised when I heard the manager had been removed from the Lodge.

At Jaci’s Camp the manager had no such problems and said that the interns were a great bonus to the lodge. The most negative comment he made was to do with perceptions among the staff – and because of its far more reasonable tone (given the absence of racist overtones) it provides a helpful insight regarding the views of the ranger and other lodge manager cited above:

...I have heard via the grapevine that there is a lot of – resentment is the wrong word – trepidation about it [the internship programme], because people are coming into the lodges to be trained up to succeed the people who are working in the lodges, and that obviously kind of puts people’s backs up. There is a perception amongst all lodge staff, staff who come from the local communities as well – they feel threatened that here comes a young upstart who is going to come in here and learn how to do their job.... People’s jobs, particularly in this area, are very precious. Nobody is going to want to train their replacement (Manager, Jaci’s Camp, 4 July 2000).

Underlying the criticisms of those whose jobs are threatened by the interns, and by the affirmative action policies of the present government, is fear – or, at best, resentment. Once they have the necessary skills, what can possibly stop the bright, charismatic youth of those formally marginalised populations from taking their jobs? Indeed, the interns were highly enthusiastic about the great opportunities the project offered and told me that they expected that there would be no difficulty finding lucrative and satisfying employment on completion of their training.

Yet they also raised concerns similar to those of the theatre group. Such concerns revolved around issues of managerial control and, for some, financial difficulties. While undergoing the training, although all expenses were covered, the interns were not paid a salary. This was problematic for some, especially those who had been gainfully employed prior to commencing the course. For example, one had been a school teacher and another had worked in a bush clearing team and now they were not earning to support dependents.

All the interns said that they were over dependent on Mafisa as the project's only source of funding. Their concerns went beyond merely participating in and completing the internship training programme. Indeed, and in a way that indicated a lack of trust in Mafisa, they expressed a desire to be involved with the broader mechanisms of project management, including the donor-funding process. For example:

Mafisa should let us be involved with donors. They should help us to understand that system so we will know what to do when they go. Now we are so dependent on them that if they leave we are really helpless. Also, the most important thing is to involve us.... If they just get someone from outside for the big meetings, we don't know what is going on as there is no one to represent us (group interview with interns, 15 September 2000).

Similarly, knowing that funding was limited, the interns raised questions about Mafisa's priorities, and their own lack of voice in choosing those priorities. For example, Mafisa went to the expense of inviting two expert Gauteng-based consultants in local literature, something the interns regarded as unnecessarily wasteful, to come and teach the interns for a day. In the words of one intern:

They keep hiring more and more people to come and do this and that. But we don't see the need... They kept coming with more people, like those literature people, [who] cost more and more money. They were good, but unnecessary and a waste of money, because then they told us there was no money for our drivers' licences. Our learners permits are about to expire and now they tell us they don't have the money. They shouldn't promise us things they can't do. They should have told us they can't afford it and then we can think on our own what to do, and make a plan (group interview with interns, 15 September 2000).

The above is representative of concerns raised by other project participants that Mafisa was not very systematically organised when it came to structuring projects around budgetary limitations. At their most negative, such opinions became as strong as "Mafisa is squandering money" or even outright accusations of embezzlement. While Mafisa did keep strict financial records, and was inevitably closely monitored by DfID, it was evident that its project implementation methods were also somewhat haphazard – not least because of the apparently unavoidable turnover in Madikwe Initiative personnel, a point to which I return below.

Despite such criticisms, the internship programme was perhaps the most unconditionally successful of Madikwe Initiative projects. As a general manager from the NWP&TB said:

The Madikwe Initiative, especially the internship programme, is unlocking the potential in the villages. It is a great opportunity for skills development and then people can become employed in the tourism industry. The objective is to contribute by giving people capacity to take opportunities, to invest in MGR (interview, 25 July 2000).

Indeed, as the two quotes at the beginning of this section reveal, the interns had clear aspirations to use the programme as a stepping stone towards real autonomy. On a rhetorical level at least, the programme was helping interns to develop such aspirations and imagine significant life goals that would enable them to become self-sufficient. This again underscores the view, often presented by village respondents, that education is the most effective means to a long-term goal.

Yet, it is important to remember that the interns were chosen for the project because they had been among the academically brightest and better educated of youth in the villages. It was the more advantaged (and hence secure) people such as the interns (and salaried professionals such as the school principals cited above) who were able to think strategically and imagine long-term goals. While the interns were undoubtedly learning skills necessary to take up senior employment positions in lodges, it was also evident that they were not the poorest of the poor, nor the most marginalised of an impoverished, underdeveloped population. Again, the Madikwe Initiative's rhetorical notions of development (and democracy)<sup>189</sup> were inconsistent with its practice: on one level it claimed to target the most marginalised; on the other it recruited those already relatively capacitated and within the mainstream, some interns having left jobs to take up the opportunity Mafisa offered. In such a way the Madikwe Initiative also undermined its own ability to fulfil its overall goal which was to redress the imbalance of power between the partners of the Madikwe project and enable the 'local community' as a whole to become an equal stakeholder.

## **Dependency, Sustainability and the Balance of Power**

The examples of the theatre group and the internship programme highlight several overlapping themes that recurred throughout each of the Madikwe Initiative projects.

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<sup>189</sup> I have outlined the Madikwe Initiative's approach to development in earlier chapters. See, for example, the section *Democracy: A Versatile Abstraction* in chapter four, where I also discuss an inherent tension between its democratic principles and its aims to target the most disadvantaged of the population.

These themes centred around issues of managerial control, ownership, project dependence, sustainability, empowerment and autonomy. Particularly significant was that the theatre group, two and a half years into the Madikwe Initiative's presence and six months after the end of DfID's original terms of funding, was still heavily dependent on Mafisa and the Reserve, as were other Madikwe Initiative projects such as the brick making teams, the construction teams and the bush clearing teams. For example, the bush clearing in the Reserve was all financially dependent on state funding that was channelled through the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) or national Poverty Relief money.<sup>190</sup> A consequence was that workers had become used to being paid at rates higher than those available on contract in the private sector. The bush clearing team leaders, who acted as contractors, thus found that the prices they had been paid in the Reserve exceeded what local farmers were willing to pay for bush clearing services. Furthermore, work within the Reserve was limited by the availability of the external funding, which was sporadic. As one contractor said: "We are dependent on the Reserve because they have the equipment. Also there is not enough funding and we are always dependent on funding" (interview, Supingstad, 24 August 2000).

Phrases I heard from villagers such as 'we are too spoon-fed'; 'we need to learn...to do things for ourselves'; 'we are so dependent on [Mafisa] that if they leave we are really helpless'; 'for the big meetings... there is no one to represent us'; 'it was decided without our participatory involvement' reveal that project participants held strongly negative views about their dependence on Mafisa as an exogenous development body. Indeed, none of the projects was self-sustaining although, during my fieldwork, the theatre group was the only Madikwe Initiative project to collapse entirely. Although the group had the necessary skills and training to stage performances it was wholly dependent on Mafisa consultants to arrange those performances at lodges and its members were not able effectively to source work

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<sup>190</sup> Bush clearing was part of a nationwide drive to clear South Africa of invasive alien species, initiated by the Working For Water (WfW) programme, an inter-departmental initiative led by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and the Department of Agriculture. Its aims were to "protect and restore biological diversity [and]...to create jobs and combat poverty, particularly in rural areas (A Working for Water Programme pamphlet, undated). Although it was a WfW initiative, funded by DWAF rather than DfID, the bush clearing project was implemented by Mafisa under the Madikwe Initiative. By the time I was conducting fieldwork in 2000, the project was being run directly by WfW as the training had been completed.

opportunities within the private sector for themselves. Yet, despite so many respondents complaining so eloquently about project dependence, their views apparently had no effect, even though many were formally reported to the NWP&TB.<sup>191</sup> Their complaints did little in terms of bringing about any visible change in the power structure of the projects or in the approach Mafisa's consultants adopted. In fact it became increasingly apparent that the people contracted as consultants by Mafisa were primarily consulting with Mafisa rather than with the villagers; in other words, they took their directives from Mafisa, and contributed to Mafisa as an institution, whilst regarding their role in the villages as an advisory or teaching one only. They therefore failed really to consult with villagers.

The high degree of dependence, coupled with indications of the limited success of projects (such as the dispersal of the theatre group), strongly suggests that the undeniably top down approach to development practiced by the Madikwe Initiative was ineffective, at least in the short period for which the original DfID award was provided. Moreover, the very structure of the Mafisa-led Initiative encouraged, if not ensured, that projects were heavily reliant on Mafisa or the Reserve, or both. In large part, this dependence was because the Madikwe Initiative programme was designed around the Reserve. Development was seen as something to be driven and shaped by the Reserve's presence and its need for labour, curios, servicing businesses and so on, rather than as something that should be designed around villagers themselves and their needs, interests and priorities. The Reserve, rather than the villagers, were at the centre of NWP&TB and Madikwe Initiative thinking, and the result was an inevitably high degree of dependence on the Reserve.

Furthermore, evident within the Initiative's literature is a belief in its need to retain power and to act as a watchdog – a belief that Mafisa is better equipped than village residents to control resources and make developmental decisions. For example, the same Madikwe Initiative document I quoted earlier in this chapter states that if initiatives are to be effectively driven in the Madikwe area, village level committees need to be 'strengthened and unified' through capacity building programmes (Koch, 2000:17). Such a claim is highly problematic. Top-down, exogenous interference

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<sup>191</sup> Complaints were made directly to Mafisa consultants (conversation with Mafisa associate, 12 April, 2000), as well as to me in the course of my fieldwork. Those made to me I compiled into a section called *Voicing the Issues* in my report for the NWP&TB.

with local governance can have complex and detrimental repercussions, repercussions that Mafisa's directors, Koch and Massyn (1999), thoroughly addressed in *Challenging Eden*. They also argued there that tensions and conflicts over local governance, particularly in Molatedi, were pronounced, and that development interventions needed to be able to accommodate such conflicts if they were to realise their potential. Furthermore, within people-based development discourse there is an implicit understanding that capacity building should be locally instigated and driven, a long-term process sustained by local knowledge and ideas (Bolnick, interview 5 June 2002) rather than exogenously motivated.

In addition to expressing a need to intercede in village-based committees, and in a way that would implicitly but effectively remove power and control even further from the village level, Koch's (2000) Madikwe Initiative document also emphasises that external monitoring of such local committees was required:

local government [i.e. formal local government institutions] is explicitly identified in a range of development and constitutional regulations as the institution to oversee development ... and frequently intervene, sometimes in a 'top-down' way, to ensure that village level committees function in an equitable way...[and that] NGOs and other trusted or impartial brokers can also play this mediation role... Experience has shown it is not always wise to rely simplistically or romantically on the CBNRM assumption that shifting control down to 'grassroots' local groups will inevitably result in good governance and management (Koch, 2000:13-17).

Considering Mafisa's frustration in Molatedi with a profusion there of under-capacitated and conflicting village-based committees, it is not surprising that it assigned itself the role of what Koch calls an 'impartial broker' with the right, if not the duty, to 'frequently intervene' in order to ensure development initiatives were driven effectively.<sup>192</sup> But it also leads to an unavoidable conclusion that the Madikwe Initiative was thus, and in no uncertain terms, unashamedly a top-down intervention programme, with Mafisa acting as the 'trusted' central powerhouse driving the projects. The obvious question to ask is: trusted by whom? Mafisa was not, on the whole, entirely trusted by project participants – as the project case studies illustrate. Nor were they trusted by many of those of my respondents in the villages who expressed an opinion about the Madikwe Initiative. Was the trust place in Mafisa a

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<sup>192</sup> Chapter five is devoted to Molatedi's committees and the frustrations they prompted.

trust that itself came from the top down – from DfID as a funding agency concerned to ensure efficient and accounted-for use of its resources?

