



Construction of Personhood within Xhosa Ethnicity: **Critical perspectives mediating state and community conflict over natural resources.**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED

ADM: Amathole District Municipality

DEAT: Departments of Environmental Affairs and Tourism

MLB: Mbashe Local Municipality

MEA: Minister of Environmental Affairs

MECs: Member of Executive Council

MPA: Marine Protect Areas

MRLA: Marine Living Resources Act

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

NTFPs: Non-Timber Forest Product

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the navigation of structural pressures, limitations and conservation policies by the community of Hobeni Village in the practice of traditional rituals within the context of nature conservation. It considers how ceremonies such as *uKuqatywa komntwana*, *Intonjane*, *Ulwaluko*, *ukunikezelwa ko-Mkhontho*, and *Umcimbi/ Umgidi* play a vital role in the construction of personhood among small groups of men, women and teenagers identifying as Xhosa people in the Hobeni Village in the Eastern Cape. The qualitative research drew insights from indigenous knowledge already known to the researcher, current research, participatory observation and semi-structured interviews conducted on twenty-four members of the community. The ethnographic study found that systemic methods of nature conservation Vis a Vis symbolic oppression, sit in tension with the rituals performed by members of the AmaXhosa at Hobeni village. It argues that for Hobeni residents, accessing the natural resources placed under conservation is a vital aspect of their identity formation, which is impacted by conservation. The research found that current conservation practices pose a threat not only to AmaXhosa practices of identity formation and sense of belonging but also to the maintenance of their culture. The connection of the Hobeni people with nature is limited by conservation methods that force them to adapt their traditional practices that attempt to find congruence with their belief systems, but that strain the relationship between these villagers and their ancestors. In the search for alternative methods to preserve natural resources and maintain the culture of Hobeni village, this dissertation calls for the establishment of a different approach to conservation that is context-specific and community-centred. A transformative approach to conservation could advance environmental justice without compelling the community to negatively negotiate, as is currently the case, their cultural practices or erode their entanglement with nature. The contribution of this study lies in challenging the narrative or ideologically laden discourses that perceive people as a threat to nature and the environment. This dissertation concludes that people possess diverse knowledge systems and resources that enable them to coexist and conserve nature in their surroundings or living environment.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the course of my undergraduate studies in the humanities faculty, with Sociology as one of my majors, I often heard of the phrase “the scramble for Africa”. At a lecture in 2015, Dr. Frank Matose presented a map of Africa displaying the continent’s abundant natural resources. Tragically, that map also depicted the extraction of these natural resources by Europeans during colonialism and persists currently in the period of post-colonialism as well. The nature and extent of this extraction formed an enlightening picture about the history of Southern Africa, including its current rural dispossession¹ and persistent inequalities. This research thus arose out of my earlier undergraduate teaching which tackled the concept of land dispossession at Dwesa-Cwebe, access to commons², social justice³, community rights⁴, conservation policy and militarization of nature. It seeks to develop a conceptual understanding of how natural resources shape the construction of personhood in the small group of Xhosa people at Hobeni, a small village in the Mbhashe municipality of the Amathole District in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. It aims to understand how the conserved nature forces the Dwesa-Cwebe people to renegotiate their customs and explore the entanglement with multiple species. This chapter introduces the subject matter of the research and tackles the background to the research area and the research overview. It also outlines the research question and aim, discusses the alternative ontology before the conclusion.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

¹ Depriving someone access to land and other essential properties or his belongings.

² Land and or resources belonging to people or affection the whole community.

³ [Social justice] can be defined in terms of a hierarchy of four ideas. First, that the foundation of a free society is the equal worth of all citizens, expressed most basically in political and civil liberties, equal rights before the law and so on. Second, the argument that everyone is entitled, as a right of citizenship, to be able to meet their basic needs for income, shelter and other necessities. Third, self-respect and equal citizenship demand more than the meeting of basic needs: they demand opportunities and life chances. Finally, we must recognise that although not all inequalities are unjust inequalities should be reduced and where possible eliminated.

⁴ environmental rights, such as the right to clean air, pure water, and healthy soil; worker rights, such as the right to living wages and equal pay for equal work; rights of nature, such as the right of ecosystems to flourish and evolve; democratic rights, such as the right of local community self-government, and the right to free and fair elections.

On the 10th of May 2018, the Legal Resource Centre published by Daily Maverick Newspaper stated the legal challenges that sit in tension with the community of Hobeni in Dwesa-Cwebe in the Eastern Cape. A brief paraphrased summary of the report found that:

In 2000, David Dilizibhunga Gongqose, with his two fellow fishermen, appeared in the Supreme Court as they challenged the Marine Protected Area (MPA) with regards to the rights to participate in the coastal area at Hobeni, Dwesa-Cwebe in the Eastern Cape. They argued that it is unlawful to be denied access to marine species because they depend on them to sustain their livelihood, and it is their customary right to partake in those marine resources. The case emerged when Gongqose and two others entered Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve (land transferred in ownership to the community in terms of a restitution agreement 2001) in their attempt to fish on the Marine Protected area. They were arrested by the police and charged with an attempt of illegal fishing inside the MPA. The blamed fisherman told the Elliotdale Magistrate's Court that they ought to plead not guilty, as