The propensity for top-down development interventions to breed project dependence has been well documented and has little need for further comment here – indeed, top down approaches have been effectively critiqued and discredited by numerous critics, as I discussed in chapter three (see also, for example, Cernea, 1991, Gardner and Lewis, 1996, Henkel and Stirrat, 1996, Rew, 1997, Tucker, 1999). What is of particular significance is the unintended impacts of those interventions, especially how many respondents, in response to the disequilibrium of power, questioned the structure and operation of the Madikwe Initiative, generating a discourse of discontent about Mafisa's retention of control over the Initiative's projects.

### **Absent Management and the Question of Autonomy**

Mafisa's directors and associates, all based far afield, had complete managerial control of the Madikwe Initiative, and its projects-in-progress were run largely by exogenous consultants. The consultants, too, were all based in distant places and visited the area sporadically only. Recognising the need for on-going and effective communication between the Initiative's projects, their respective project managers (who were rarely there), and the partners in the greater Madikwe Reserve project, Mafisa had employed a field co-ordinator shortly after launching the DfID-funded Initiative. That person was meant to reside in Madikwe, to be on the spot to oversee and liaise with projects, to deal with any problems that might arise with the projects and to report regularly to the largely absent management.

The first field co-ordinator, whom I here call Joseph, was a black Setswana-speaking man. He was described to me by Mafisa agents as an affirmative action appointment, a so-called previously disadvantaged individual. His main duties, I was told, had been to liaise between Mafisa management, the private sector lodge management, the NWP&TB's Madikwe Reserve staff and the Madikwe Initiative projects in the villages. But he left, before my fieldwork commenced, under a largely unexplained cloud. Jeanette, the Madikwe's ecologist's wife, then filled the position temporarily until a white, English-speaking woman from Pretoria (I call her Barbara) was

appointed by Mafisa's directors in May 2000. Barbara described herself as an expert in conflict resolution and claimed she had had prior experience in dealing with service providers and in sourcing funding. Accordingly, Barbara's job description, which she described as 'nebulous', involved managing the Initiative on a larger scale. Her tasks included liaising with donors and with service providers – and hence required frequent trips to Gauteng. Furthermore, although she stayed in the Reserve during each week, she returned to her husband in Pretoria for weekends which became progressively prolonged after she became pregnant a few months into the job. As a result, she was often out of the Madikwe area, and not constantly available, as Joseph or Jeanette had been before her, to attend to queries and problems arising in the projects. Inevitably there were pitfalls with the new arrangements, most stemming from her absences from the Reserve itself.

Among many respondents involved in Madikwe Initiative projects, one of the biggest bones of contention, aside from the limited contact they had with Barbara, was that she could not speak Setswana. This was particularly significant as Joseph before her had been the only Setswana speaking person in a managerial position within Mafisa. Chief Suping lost no time in stressing the problem to me: "How many people are there in Mafisa? How many can speak Setswana? Why not have people who can communicate with our people?" (interview, 29 August 2000). While Chief Suping's general antagonism towards Mafisa could possibly have coloured his negative view, the chairperson of the Lekgophung RDP Forum, the committee which dealt with development initiatives concerning the village and which was generally highly supportive of Mafisa, had the same concern, a concern that was repeatedly voiced by village respondents, and raised in three focus group discussions:

We thought that woman [Barbara] would be doing Joseph's work. He used to visit us frequently, she doesn't. We don't know what her role is. We thought Mafisa could employ someone with a knowledge of the language of the people, but she cannot speak Setswana. It is a problem because if she can't find me, she cannot communicate with the others. Those people have difficulty expressing themselves in English. Barbara is only a help when I am here (interview with middle aged man, RDP Forum chairperson, Lekgophung, 26 August 2000).

...Most of the people employed in Mafisa are white. They fired Joseph and we were not told why. He was able to communicate in Setswana with the people, unlike the woman [Barbara] who is employed now. She cannot communicate with us and we find this very difficult... It would be better if the RDP [forum] together with the community and chief could just sit down and write a letter together to the people of Mafisa telling them that they are not satisfied about how they just expelled Mr

Joseph from his post. They should ask Mafisa to choose a better person who can speak the language of the people (interview with young man, Lekgophung, 17 August 2000).

Such views contrasted strongly with those of Mafisa agents as well as several NWP&TB respondents, who repeatedly stressed the advisability of development initiatives being removed from village-level control in order to avoid inter committee conflicts. In the words of Madikwe's park warden:

I think Mafisa's failures were, and still are to an extent, having too many people involved in running this. It creates confusion in the communities. Their previous liaison person [Joseph], a PDI [previously disadvantaged individual], was not up to scratch and was unable to fulfil his mandate. A lot of time was wasted there but now it seems to be running better since they employed someone with more experience and training. It is better to appoint an outsider, someone who can drive initiatives through and be above the village structures (interview, 25 July 2000).

The problem of language was also raised by some project members who said that they had difficulties understanding the consultants who ran the workshops – most forcibly by members of the construction teams, who needed to learn technical skills in a language foreign to them and all within the limited space of a short series of workshops. Yet, ironically, given that some respondents complained that they often could not understand the consultants, many said the solution was to hold additional workshops, and I repeatedly heard comments such as “we need to be workshopped more”, indicating that project members were embracing the development agenda, with its jargon and methods seemingly intact. This initially seemed to contradict often repeated claims that the consultants were the ones who benefited most from the Madikwe Initiative. But, as I demonstrate below, it became increasingly evident that these respondents were not, in fact, buying wholesale into the hegemonic development discourse. Rather, they were selecting and appropriating certain aspects that could help strengthen local autonomy. As with the conflict between Chief Suping and Mafisa, these respondents saw the real problem as not being about the methods of development but about who was exercising control over those methods – and the resources available to put them into effect.

Among village respondents, one of the few people I interviewed who did not say that the Madikwe Initiative's co-ordinator's language was an issue was the manager of Lekgophung's new business centre, a middle aged man, a strong, 'no-nonsense' type

character who himself spoke good English, was a member of the RDP forum and was well connected in the village. It was not difficult to see why Mafisa's directors found him an attractive candidate for the management of the business centre, much as they had the eight selected interns. Indeed, according to another respondent who worked within the Madikwe Initiative, he was "knit closely" with Mafisa, and had been unfairly appointed: "...when [the manager] was chosen for the business centre, five people applied, but the others didn't have a chance. They interviewed him at his house and even made the conclusion there. It was not fair and this sort of thing creates conflicts" (Lekgophung Resident, 12 August 2000).

Throughout my interview with him, the business centre manager was adamant that Mafisa could do no wrong. Its agents were the people who "broke down the Berlin Door" [sic] and hence created opportunities for the villagers to start becoming involved in the Reserve. Below is an extract from the interview which illustrates his views on the language issue:

Q: Some people find it problematic that the new field coordinator can't speak Setswana..

R: That doesn't matter! You can't force her to speak Setswana. Why can't those people speak her language? If they want to blame her, why can't they talk her language?

Q: But people could question why Mafisa doesn't employ someone who can speak Setswana.

R: Exactly. But let's say [ask] why? If they can't find someone who can speak Setswana, what must they do? The post must stay open? (Interview, Lekgophung, 26 August 2000).

The business manager's opinions initially struck me as almost absurdly biased; he seemed to be a man who knew on which side his bread was buttered. But, as time went on, I began to feel he was raising an important point: language was perhaps not, contrary to what I had thought I had understood from interviews with project participants, the insurmountable problem jeopardising the success of projects. Although it was not ideal for workshops, for example, to be conducted in a language other than that which was the trainees' mother tongue, it was a difficulty that could, and was, overcome: the brick makers had learned how to make bricks; the theatre group had learned how to stage plays; the construction teams had learned how to

build structures such as ‘drifts’;<sup>193</sup> and the bush clearers had become expert in handling specialised machinery and herbicides – and all despite language differences.

Yet, some of my respondents had taken the issue further by firmly stating that problems with communication went beyond being merely a question of language to becoming far more negative questions of race, colour and cultural difference: “They must employ consultants who can be understood easily and not keep sending all these white people. I suggest they mix them with black people” (interview, young man, brick maker, Lekgophung, 20 August 2000); “They are training people with skills, but it is bad that they are employing [as trainers] only white people who cannot communicate with our elders” (young man, Security Guard, Jaci’s Camp, 22 August); and “My understanding about Mafisa is that they are really too white and they don’t want people who understand the work [of others].... They are comfortable when they are alone, doing nothing alone. I want to ask Mafisa to change their attitude” (interview, middle aged woman, member of a garden project,<sup>194</sup> Molatedi, 21 September 2000).

The more I, with my unmistakably white skin, spoke to people – and always in English, at best occasionally sprinkled with a few token Setswana words – the more it seemed to me that the issue was not purely about whether or not consultants spoke English or Setswana, or even what colour their skin happened to be. There was I, a white English speaker, apparently escaping resentment. But I was not a project manager, a wielder of power, a holder of resources – or an imparter of knowledge. People did not *need* to understand me. Yet, for the most part, they managed to do so, if not directly then with the aid of translators.

It became increasingly apparent that the antipathy expressed about language and about race was more a protest over the balance of power which left all decision making and control of financial resources with people regarded as outsiders. Respondents could not see, nor even imagine, Mafisa involving local residents on a managerial level, empowering villagers to be in control of the greater mechanisms of

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<sup>193</sup> Fords to help enable roads to be passable during floods.

<sup>194</sup> The garden project was not a Madikwe Initiative project. It was started in 1997, funded by Segream South Africa.

the Madikwe Initiative. All they saw was a succession of white outsiders arriving and acting as if they were the only knowledgeable experts. Such observations were not limited to project participants. According to the NWP&TB's Madikwe operational warden:

Since Mafisa started, I can't see any local people who have taken executive positions, or who are being trained as executive managers, or who are participating in any way in Mafisa's executive capacity. I always see people coming from far afield. If it is because of incapacity amongst local people then why don't they train them? That is the only thing that worries me. They [Mafisa] are not locally situated and if they leave, everything will fall apart. If they had just one person on site - just one amongst all those people, that person will be able to carry on and source funding or whatever (interview, 27 August 2000).

The NWP&TB itself did employ a black Setswana-speaker as their local community liaison officer (CLO). Like all the NWP&TB personnel, the CLO was employed through the Board's head office in Mafikeng and was therefore not from the local area. Despite his language skills and, moreover, his skin colour, I rarely heard a positive word spoken about him in the villages. Rather, his association with the NWP&TB and Mafisa was held against him. Comments such as the following were common: "[the CLO] may as well vaccinate all the animals, he is so bad as a CLO" (Molatedi resident, 14 September, 2000); "The CLO must know the aspirations of the community. That man... I don't know. To me he is part of Mafisa - he dances to their music. How often does he come to Supingstad? I don't know. What does he come here for? An emphatic I don't know" (Chief Suping, 29 August, 2000); "[The CLO] is supposed to represent the reserve to us, but everyone is complaining about him. They say he is not a man of his word. He makes promises and never fulfils them" (RDP Chairperson, Lekgophung, 26 August 2000).

Such rancour towards the CLO, a Tswana man, went beyond whether or not he was good or bad at his job. Rather it was another indication that the deeper problem project respondents were raising was not about language, race or colour. Instead, such signifiers of difference were revealing of a clear perception that those in control of resources were all outsiders, the 'other', as opposed to 'us' the villagers, and that that was a threat both to the possibility of real capacity building and to any sense of local autonomy. Frequently, villagers, feeling imposed-upon, expressed their antagonism towards these outsiders in terms of language (and race), as a means to address and

contest power structures and hopefully thereby to regain control – and local autonomy.

What this shows is that the development encounter had provoked an increasingly vocal protest about exogenous control and the exercise of power. A central element of the protest was thus to discredit the manner in which Mafisa was operating its development interventions: Mafisa's top-down approach was portrayed to me, by many project participants, as illogical, irrational and doomed to failure. Through the use of development language ('we need to be workshopped more', 'we need to be empowered to do things for ourselves', 'we need to be represented at the big meetings', 'they must not decide things without our participatory involvement'), project participants were expressing how the Madikwe Initiative was failing to realise its own rhetorical aims of empowerment and capacity building.

Those and other criticisms revealed an inherent ambivalence in the way Mafisa operated as a development organisation. The Madikwe Initiative was supposedly functioning in the villages in order to benefit village residents, to build capacity and to bring empowerment. Yet, according to many village respondents, it was apparently not only failing to empower (the projects were still highly dependent and unsustainable because local capacity was nowhere near adequate and no long-term vision of capacity building seemed evident in the Initiative's approach to interventions) but was itself simultaneously reaping the majority of benefits through, for example, its control over resources and decision making and through the way it used resources on its consultants' salaries.

The presence of such criticisms about Mafisa indicated that respondents were not, on the whole, merely down-trodden, dependent objects of development. Rather, such criticisms discursively disrupted Mafisa's authority. They revealed the existence and persistence of a power imbalance that left villagers still bottom of the hierarchy, albeit with a voice to express their discontent. And they made it clear that such an imbalance rendered the Madikwe Initiative rather more ineffective than Mafisa (and DfID) had anticipated it should have been.

It was people's experience of participating in and observing Mafisa-led projects that had provoked this response, a response which itself initiated the creation of an increasingly united endogenous discourse of limited yet growing resistance to domination by exogenous agents – a discourse that went beyond the projects to other village respondents who were familiar with the Madikwe Initiative. Indeed, it was respondents who were not actually participating in Madikwe Initiative projects who levelled some of the harshest criticisms at Mafisa:

Mafisa do not fulfil their promises. They are an organisation that benefits by using other people. They need to understand our problems and to do that they need to consult the community. Projects are not progressing as expected. [The consultants] are making fools out of people (School Principal, Lekgophung, 21 August, 2000).

The most negative thing is that people who are supposed to be training our people, they are benefiting more than the people. They are building up capital for NGOs and they are the ones benefiting most at the end of the day. Little or nothing has been done in Supingstad. In Lekgophung there are a few things like the resource centre, but to me, after so many years, it is very little....Where are the initial records? DfID initially gave over four million Rand for the Madikwe Initiative to establish a fund for the three villages, but everything changed with the introduction of consultants. What happened to that money? I have not seen anything happening and I think we need an enquiry into their activities. If people have handled projects that involve funds, and nothing has been produced, there must be an enquiry into how those funds were used... (Chief Suping, 29 August, 2000).

Outside consultants with good intentions are welcome. But let me be honest: they [themselves] benefit a lot. More than the people they were sent to help. They are paid even when they do nothing. They are squandering money (Older man, Molatedi resident, 26 August, 2000).

The evident distrust of Mafisa and many of the consultants it employed is central in the above comments. It was a distrust that was strikingly similar to the distrust that several of the NWP&TB's management personnel as well as the majority of Mafisa consultants had about the villagers. That distrust was implicit in their beliefs that initiatives needed to be driven by supra-village structures, that the majority needed to be protected from a powerful local minority. The Madikwe Initiative, it seemed, was thus itself a site of mutual distrust. Phrases such as 'Mafisa do not fulfil their promises'; 'we need an enquiry into their activities'; 'They are squandering money' were evidence of deeply rooted perceptions that Mafisa and its personnel and consultants were benefiting at the expense of villagers, and a determination to claim control of resources for people at village level.

Such a perspective sheds a new light on Chief Tsiepe's comment: 'Before, there was nothing', quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Before the Madikwe Initiative, control of what limited resources there were was located in the villages, albeit heavily contested between different organisations and committees, particularly in Molatedi. But at least it was not held and exercised by external agents. The Madikwe Initiative had brought a sense that there was now, in contrast, actually a void, and it was one that was filled by those exogenous power-wielders. Villagers had been relegated to a marginalised position in an area where once they (or, at least, their chiefs) had been autonomous – and that, ironically, in a context where they had been under the deeply marginalising South African apartheid government. Now, many village respondents were beginning to see the new system of 'democracy and development' as yet another process which generated a sense of loss of control, of growing dependency; and they were starting to highlight the need to select, reject and appropriate exogenous methods, ideas and personnel if there was to be any possibility that the process might be reversed. This was particularly ironic in light of the new South Africa's democratic intentions of capacity building and empowerment, and it begged questions regarding the motives behind such notions. As James (1999:14) says: "Perhaps we should ask whether this seemingly benign and democratic liberal language does not mask the practical realities of the political and financial decisions shaping relief and development aid today, and helping to shape the structural political realities of tomorrow?" Empowerment, in this light, could be equated with subjection, the subjection of moulding people to fit into a new allegedly democratic order, not on their own terms but on the terms of a set of exogenous models. It was application of those exogenous models that ensured the majority of village residents would remain the weak leg of the Madikwe Project. And it was for that reason that the then still relatively inchoate rumblings of discontent about the models were beginning to rise to the surface.

But, the weak leg had the potential, largely through its responses to such exogenous interventions, to show that dominant power structures often have ambiguous, contradictory aims, as well as a particularly impoverished, synchronic view of development – especially given their failure to address long-term capacity building, to focus on future generations. The power of the weak leg, therefore, lay in its ability to strike a note of discord, to emphasise the imbalance created by the two dominant

partners of the Madikwe project – a project that was shaped and operated not by villagers but by external dominating players. For the moment that discordant note was still relatively muted, loud enough for me to hear from my perspective as a social analyst undertaking long-term fieldwork in the villages, but largely unheard by the dominant partners of the Madikwe project.

## Chapter Eight

### Concluding Comments

Over a decade after the country's first democratic elections, dealing with the legacies of apartheid is still one of the greatest challenges facing South Africa. Levels of poverty are particularly extreme for the majority of people living in marginalised areas such as many of the rural parts of the former homelands, which were systematically underdeveloped during the colonial and apartheid periods. Such rural economies have, on the whole, remained depressed in the post-apartheid era, despite some efforts by central government to stimulate development. Unemployment is high and income-generating opportunities are scarce. The concept of people-based conservation, whereby local residents are intended to reap significant economic and developmental benefits from ecotourism and conservation-related activities, is deeply alluring, particularly in such a context of poverty and lack of opportunity. This is especially the case in South Africa, where people based conservation can be seen as an apt means to achieve retribution for the draconian conservation policies of the pre-democracy years that often resulted in local people being forcibly removed from land in order for game parks to be established.

While the idea of such direct atonement for past injustices is indeed gratifying, particularly in a political sense, in this thesis I have argued that the notion of conservation being able to fulfil both ecological and rural development objectives is highly problematic. My fieldwork in and around Madikwe Game Reserve in South Africa's North West Province found great disparity between the rhetoric and the practice of the agencies driving the Madikwe project. The rhetoric included the NWP&TB presenting a powerfully appealing vision of its 'pioneering approach to people-based wildlife conservation' (Davies, 1997:2) which it defined as being shaped by the primary aim of fulfilling socio-economic goals. The Board's claim was that it 'puts the needs of people before that of wildlife and conservation' (Davies, 1997). However, I found that the reactions and perceptions of the supposed beneficiaries of such people-based conservation told a different story. It was a story that featured images of pre-drawn, hierarchical relationships in which village residents were always at the bottom, voiceless and peripheral. Contrary to the

NWP&TB's rhetoric, the so-called local community had not become an effective (let alone equal) stakeholder in the Madikwe project. Nor was it likely that those who comprised those imagined communities ever would do. Indeed, the neo-liberal rhetoric which accompanied approaches to conservation-driven development at Madikwe, and which has come to dominate much of South Africa's present political-economic discourse, concealed the insidious operation of power that left local people marginalised and excluded – both from the Reserve and from the ecological and developmental operations which constituted the Madikwe project.

One of the most salient conclusions that the work presented in this thesis suggests is that rhetorical shifts within hegemonic development discourse, from top-down to bottom-up approaches, seem to have little effect in practice. Although so-called people-based approaches now dominate the development arena, interventions are still characterised by power imbalances that are never in favour of local people. Indeed, the concepts that comprise people-based development, concepts such as participation and empowerment, have become absorbed into a new hegemonic, paradigmatic discourse. As a result they have lost their vigour and their flexibility. Instead, they have the tendency to become, as Cooke and Kothari (2001) would say, a new tyranny: behind the appealing people-centred rhetoric, hegemonic power is exercised as rigorously as ever.

A particularly pernicious aspect of this power is the way it facilitates and encourages the use of paradigmatic models. Like all paradigmatic models, those associated with people-based approaches to development ultimately fail to reflect the intrinsic complexities of locally lived realities. Such was the case with development as it was being practiced at Madikwe at the time of my fieldwork. The NWP&TB's approach did not allow for, and hence could not accommodate, the multilayered socio-political, historical and economic factors that shaped, informed and comprised the everyday lives of the Madikwe project's intended beneficiaries, the residents of Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi. While the Board's rhetoric was deeply alluring, it failed to translate into successful practice. Instead, it encouraged the application of a developmental model that was shaped without any real consultation with villagers. Moreover, village residents were collectively reduced to little more than a component of the model. They had been cast as 'the local community', one of the three main

nominal stakeholders in the Madikwe project. But from the start they were viewed as the weak partner. According to the NWP&TB's people-based conservation discourse, they were supposed to benefit substantially from the conservation operations in Madikwe. But, at the time of my fieldwork in 2000, nearly ten years after the Reserve had been established, the vast majority of village residents were still not realising significant (or any) benefits. As a consequence, and in recognition that the supposed local community stakeholder was failing to play its role, a DfID-funded intervention programme, the Madikwe Initiative, was instigated by the NWP&TB. Its goal was to address the apparent weakness of the local community as a partner in the Madikwe project. For the local community was seen as an entity whose weaknesses needed to be 'cured', and itself strengthened, if it was going to become effective as a partner and thus reap benefits from the Reserve. But the Madikwe Initiative was also constrained and compromised by the developmental model that shaped the Madikwe project in its entirety: its role could never really be much more than that of a palliative analgesic. Furthermore, as I have shown, by the end of my fieldwork in 2000 it was a largely ineffective one at that.

As demonstrated in chapter seven, the Madikwe Initiative – which was managed by Mafisa, an NGO with no local roots in the area – was organised and implemented in such a way that villagers found themselves irrevocably wedged at the bottom of a pre-established hierarchy. They were left with little or no say either in project design or implementation. Managerial control rested entirely with the NGO's outsider consultants. The result was a series of projects that remained highly dependent on the NGO at the time of my research and that were far from being, or being able to create, the sustainable entrepreneurial businesses that the Madikwe Initiative plans had envisioned. The 'community stakeholder' was thus left in a situation where it was still failing to fulfil its expected role.

The problem was that the imagined community stakeholder, diverse as it was, was being hindered, if not precluded, from participating in any significant manner in the Madikwe project by the way the whole enterprise, along with the remedial Madikwe Initiative, was structured. And local residents had no part in shaping or establishing those structures. The neo-liberal, democratic language that goes hand in hand with people-centred approaches to development appeared to do little more than obscure the

negative manifestations of power within those approaches. Meanwhile, it was the dominant partners' operations that were reaping the benefits. The majority of village residents had not become more empowered, or less marginalised, to any significant or lasting degree. They were not richer – or poorer. But the difference was that the presence of the Reserve, and the rhetoric that had accompanied it, had created massive expectations in the villages.

In each of the chapters in this thesis I have presented one particular aspect of what is essentially a single argument: that people-based conservation, as it was being practiced in and around Madikwe at the time of my fieldwork, was fundamentally flawed. Nine years after the Reserve had first been established, and two and a half years into the Madikwe Initiative, the vast majority of villagers were still marginalised or excluded rather than empowered and benefiting stakeholders. People-based conservation was failing to realise its potential and to fulfil the goals presented in the NWP&TB's rhetoric. The presence of the Reserve had not brought the substantial benefits that many villagers said they had been led, by NWP&TB personnel, to anticipate. This was in large part because of the Madikwe project's tightly governed power structure, a structure in which villagers did not feature in any meaningful way. On any given level, local residents could only participate in ways in which the dominant partners (the NWP&TB, the Madikwe Initiative consultants and the private sector lodge operators) indicated was appropriate.

In chapter two I described how, from the moment of its first conception, the Madikwe project was shaped and informed by the prevailing political climate. When it was established in 1991, the Reserve fell within the borders of what was then still the Bophuthatswana homeland. The political climate was one of turmoil, with Bophuthatswana's president, Lucas Mangope, struggling – and ultimately failing – to retain control of his 'independent state'. The anti-apartheid movement, particularly the ANC, was the enemy. Rather than give in to them, Mangope preferred to form an alliance with the extreme right wing Afrikaner movement known as the Volksfront. Given that then recent history of overt conflict between Mangope and ANC

activists,<sup>195</sup> it was inevitable that antagonism between the former Bophuthatswana administration (which, it is important to remember, included Chief Suping of Supingstad) and the post apartheid ANC government, would not simply disappear. Indeed, in chapters four and five, I argued that the suspicion and distrust between major players on the Madikwe stage – suspicion and distrust that was a product of that apartheid past – had an untold impact on the development process. This was particularly so because the post apartheid atmosphere of reconciliation and forgiveness was not conducive to confronting on-going conflicts and tensions that were rooted in the apartheid era, particularly those tensions centring around issues of local governance.

A good example, described in chapter four, was the unwillingness of the NWP&TB and Madikwe Initiative agents to accommodate the concerns of a chief who had also been an ex-homeland leader, and whom they viewed as nepotistic and autocratic. The pervasiveness of the homeland administration/ANC government tensions was particularly well illustrated by a NWP&TB general manager's view of the Chief Suping dilemma: "He was Minister of Internal Affairs in the Homelands government and is therefore in conflict with the ANC... maybe it is better to leave Chief Suping to his politics and concentrate on the more progressive ones who want to take the opportunities. We can't get entangled with local politics..." (interview, 25 July 2000). Particularly significant is the general manager's attempt to maintain the fiction (that he nonetheless no doubt believed) that the NWP&TB's presence was not political.

On every level Madikwe-linked development was profoundly and inescapably driven and shaped by politics. That politics was not contained, or containable, in distinct national, provincial or local spheres. Rather there was a continuous overlapping, a blurring of boundaries between the national and the various levels of local. As Mohan and Stokke (2000) argue in their critique of participatory development: "...places are constituted by economic, social, cultural and political relations and flows of commodities, information and people that extend far beyond a given locality. Thus, what is required is 'a global sense of place' rather than conceptualisations of the local as discrete communities" (2000:15).

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<sup>195</sup> The conflict has been well documented. For particularly comprehensive overviews, see, for example, Sparks, 1994 and 2003; Jeffery, 1993.

Either oblivious to that kind of imperative or else constrained not to notice it, the Madikwe Initiative's development agents sought to compartmentalise what they viewed as political issues, to consign them to the sphere of central government where they understood politics to reside, and hence to avoid addressing anything they regarded as political, even within the specific socio-political contexts in which they intended to introduce development interventions. As I have demonstrated in chapter five with the case of the Bopitikelo Community Centre in Molatedi, however, it was not actually possible for the Madikwe Initiative to avoid becoming embroiled in local tensions, particularly those concerning issues of governance. Both the NWP&TB and the Madikwe Initiative's agents claimed that, because they were affiliated to government, they were obliged to work with the supposedly democratically elected local government structures rather than solely with village-based committees – or, indeed, with the chiefs and their tribal authorities.

Such a policy obligation, however, contradicts the agencies' people-based development rhetoric because central to the discourse underpinning it is a strong emphasis on avoiding or minimising state intervention and strengthening 'the local' through effective representation and organisation, and doing that so that local people can succeed in controlling resources and reaping the benefits (see, for example, Hulme and Murphree, 2001). Yet, by prioritising working with district councils rather than with village-based governance structures, the Madikwe Initiative was, effectively, encouraging and abetting the encroachment of state control into the villages, whilst simultaneously depoliticising the development process (cf. Ferguson, 1990, who demonstrates a similar finding for development interventions in 1980s Lesotho).

Furthermore, the working-with-local-government route meant that residents more aligned with the chief than with somewhat distant and, at times, antagonistic local government officials were effectively alienated from the Initiative's interventions. The approach therefore had a negative impact on the implementation of projects because it resulted, again, in exclusion – as was blatantly evident in the example of Supingstad (chapter four), and more subtly so in Molatedi (chapter five).

Because of its commitment to that working-with-local government approach, the Madikwe Initiative was unable to accommodate village-Reserve level governance conflicts. Its tendency, instead, was to describe such conflicts as a political problem and therefore something for central government to resolve, as opposed to something that could, or should, be addressed locally through their own interventions. Yet, the intensely negative impact this had on the development process indicates that it is only logical for development practitioners to explore and work with, rather than analytically to separate out, power relations on a local level as well as between the state and various levels of civil society from development exercises. Furthermore, rather than viewing the state as an unconnected, impartial other entity, my findings indicate that perhaps more could be gained by such developers were they to address different visions of the state and the role it should play, or not play, in rural contexts.

In a different way, chapter three has also argued that the Madikwe project was moulded by an ultimately marginalising exogenously driven hegemonic discourse. By tracing the rhetoric of the NWP&TB to where it originated in people-based development discourse, I have shown how it conformed to a changing conceptualisation of development (from top-down to bottom-up) that was 'politically correct', but nonetheless intrinsically political. The rosy picture of successful people-based conservation with satisfied stakeholders working in harmony was at once upset by a village respondent who claimed it was only the 'stickholders' who were benefiting. As my fieldwork progressed it became evident that, in most villagers' views, the NWP&TB and the private sector were the ones not only in control, but also those who were reaping the benefits. The Madikwe project was not the bottom-up, local-people-take-centre-stage initiative touted in the NWP&TB rhetoric.

Another major problem revolved around the pressure within people-based conservation discourse generally of the need to form a representative committee, what Barrow and Murphree (2001) call an organisational vehicle, whereby any given local community is meant to be represented by a single, legitimate, democratic structure. This has often been presented as one of the central prerequisites for successful project implementation within people-based conservation rhetoric (see, for example, Barrow and Murphree, 2001) – and just as often critiqued as one of the most problematic, as I have shown in the chapters above. The case of the Lekgophung RDP forum, which I

discuss in chapter five, illustrates how the presence of such a structure can, indeed, be highly advantageous for development interventionists. The RDP forum had succeeded in dominating (or accommodating) village politics in Lekgophung and, according to village residents, seemed to be successful in representing majority views. Hence, development focussed interventions had proceeded relatively smoothly in that village.

In Molatedi, on the other hand, there was a plethora of conflicting committees and structures – most themselves products of various kinds of development intervention over the years – and so no one single structure with which the developers could work. And since Molatedi's residents were unable to fulfil that organisational developmental precondition, the Madikwe Initiative's agents seemed unable to accommodate the ensuing tensions. This severely hindered the Initiative's ability to fulfil its aims of reaching as wide a target group as possible. Yet, as the example of the NWP&TB-initiated Community Development Organisations (CDOs) illustrated (see chapter four), it was also impossible for external development agents to establish or impose such a structure. Sithole (2004) has reported having found the same problem with resource management committees (RMCs) set up by the Mafungautsi State Forest Reserve authority in Zimbabwe. Although supposedly democratically elected, the RMCs were highly contested by other local structures and organisations and were "clearly a source of dissent and dissatisfaction" (2004:269). As described in chapter four, the CDOs at Madikwe not only failed to overcome, but actually contributed to even greater social fragmentation and conflict, particularly in Molatedi (as, indeed, did the Molatedi Service Committee– another imposed structure). What these examples indicate is that the evolution of representative committees clearly needs to be the result of local processes, locally driven rather than externally imposed. The situation highlights the difficulties, if not absurdities, of trying to apply prevailing development models to specific local settings. It also reemphasises the power imbalance that left villagers external to the Madikwe project, the weak appendage in need of doctoring.

A particularly effective, if unintentional, method of maintaining that power imbalance was the way in which the development agents tended to adopt marginalising binaries when applying people-based conservation notions to the villages. An example I offered in chapter four showed how, in the context of local governance, those agents

categorised chiefs as autocratic and the antithesis of democratic, and how they failed to acknowledge the grey, overlapping layers in-between the two extremes. By doing so, I argued, NWP&TB employees and Madikwe Initiative consultants succeeded in constructing an impenetrable binary, one that retarded for them the process of accessing local knowledge and understanding the intricate, multi-layered tensions that shaped local governance issues in each village. And, as I show, it also enabled them to justify their exclusion of the entire village of Supingstad from the Madikwe Initiative's interventions.

The democracy/autocracy binary was only one instance of such over-simplified assessments I encountered during my fieldwork. Indeed, I came to see the same conclusion, as did Henkel and Stirrat (2001), that people-based developmental thinking is the product of a reactive discourse and is therefore prone to producing pronounced binary oppositions that reflect its own dualistic concern to differentiate interventionists from 'the people'. Bottom-up, people centred approaches were adopted in reaction to the palpable failure of top-down approaches, a response to appeals by critics such as Chamber's (1983) call for 'reversals'. The rhetoric I heard in and around Madikwe was thus shaped by dualistic polarities (such as the state/local, democratic/autocratic raised above, and also modern/traditional; exogenous/endogenous and so on). Use of these polarities obscured any meaningful reflection by the agents of development about the complex realities which comprised the socio-political situations in each of the three villages.

Developers' understanding of the situation in Madikwe was a clear manifestation of how false or misleading knowledge can be created and applied within the development arena, a tendency that has been well described in post development critiques (see chapter three). Particularly pertinent is Ferguson's (1990) description of development as an interpretive grid that constructs its own view of the subjects of development, a view that often has little bearing on the complex reality of specific situations and local contexts. Similarly, in *Misreading the African Landscape*, Fairhead and Leach (1996) show clearly how policy makers failed to access local knowledge and thus generated a false understanding of the factors that shaped the landscape of Kissidougou in Guinea. Escobar (1995), too, argues convincingly that

the development arena produces misleading knowledge about the 'third world' which then enables it to exercise power over local populations.

Critiques such as these support my own fieldwork findings which underscore how, despite a conceptual change in approach, from top-down to bottom-up development, little has really changed. External development operators still tend to approach specific localities with preconceived ideas, what Said (1978) called 'the mind forg'd manacles' of developmental models. When the local fails to fit the official mould, the typical outcome is marginalisation or exclusion, rather than reflexive reconsideration of the pre-ordained model. Given such scenarios, it is not difficult to see why Escobar (1995) advocates the destruction of the development paradigm in its entirety and Sachs claims that "The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape..." (1992:1).

For many people living next to the Madikwe Game Reserve, realisation of the economic and developmental benefits that were supposed to come from the Reserve was not their only priority. Indeed, as I show in chapter six, a majority of residents were just as concerned, if not more so, about Madikwe's conservation operations and about the natural heritage within the Reserve to which they were denied access, as they were about those seemingly elusive economic benefits. But, again, the way Madikwe was conceptualised and run forestalled the possibility of most villagers gaining access to it. As I argue, Madikwe was a culturally constructed landscape with deeply political underpinnings that excluded local people. It was a representation of an imagined past, a pristine wilderness in which people did not feature.

Hidden within this construction was a powerful paradox: Madikwe was seemingly about conservation and South Africa's natural national heritage. This was why it was a tourism destination – a place where wild animals could be viewed in their natural habitat. Yet according to NWP&TB rhetoric the Reserve needed to be, first and foremost, a commercially oriented and viable business so that the main purpose of conservation there was to generate a profit so that the Reserve could act as an 'economic engine' for development in the area. This glaring spotlight on development meant that conservation became sidelined in the rhetoric of the NWP&TB – albeit not so in its local agents' practices. A consequence was that the Board placed a purely

economic value on its conservation operations, and was hence able to adhere to a policy which did not, in the main, allow local residents access to the Reserve. The argument was that a greater profit could be realised if the Reserve attracted visitors willing and capable of paying high prices for exclusive ecotourism experiences – in other words a kind of fortress conservationism all over again. Catering for such an elite market meant that the Reserve had to remain uncluttered by bus loads of day trippers in order to preserve the illusion that visitors were ‘at one’ with nature. The result for local residents was, again, exclusion.

In a similar argument that focussed rather less on tangible and immediate economic benefits, many village respondents claimed that if the local population were ever really to benefit from the Reserve it would be through future generations. This reflected a long-term view central to which was the need for school children to be exposed to and educated in both conservation and the private sector practices of ecotourism and lodge operation that sustained the Reserve. Through developing an interest in such operations, and being given the opportunity to make educational choices that would capacitate them to command good jobs within conservation and lodge management, future generations would, said villagers, finally be able to break the mould that rendered them little more than a marginalised afterthought in the Madikwe project.

But, at every turn the majority of local residents’ views were either unheard or ignored. Comments such as ‘they didn’t want to listen to our ideas’; ‘they have their own agendas’; and ‘projects that are initiated are very foreign to us’ were common among those made by village residents about the project.<sup>196</sup> Villagers found themselves placed, seemingly irrevocably, at the bottom of an exogenously established hierarchy. Indeed, the Madikwe project did not cater for local needs. Rather, the entire enterprise was designed and administered around the interests of the Reserve itself, and not around the neighbouring villages or their residents. Development was only ever seen by the Madikwe Initiative in conjunction with the Reserve and its requirements (such as a need for service industries and labour); and it

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<sup>196</sup> In order of citation: middle aged unemployed woman in Lekgophung, 28 August 2000; young unemployed man in Supingstad, focus group discussion, 1 September 2000; middle aged woman, Molatedi, 4 September 2000.

was those requirements, rather than villagers' priorities and requirements, that defined and shaped the Initiative's interventions. As ever, then, it was mainstream institutions and their operations and interests that dominated the scene, with local villagers being left on the fringes, their institutions regarded at most as a dragging weak leg.

## **Appendix 1: The Questionnaire**

**PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS/ KAROLO YA NTLHA: TSHOBOTSI YA DIPAPALO TSA BAAGI**

**1) House hold members/ Batho ba nna mo fa lapeng**

	Name/ Mina	Male/ Female	Relation- ship to respond- ent/ Kamano ya moarabi le balapa	Year of birth/ Ngwa ga wa tsalo	Place of birth/ Lefelo la tsalo	Lives here more than 5 d.p.w/ A ba nna fa gofeta malatsi a le matlhano ka beke?	Permanent place of residence/ A ke lefelo la bonnelo ruri?	level of education/ Ke mo ya thutego	Other skills/ training Dithuto tsa tlaletso kitso tiro	Employer/ Mothapi U/E - go to pg. 2	Start date/ Letha la tshim- ollo	Place of work/ Lefelo la tiro	What does s/he do?/ Mofuta wa tiro	Income p/n/ Let- seno ka Kgwe- edi	Contribut ion to HH/ Seabe ka kgwedi
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															

Table 1.1

2) Unemployment/ Bothhoka tiro

Are any members of the household not in full time employment?/ A gona le ba ba sa direng ga jana fa lapeng?

	Name/ Maina	Part time/ Informal work/ Nako e telele/ e khotswa ne	No. of days worked p/m	Average income p/m/ Tekanye Tso ya letseno ka kgwedi	Contribut- ion to HH p/m	Looking for work/ A Ba Batla Tiro? [Y/N]	Preferred field of work/ Tiro E Kgatlhegchwang	Prefered location of work [local/city]/ Lefelo le le Kgatlhegchwang [Mogae/Teropong]	Has worked recently [job + year]/ A Ba Ne Ba Dira [Tiro + Ngwaga]	Reason for leaving last job/ Lebaka la go tlogela tiro	Pensioner (P)/ Unable to work (S) A Ba Tlogetse Tiro (P)/ A Gaba Kgone go Dira (S)
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											

Table 1:2

### 3) House Hold Expenditure/ Ditsshenyegelo lwapa

Approximately how much per month does the house hold spend on the following items?

Tekanyetso e ka una madi a makae a kae a ka dirisiwang ke ba lapa ka kgwedi mo go tse dilatelang?

Items/Dilwana	Produced by HH/ Ntshiwa ke	Cost / Bokae (Rand)	Where are the items usually purchased?/ Gantsi direkwa kae?	Items/ Dilwana	Produced by HH/ Ntshiwa ke	Cost /Bokae (Rand)	Where are the items usually purchased?/ Gantsi direkwa kae?
Dairy Products/Dikuno tsa maswi		R		Clothing/ Diaparo		R	
Vegetables/ Merogo		R		Transport/ Dipalamo		R	
Meat>Nama		R		Parafin/ Parafini		R	
Starches/ Setatshe		R		Electricity/ Motlakase		R	
Other food/ Dijo Tse dingwe		R		Wood/ Dikgong		R	
Cleaning materials/ Tsa go phepafatsa		R		Lighting/ Mabone		R	
Toiletries/ Tsa go tlhapa		R		Hire-purchase/ Theko ya tuello ka kgwedi		R	
House hold goods/ Diphatlho tsa mo		R		Water/ Metsi		R	

Table 1.3

Does the House hold have any other expenses? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Housing/ Malo

- a) Whose house is this?/ Ke ntlo ya ga mang? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Are any rooms rented out?/ A lona le matlo a le a hirisang? Yes/ No [R\_\_\_\_\_p/m]
- c) Does the HH have access to fields?/ A ba na le tetla ya lema ditsha? Yes/ No  
 How many hectares? \_\_\_\_\_ How much is used? None More than half Less than half All
- d) What are the fields used for?/Ba di dirisetsa eng? Crops Livestock vegetables Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 What crops are grown? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What happens to the produce? \_\_\_\_\_
- e) What is the income from the fields?/ Ke letseno lefe le le bonwang? \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Does the HH have any other sources of income?/ Agona le madi a le a bonang gotswa gongwe? Yes/ No  
 Other Sources \_\_\_\_\_

g) Does the HH own any livestock?/ Ba na le mofuta ofe wa leroo?

Livestock/ Leruo	No./ Palo	Reason for keeping/ Le baka la go rua	No. sold annually	Livestock/ Leruo	No./ Palo	Reason for keeping// Le baka la go rua	No. sold annually
Goats/Dipodi				Pigs/ Dikolobe			
Cattle/ Dikgomo				Sheep/Dinku			
Chickens/Dikgogo				Donkeys			

Where do the animals graze? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the main problems with agriculture? \_\_\_\_\_

h) Building details/ Mofuta wa ntlo:

Building number/ Palo ya matlo	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Rooms/ Palo ya diphaposi					
Type of Structure/ Mofuta: [Traditional/ Setso - T] [Modern / Seshweng - M]					
Year built/ Ngwaga wa kago					
Builder/ Moagi (e.g. Self, family, friends, outside contractor)					
Flooring material/ Mofuta wa vloer					

Building material/ Mofuta wa dikago:

Building number/Palo ya matlo	1	2	3	4	5
Concrete Block/Setena sa block sa concrete					
Brick (clay or cement)/Ditena (tsa mmu or cemente)					
Wattle and Daub/Dikota le tlhaga					
Mud only/ Seretse fela					
Zinc/ metal sheet/Disenke					
Stone/Matlapa					
Other/Tse dingwe					

Roofing material/ Dikago tsa thulelo:

Building Number/ Palo ya matlo	1	2	3	4	5
Zinc/ Metal sheet/ Disenke					
Thatch/ Bojang					
Asbestos/ Asebesetose					
Tile/ Thaele					
Other/ Tse dingwe					

I) Services and Facilities/ Ditireo le Dikago Dingwe

1) Water/ Metsi

I. Where do you get your water from/ Le bona kae metsi?

Piped (public)/ Dipeipi (tse botlhe)  Piped (private) Dipeipi (tse private)

Water vendor/ Barekisi ba metsi  Other/Tse dingwe \_\_\_\_\_

II. Where is your water supply? (distance from house)

Metsi a lona a tswa kae? [A Bo kgala bokae] \_\_\_\_\_

III. Where did you get water from before using this supply?/

Le ne le bona metsi kae pele? \_\_\_\_\_

IV. How much time a day was spent fetching water before?/ Le ne le tsaya nako e kae pele goga metsi? \_\_\_\_\_

V. Did you have to pay for it then?/ A ! Lene le a duella? Yes/ No

VI. Do you mind paying for it now?/ O uumelcia go a dula Yes/ No

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Transport/Dipalamo	
I. Does anyone in the household own a vehicle? A Mongwe ona le koloi fa lapeng?	
II. What type of vehicle(s)?/ Ke ya mofuta mang?	
III. Where do you go shopping?/ Ba reka kae?	
IV. How often do you go?/ Le ya gakaeteng?	

3) Telecommunications/ Tlhaeletsano

I. Where is the nearest telephone you can access?/ Ke mogala o ofe o gaufi? \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you use it?/ Ba o dirsa ga kae? \_\_\_\_\_

II. How often do you use the postal service?/ Le dirisa poso go le kae? \_\_\_\_\_

- III. When did you last receive/send a letter?/ Ba kwadiile leng kgotsa ba amogetse leng makwalo? \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. How do people usually get messages to you?  
Batho go le gale ba fitlhisa melaetsa jang kwa go bona? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Is your house connected to mains electricity?/A ntlo ya bona e golegeletswe motlakase? Yes/No

**J) How would you rate the following services in the village?/**

**Ba bona jang ditirelo tse di latelang mo motseng wa bona? [Please circle one]**

**1) HEALTHCARE/ TSA SEEMO SA BOPHELO**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

**2) ROADS/DITSELA**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

**3) SCHOOLS/DIKOLO**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

**4) TELEPHONE ACCESS/PHITLHELELO YA MOGALA**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

**5) ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER/PHITLHELELO KO METSING A A GIWANG**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

**6) ACCESS TO SHOPS/ PHITLHELELO KO DISHOPONG**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

**7) ACCESS TO TRANSPORT/PHITLHELELO KO DIPALAMONG**

Excellent	Very good	Adequate	Bad	Very bad
Maemo antiha	Di siame thata	Di fa gare	Di maswe	Di maswe tota

k) Please rank the order in which you think the following services need to be improved:

Fa mokgwa o ditirelo tse di ka tokafadiwang ka teng:

[1 = most in need of improvement/Thata se se tihokang go tokafadiwa]

SERVICE	RATING	WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE
Schools/Dikolo		
Transport/Dipalamo		
Healthcare/Tsa seemo sa Bophelo		
Telephones /Tihaeletsano		
Post/ le poso		
Roads/Ditsela		
Sewage/Kgelelo ya leswe		
Water supply/ Tthagiso ya metsi		
Refuse removal		
Shops		
Other service that need attention/ Le tse dingwe		

Please give reasons for your choices/Tswee tswee fa mabaka a kgetho ya ntlha ya gago o be kae gore o bona e le mang yo o ka nnang maikarabelo mo go tokafatseng ditirelo tse: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

L) House hold appliances and furniture/ Didiriswa tsa montlung le fenetshara:

Lounge suite/sofa + le ditilo	
Fridge/ Setsidifatsi	
Deep Freeze/ Setsidifatsi se se maru thata	
Microwave/ Setofo notlana	
TV/ Television	
Video/ video	
Stove/ Setofo	
Oven/ Seanej	
Radio/ Sevalemeya	
Other/ Tse Dingwe	

**PART 2: ATTITUDES, AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS**  
**KAROLO YA BOBEDI: MAIKUTLO, TSIBOSO LE MOGOPOLO**

**A) General - Attitudes Towards the Reserve/ Kakaretso: Maikutlo Malebana le Serapa**

1) Have you ever been to the Reserve?/ A o kile wa ya kwa serapeng? Yes/ No

Yes: How many times?/Ga kae?

Once	<five	<ten	<twenty	Frequently
1	<5	<10	<20	Gangwe le Gape

For what reasons?/ Ka mabaka a fe? \_\_\_\_\_

2) Are you interested in going to the Reserve?/A o kgat hegela go etela serapa? Yes/ No

What are your reasons for (not) wanting to go?

Mabaka a gago ke a fe?

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

3) Do you feel that you can go to the Reserve anytime?

A o ikutlwa gore o ka e tela serapa nako ngwe le ngwe?

Yes/ No

Please give reason/A o ka fa mabaka: \_\_\_\_\_

4) What was the area like before the Reserve was set up?

Pele go tshomiwa serapa lefelo le le ne le ntse jang? \_\_\_\_\_

5) Has the Reserve made a difference to the area?

A! Serapa se dirile pharologano mo lefelong le?

Yes/ No

In what ways?/ Ka ditsela dife? \_\_\_\_\_

6) Has the Reserve benefitted the local villages?/ A serapa se sethuitse baagi?

Yes/ No

Yes - Which ones?/ Ba feng M L S Other/ Bangwe: \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways?/Ka ditsela dife? \_\_\_\_\_

No - Why not?/Nnyaa- Goreng? \_\_\_\_\_

7) Do you think some villages benefit more than others?

A o nagana gore gona le motse o o boelwang go feta e mengwe?

Yes/ No

Please explain/ Tlhalosa: \_\_\_\_\_

8) Has the Reserve benefitted your village in particular?/

A serapa se tswaise motse wa lona mosola?

Yes/ No

How?/ Jang? \_\_\_\_\_

- 9) Has the Reserve made any differences to your life?  
 A serapa se direle phetogo mo botshelong jwa gago? Yes/ No  
 Yes: What?/Jang? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) How could the Reserve be of greater use to (a) you ?  
 Serapa se se ka go tswela mosola jang (a) Wena? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) The area/ Motse? \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) What are the most positive things about the Reserve?  
 Ke eng se se itumedisang ka serapa se? 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) What are the most negative things about the Reserve?  
 Ke eng se se sa itumediseng ka serapa? 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) Do you think it is important to protect wildlife?  
 A o nagana gore go mosola go sireletsa diphologolo? Yes/ No  
 Why/ Why not?/ Goreng/Goreng go se sanna jalo? \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) Are you interested in seeing the wild animals?  
 A ona lekgatlhego ya go bona diphologolo tsa naga? Yes/No
- 15) What products that come from the reserve should be available to local residents?  
 Ke dikamo dife tse ditswang ka fa serapeng tse di ka dirisiwang ke metse e mabapi le serapa?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 17) Should local residents be allowed access to hunting?/ A baagi ba letlelewe go tsoma? Yes/ No  
 Yes- Should the hunting be controlled?/A letsomo le laolwe? Yes/No  
 Yes- How?/Jang? \_\_\_\_\_
- 18) Whose interests should the Reserve prioritise?  
 Serapa se tshwanetse go beela dikgatlhego tsa ga mang pele? (Circle one)  
 Everyone local residents only All South Africans International visitors  
 Mongwe- le mongwe Baagi selegae fela Baagi botlhe ba Aferika Borwa Baenggo tswa moseja  
 Please explain your answer/ Tswee-tswee tihalasa karabo ya gago: \_\_\_\_\_

- 19) Do you know anyone involved in landclaims in the area?  
 A o itse mongwe yo o batlang poelo ya lefatshe? Yes/ No
- 20) How do you think the landclaims should be resolved?/ Fa o a kanya poelo ya lafatshe eka rarabololwa jang? \_\_\_\_\_
- 21) Do you think the land the Reserve is on could be used better in a different way? Yes/ No  
 A o akanya gore lefatshe le Serapa se leng go lona le ka dirisiwa botoka ka mokgwa mongwe?  
 What way?/ Ka tsela efe? \_\_\_\_\_

**B) Attitudes of those NOT Employed in MGR or a Related Business**

Maikutlo a ba sa direng mo MGR le dikgwebo/ ditirelo tse di amanang.

- 1) Do you know anyone who works either in the Reserve or in a job related to it?  
 A o itse mongwe o o dirang gongwe serapeng kgotsa mo tirong e e golaganeng le sona? Yes/ No  
*[No- go to question 5]*
- 2) How many people?/Ke batho bale kae? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What do they do?/Ga jana ba dira eng? 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Why do you think they got the job?/ Ke goreng fa o nagana ba bone tiro? \_\_\_\_\_
- Did everyone have the opportunity of applying for that job?  
 A mongwe le mongwe o ne a na le tshono ya go kopa tiro? Yes/ No  
 No - Please explain/ Nnyaa: Tlhalosa: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Please estimate how many people from this village you think work in the Reserve or a related business:  
 Ka kopa kabakanyetsa gore ke batho ba le kae ba ba dirang mo serapeng kgotsa mo dikgwebo tse di amanang?  
 None/ Ope <10 <20 <30 <40 <50 <100 <200 <500  
 How many people from other local villages?/ Ba ba kae gotswa mo metseng e mengwe?  
 Village/Motse: \_\_\_\_\_  
 None/ Ope <10 <20 <30 <40 <50 <100 <200 <500  
 Village/Motse: \_\_\_\_\_  
 None/ Ope <10 <20 <30 <40 <50 <100 <200 <500
- 6) What criteria do you feel it is necessary to fulfil in order to work in the Reserve?  
 Fa o nagana go tlhokega seemo se feng gore o kgone go dira mo serapeng? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Would you like to work in the reserve?/ A o ka rata go dira mo serapeng? Yes/ No  
 Why/Why not/ Goreng? What job/Tiro e e feng? \_\_\_\_\_



- 
- 12) Would you like to be more involved?/ A ba ka rata go akarediwa? Yes/ No
- 13) What are some strategies that could lead to you being more involved?/ Ke eng se se dirwang gore o tefatse learolo ya gago? \_\_\_\_\_
- 

- 14) Do you feel that communication structures between the Reserve and the village are effective?  
A ba ikutiwa kgoaganano le serepa e tsamaya sentle? Yes/ No
- 15) How could they be more effective?/ Ba bona dika tsamaisiwa sentle jang? \_\_\_\_\_
- 

- 16) Are communication structures within the village effective?  
Ba bona kgoaganano e ntse sentle? Yes/ No
- 17) How could they be more effective?/ E ka dirwa jang gore e tsamaye sentle? \_\_\_\_\_
- 

#### **PART FOUR: TOURISM**

- 1) Do you think tourism is a good thing for the area?  
A o gopola gore bojanala bo siametse tikologo e o leng mo go yona? Yes/ No  
Why/ why not? \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 2) Do you think the village can benefit from tourism?/ A motse o ka bona letseno mo bojanaleng? Yes/ No  
Why/ Why not? \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 3) If you were a South African tourist coming here for the first time, what would you most like to see?  
Fa o ne o le mojanala wa Afrika Borwa e le lantlha o tla ka fa, o ne o ka e le tsa go bona eng thata thata?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 4) If you were an international tourist, and this was your first time in the country, what would you be most interested in seeing in this area?/ Fa o ne o le mojanala wa boditshaba e le lantlha o tla mo nageng e, o ne o ka kgathiwe ke go bona eng? \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 5) Would you like to see tourists coming to the village?/ A o cietsa go bona bajanala ba tsile mo motseng?  
Yes/ No Why/ Why not? \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 6) If you were to show a visitor around the village, what would you show them?/ Fa gotwe o bontshe bajanala Likologo ya motse, o ka ba bontshe eng? \_\_\_\_\_
-

7) Do you think tourists should stay in the Reserve and not come to the village?/ A o gopola gore baeti ba nne fela kwa serapeng ba sa tle mo motseng? Yes/ No

Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

8) Are you interested in your history and heritage?/ A o ikumelala setso sa gago le tsoseletso ya ditirayala?

Yes/ No      What do you find are the most interesting aspects?/ Ke dintlha dife o tsayang gore di bothokwa thata? \_\_\_\_\_

Who taught you about this history/ Ke mang a go rutileng ka ditiragalo tse? \_\_\_\_\_

9) Do you think it is important to know who your ancestors were, how they lived and where they came from?

A o gopola gore go bothokwa gore o itse badimo ba gago, gore ba ne ba phela jang ka kopo tihalosa batswa kae?      Yes/ No.      Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

10) Do you think tourists would be interested in Tswana culture?/ A o gopola gore bajanala ba ka kgatlhegela setso sa Setswana?      Yes/ No      Please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

11) What are the most important things about Tswana culture that outsiders should understand?/ Ke eng se se bothokwa mabapi le setso sa Batswana se batswakwa ba tshwanetseng ba se tshaloganye? \_\_\_\_\_

12) If you were travelling in a foreign country such as America and someone asked you to explain where you come from, what would you answer?/ Fa o ne o jetse nala kwa dinageng tse di kwa ntle jaaka America batho ba be go kopa gore o ba tihalosetse gore o tswa kae, o tla araba o reng? \_\_\_\_\_

14) How would you explain the difference between the/ O ka thalosa jang pharologanyo fa gare ga Batlokwa, Balete and Bahurutshe? \_\_\_\_\_

15) How would you explain what life is like in your village?/ O ka tihalosa botshelo jwa motse wa lona jang? \_\_\_\_\_

16) Are you interested in the cultures and histories of people in other countries?/ A o na le kgatlhego mo ditsong le ditiragalong tsa dinaga di sele? Yes/ No

What aspects would you find especially interesting?/ Ke sintlha si fe tse o ka bonang si itumesisa? \_\_\_\_\_

17) Parks Board are interested in setting up Heritage Tourism projects in the Reserve, so that tourists can learn about the people who come from this area. What do you think of this idea?/ Bothati ba bojanalo bo kgatlhegela atolosa siprojeke tsa segopotso sa bojanala mo serapeng, ka ga jalo bajanala ba ka ithuta ka maphele a batho ba ba nnang motikologong e? O nagana eng ka kgopolo ena? \_\_\_\_\_

- 18) What do you think should be included in such Heritage projects?/ Ke eng se o gopolang se ka okediwa mo projekeng e ya segopotso? \_\_\_\_\_
- 19) Who should be in charge of setting up these projects?/ Ke mang yo o maleba le go rulaganya diprojeke tse? \_\_\_\_\_
- 20) What benefits can you envision coming to the village as a result of heritage tourism?/ Ke dikuno di fe tse o di bonelang kwa pele tse di tlang ko motseng ka ntlha ya tsosoloso ya bojanala? \_\_\_\_\_
- 21) Do you think there could be any negative impacts on the village?/ A o nagana gore go ka nna le menagano mengwe e e sa nyalaneng go tswa mo motsetseng? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART FIVE: MAFISA AND THE MADIKWE INITIATIVE**

- 1) How long have you been living permanently in the area/ O phidile fa sebaka se sekae? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Have you noticed any differences in the area since 1998? Yes/ No  
Please elaborate/ Tlhalosa : \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Have you ever heard of the Madikwe Initiative (MI)? Mafisa/  
O itse go le kae ka MI/ Mafisa Yes/No [No- go to Q 13]
- 4) What are their roles? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What are the goals?/ Diphitlhello ke eng? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Have you ever applied for a Mafisa/ MI training programme?  
A ba setse ba kile ba dira kopo ya go tse nna lenaane katis la Mafisa/MI? Yes/ No  
Yes- What was it/ Eme e leng? \_\_\_\_\_  
What was the outcome/ Ditlamorago e nnile eng? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Do you know anyone who has applied for a Mafisa/ MI training programme?  
A ba itse mongwe yo o dieileng kopo ya lenaane katiso ya Mafisa/MI? Yes/No  
Yes- Which programme(s)?/ Ke le naane le feng? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Have you ever been to a Mafisa/ MI meeting?/ A ba setse ba kile ba tse nna kopano ya Mafisa/MI?  
Yes/ No Yes - How did you hear about it?/Goreng ba ne ba ya? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why did you go?/A! E ne ele kopano e e botiho kwa? \_\_\_\_\_  
Was it a useful meeting? Yes/ No Why/ why not? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) Have MI/ Mafisa brought any benefits to the local residents?/  
A e tlisitse dipoelo mo ba aging ka kopo tlhalasa?  
Molatedi Y/N \_\_\_\_\_  
Supingstad Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

Lekgophung Y/N \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

10) Do you think MI/Mafisa are effective?/ A o tsaya gore MI/Mafisa e a dira? Yes/No  
Please explain/Tlhalosa: \_\_\_\_\_

11) What should be done differently?/ E ne e ka nna botoka fa e ka bo e dira jang? \_\_\_\_\_

12) What are the best aspects of Mafisa?/ Ke eng dilo tse di botlhokwa ka Mafisa? \_\_\_\_\_

And the worst?/ Tsi di seng botlhokwa ka Mafisa? \_\_\_\_\_

13) Do you know of any development projects in the area?/  
A go na le dithabololo dingwe tse o di itseng? Yes/ No

Yes - What projects? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was responsible for setting them up?/ Ke mang yo di simotseng? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is running them now?/Ke mang yo o di tsamaisong ka nako e? \_\_\_\_\_

14) Who has benefited most?/ Ke bo mang ba ba boetsweng bogolo? \_\_\_\_\_

15) How could more people benefit?/Di ka thisang jang bontsi ba batho? \_\_\_\_\_

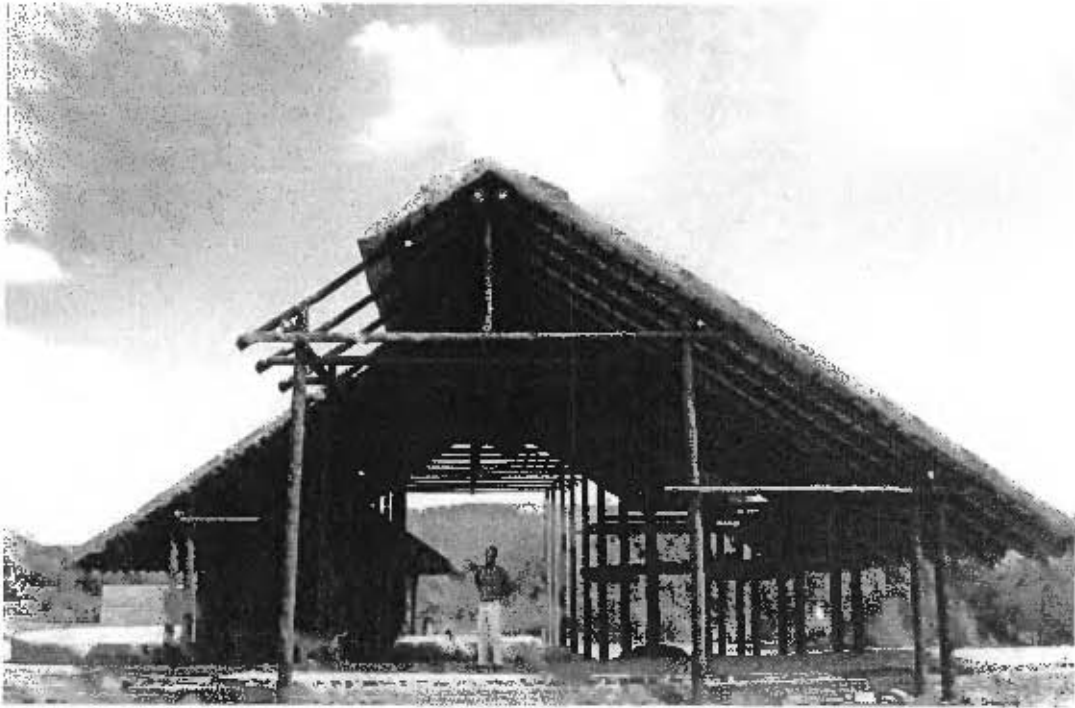
16) How do you feel about outside consultants working in the villages?  
Ba ikutlwa jang ka consultants tse di dirang mo metseng gotswa kwa ntle? \_\_\_\_\_

17) What have they done for people?/ Ba diretse merafe eng? \_\_\_\_\_

18) What do you feel should be done in the future?/ Ba gopola go ka dirwa eng mo nakong e e tlang? \_\_\_\_\_

19) Do you have any other comments you would like to make?/ A go na le sergwe se o batlong go se tshwaela? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Photographs



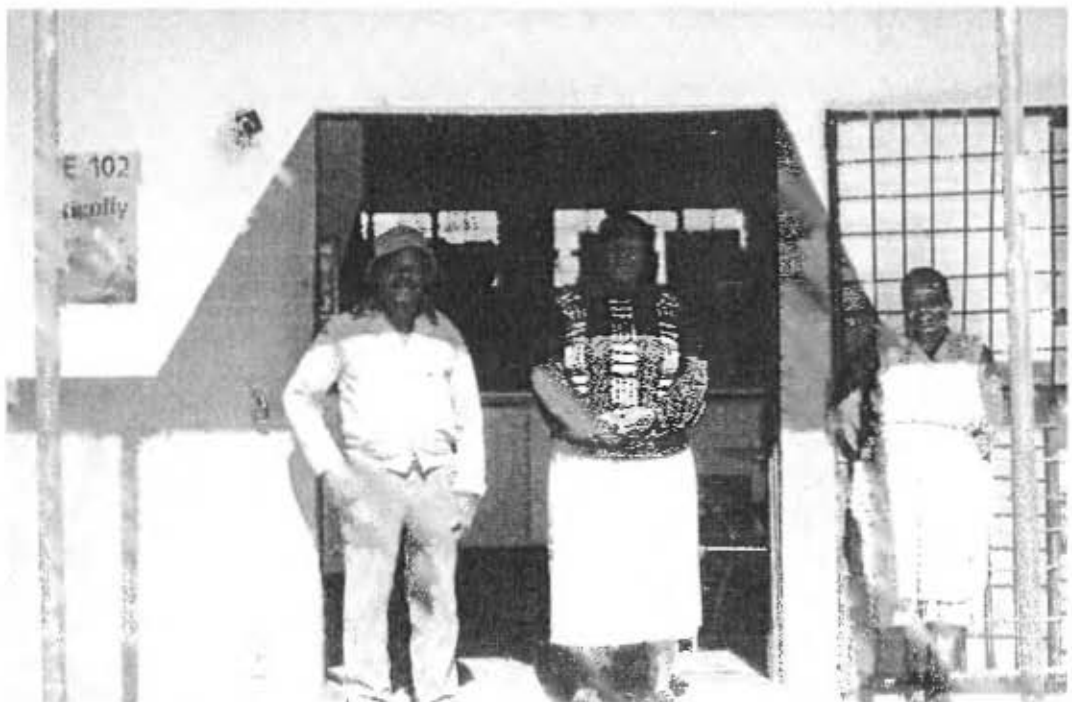
The Bopitikelo Centre in 2000, some months after it was flooded. The Marico River is just visible in the background.



The Madikwe Initiative brick making project in Lekgophung, 2000.



The first focus group discussion in Lëkgophung.



Mr Ramorula's general store in Molatedi with two customers and Mrs Ramorula on the far right.



Mafisa interns at Fau Lodge



The Ajaterskop gate to Madikwe Game Reserve.



Chief Gaborone by Duggan-Kronin circa 1930.



Chief Gaborone by Duggan-Kronin circa 1930.

## Appendix 3: Colonial Chronologies

This appendix is included specifically to highlight the superficiality of colonial histories that are concerned only with categorising and confining people to bounded social entities and geographical locations. It presents colonial and apartheid era interpretations of the histories of the villages of Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi. It should be read in conjunction with the section *An Historical View* in chapter two.

### Story 1: The BaHurutshe of Supingstad

Suping – born c. 1830 died 1896
Thebe Suping – born c.1850, died 1949
Legangwe Michael (unofficial acting chief) – born c. 1890 died 1951
Peter Masiela – born c. 1899, died 1953
Hendrik Suping (acting chief for Victor) – born 1907
Mathews Mangope – born 1912, died 1970
Victor Simane Suping – born 1945 –

Source: Breutz, 1953.

The people who live in Supingstad today are predominantly BaHurutshe people, a people led by BaHurutshe chiefs, said to be descendents of what Lestrade calls the 'semi-mythical, eponymous hero' Mohurutshe (1928:427). The so-called BaHurutshe are said to be one of the oldest Tswana groupings of people, senior in rank to all other Tswana (Ellenberger, 1912; Lestrade, 1928; Schapera, 1937; Breutz, 1953:16).<sup>197</sup> They were classified by the colonial government as Western Sotho, as were the

<sup>197</sup> Rheinallt alone claims the BaHurutshe split from the Barolong, which he claims is the oldest Tswana 'tribe' (1937:18-19). Lestrade states unambiguously: "Where there is a marked divergence in any Chwana [Tswana] tribe from the general scheme [of the BaHurutshe] such divergence is to be regarded as a secondary development, and the practice of the BaHurutshe as older and more characteristic of the group; for this tribe, with its offshoots, is looked upon by all the BeChwana [BaTswana] as being the oldest and most archaic of the Chwana [Tswana]-speaking group as a whole" (1928: 427). The seniority of the BaHurutshe gave them the right to *go loma thotsi* (bite the pumpkin – the pumpkin being the earliest crop grown by the Tswana), a tradition whereby other tribes could not harvest their crops until the BaHurutshe chief had given his permission (Rheinallt, 1937). Lucas Mangope, once president of the 'independent' Bophuthatswana homeland, is himself BaHurutshe.

BaLete of Lekgophung, while the BaTlokwa of Molatedi were labelled Southern Sotho (Schapera, 1937:58-60).

BaHurutshe people settled in the Molopo River area, near Mafikeng (in what is now North West Province) in the 15th or 16th century (Rheinallt Jones, 1937) and possibly as early as 1300 (Breutz, 1953). According to the *Short History of the Tribes of the Transvaal* (1905), the first split in the Bahurutshe came after the death of the third Chief Molope, some time in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. His eldest son, Mohurutse, remained chief of the main tribe, known still as the BaHurutshe, while Kwene became chief of the new sub-group who became known as the BaKwene. Mohurutse had two sons, Motebele and Motebyane. Although Motebele was heir, Motebyane fought him for the succession and won. He was succeeded by Melore and then eight other chiefs about whom little is known. The ninth, Pule, son of Kealedi, was born sometime between 1580 and 1600. Two of his sons, Manyane and Manope fought and Manope became chief, succeeded by his son, Kontle. Under Kontle, in 1881-2, the Bahurutshe split again, into three groups: the first under Kontle remained at Dinare (in what is now Botswana); the second under Sebogodi, went to Mochudi (also in present day Botswana), and the third, under Suping, went to Vinkrivier (farm no. 132 – see map 5, page 41) and became the Bahurutshe ba Suping with the tshwene (baboon) as their totem (History of Native Tribes: 11-13; Breutz, 1953:16-23).

The BaHurutshe of Suping also stayed briefly in Lekgophung in 1882-3, which is the present day village of the Balete, under Chief Tsiepe, located on a portion of Hartebeestfontein (farm no. 195 on map 5, page 41), which adjoins Vinkrivier. Suping was anxious to secure land for his people and applied to the government to grant him some of Hartebeestfontein as well as neighbouring Vinkrivier. Between 1891-3 the government of the South African Republic considered Suping's request and, although the Superintendent of Natives recommended granting him the location in 1892, his recommendation was not approved by government. Suping therefore bought Vinkrivier (3556 hectares), with the Superintendent of Natives acting as

trustee, on 9 April 1894. He also retained the use of parts of Hartebeestefontein (849 hectares).<sup>198</sup>

In 1894, because of differences with neighbouring farmers, Suping and his people moved to Odi, close to Gaborone, in what is now Botswana. Suping died there circa 1896. He was succeeded by his son, Thebe, who was born circa 1850. The BaHurutshe of Suping returned to Vinkrivier after the annexation of the Transvaal in 1900. In 1903 they built the present village of Supingstad.

### Story 2: The BaLete of Lekgophung

Mokgosi – born c. 1790, died 1886

I Mokgobjwa – born 1823, died 1932

II Tsiepe – born c. 1855, died 1945

III Mmamogola Thutweng Brown Mokgobjwe – born 1912 died 1975

Chief Kgosinkwe Tsiepe – born 1944

*Source: Breutz, 1953.*

The people classified by colonial historians such as Breutz (1953) as the BaLete (lit: buffalo) of Lekgophung are said by such sources to be descendants of Chief XV Mokgobjwa. He died circa 1780 and was succeeded by his son Powe and then his grandson Mokgosi. According to Breutz (1953) the BaLete came from the area subsequently known as Volksrust and trekked to Ramoutsa in what became Botswana. In 1891 they split and some people left the BaLete parent group and trekked to Peseke, ten miles away from Ramoutsa, in the north-western corner of the present (2007) Marico District. At that time Mokgosi was chief. His son, I Mokgobjwe was born there in circa 1823, the son of Sedikwe, his fourth wife. In 1892-3 the group again split, and a sub group, under I Mokgobjwe, moved to Segakwane on Skuinsdam (farm no. 131 – see map 5, page 41) where they became known as the BaLete wa Mokgobjwa, from whom the BaLete of Lekgophung today are directly descended. They then moved to Ramotlhabane, on Hartebeestefontein

<sup>198</sup> In the 1913 Land Act, both Vinkrivier and a portion of Hartebeestfontien are listed as black owned. Under the 1836 Trust and Land Act the western portion of Hartebeestefontein was added.

(farm no. 195 on map 5, page 41) in 1893. In 1901 they bought two portions of Hartebeestefontein farm (2547 hectares). Their land adjoins that of the Bahurutshe of Suping. I Mokgobjwe died in 1932 and was succeeded by II Tsiepe. In 1919 he was recognised by the government as 'headman for purely administrative purposes' (Breutz, 1953). He retired in 1942 (and died in 1945) and appointed his son, III Mmamogola Thutweng Brown Mokgobjwe, to take his place, who in turn was succeeded by his eldest son, present day Chief Tsiepe, born in 1944.

### Story 3: The BaTlokwa of Molatedi

	Mosime Tsile	
	Monageng	
	Tsile Matlabane	
	Mokao	
	Taukoban (Tau-Kubong)	
Makala		Molefe
Bogatsu		Khasoane
Kgosi		Tlobane
Matlapeng		Bogachu
Gaborone	Sebolawe	
	St. Mokgatle	
	Baswe Franz	

Source: Breutz, 1953.

According to Breutz (1987) the BaTlokwa of Molatedi came from the northeast of the country where they lived on the farm Houwater 'Malan' in Pilansburg (or Potchefstroom). When their population increased to the extent that Houwater became too cramped, some people moved to Bopitiko Doornhoek, Elandsrivier, under Chief Mosime Tsile. But Bafopeng people were already living at Bopitiko. Inevitably quarrels broke out over land, and the Bafopeng drove out the BaTlokwa. They

trekked to Piloë Zwaatverdiend where they worked a copper mine and became famous as bracelet makers. Mosime Tsile was succeeded by Monageng, who in turn was succeeded by Tsile Matlabane, Mokao, and Taukoban (Tau-Kubong 1905 history). Then Molefe, eldest son of Taukoban's second wife, quarrelled with Taukoban's heir (Makala), and left with a following of people. He settled at Grootfontein, and was succeeded by Khasoane, Tlobane, and then Bogachui. They purchased Grootfontein in the 1890s.

The BaTlokwa of Molatedi are directly descended from Makabe, the eldest son of Taukoban's first wife, who had remained at Piloë. Makabe was succeeded by Bogatsui (Bogatchoe), Kgosi and then Matlapeng. But in the early 1830s the Matabele, led by Mzilikazi, invaded the area. Matlapeng and his followers fled into the mountains, to Tswene Tswene, located in present day Madikwe Game Reserve (pictured in the photograph below), which became the BaTlokwa capital in the 1870s (Huffman et al, 1997).<sup>199</sup>



**Photograph taken at Tswene Tswene, Madikwe Game Reserve, in 2000, looking out over the plains towards Botswana.**

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<sup>199</sup> Archaeological surveys conducted by Professor Huffman of the University of Witwatersrand in 1997 have mapped Difaqane sites throughout the Reserve. While I was in Madikwe I joined an archaeological tour of the Reserve, led by Professor Huffman, and viewed the Tswene Tswene site as well as early Iron Age sites. Particularly noticeable were hollows in the rocks that had been ground out over time through being used to pound maize

Once the Matebele threat had died down, Chief Matlapeng came out of the mountains and built a village at Letloken. But by then there was increasing pressure on land and resources from white settlers. Afrikaner farmers troubled Matlapeng and his people to such an extent that he eventually trekked to Sechele, and then, in around 1868, he moved back to Tswene Tswene, where he ruled for some twelve years<sup>200</sup> before he died in a battle between against the BaKwene (Breutz, 1987:385). Matlapeng left four sons: Gaborone, Sedumedi, Kgosi and Sebolawa. He was succeeded by Gaborone in about 1880.<sup>201</sup>

While they were still at Tswene Tswene, Gaborone and Sedumedi quarrelled. Sedumedi left and went back to the old tribal home at Letloken (Putfontein) where he was 'squatting' and, according to Hunt (1905), anxiously awaiting permission from the government of the South African Republic to buy the farm. Gaborone eventually left Tswene Tswene, due to pressure from Afrikaner farmers, and established himself at a place that came to be known as Gaborone, the capital of Botswana today. Kgosi and Sebolawe stayed at Tswene Tswene, where Kgosi took over the chieftainship when Gaborone left, and his people became known as the BaTlokwa ba Kgosi – from whom the majority of people living in Molatedi at the time of my fieldwork were directly descended. Kgosi was succeeded by Sebolawe who trekked eastwards to Naaupoort (farm no. 150 – see map 5, page 41), founded the village of Molatedi in 1890, and set up as an independent chief.

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<sup>200</sup> According to Ellenberger (1912) Matlapeng only lived at Tswene Tswene for five years before his death.

<sup>201</sup> A photograph of Chief Gaborone, taken by Irish photographer Duggan-Kronin in the 1930s or 1940s, is reproduced in appendix 2.

## Appendix 4: Vleischfontein Mission

### Vleischfontein Mission



Plate 2: Vleischfontein Mission, Madikwe Game Reserve, taken in 2000. The original 1885 building was still standing but is out of shot in the foreground.

Vleischfontein Mission, where I lived for the first six months of my field stay, was a long established presence on Vleischfontein Farm, one of the twenty-eight farms that became Madikwe Game Reserve. Over the better part of the century of its existence, there is evidence that the Mission had a significant impact on the lives of local residents – particularly through the mission school, as is described below.

According to one source (Cazzavillan, 1996), Vleischfontein Farm was bought in 1885 by Jesuit missionaries, and the first building was erected by Fr Croonenberghs in December of that year. There were some five villages in the area comprising a population of more than four hundred people. On Christmas day in 1885 Chief Gaborone (who was still living at Tswene Tswene, some 9 km to the north) visited the mission and negotiated starting a school and chapel for his subjects. The school opened a few months later with about forty young male pupils and demand was so great that missionaries established a night school for adults.

Another account (Proctor, 2000) claims that Vleischfontein was the first Roman Catholic monastery in the Transvaal, set up by the Jesuit Missionaries of St Aidans College, Grahamstown in 1882 (although they bought the land in 1879). After Rhodes' invasion, in 1890, of what is now Zimbabwe, Vleischfontein became the base for a number of Jesuit missions in Matabeleland and Mashonaland. It was a halfway station on the wagon road to the Jesuit Zambezi missions in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia, which was the primary access road to the north. This was the Mafeking road, made famous by Herman Charles Bosman,<sup>202</sup> and it stretched from the centre of the Dwarsberg range through to Derdepoort and northwards to Bulawayo. Livingstone visited the Madikwe area several times during the 1840s<sup>203</sup> and even Rhodes stayed there on occasion. But when the railway to the north was built Vleischfontein lost its importance as the main route north and, in 1894, the Jesuits sold it to the French Oblates of the Order of Mary Immaculate. They, in turn, were replaced by the Holy Family Sisters, who were the first nuns most villagers had ever come into contact with. The nuns started a sewing cottage industry and bartered clothes for food with villagers. In this way they slowly changed villagers' dress (Proctor, 2000).

Accounts agree that there was a substantial black African population living and farming on the Mission land. At its height, over one hundred children attended the school that Chief Gaborone had originally suggested to the first Jesuit missionaries, including some from nearby villages. Among them was Phora Suping, Chief Victor Suping's grandmother, who was born in Supingstad in 1905. She was 96 years old when I met her in April 2000, but clearly remembered seeing her first white missionaries when she was 18. Indeed, in the first decades of the twentieth century the only way black Africans could access formal education was through mission schools.

Some sources claim that the mission became a place of refuge for black African people displaced from their land by Afrikaner farmers. There were thriving gardens and orchards, the threat of drought ameliorated by a network of springs and dams

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<sup>202</sup> Bosman wrote a collection of short stories titled *Mafeking Road*, first published in 1947.

<sup>203</sup> <http://www.madikweinfo.co.za/mad004.htm> accessed 5 June 2007.

constructed by the missionaries. The dams were stocked with barbell, and it was a time of “peace and plenty” (Cazzavillan, 1996).

But others hint at a story of intermittent but incremental tension between local residents and missionaries. According to Cazzavillan (1996), after the death of old Chief Moatshe in 1940 the inherent strains in village/mission relationships became more pronounced. Leadership was taken over by Moatshe’s sons.

Vleischfontein and the other farms that comprise Madikwe Game Reserve today were declared a ‘Whites Only Area’ in terms of the 1913 Land Act. As legislation became progressively harsher towards black Africans it became too difficult to continue with their work, so in 1950 the Oblates closed the mission and moved to Silkaatskop (Cazzavillan, 1996). The farm was bought by an Afrikaner farmer. The mission’s gardens and orchards soon disappeared. The spring was diverted because of a new road and, as Cazzavillan says, the only sign of the dams today is “a slight indentation in the ground and a stony bank” (1996:3). In the 1970s missionaries from Silkaatskop reopened the school, but the mission was finally abandoned when the farm was incorporated into Madikwe Game Reserve in 1991.

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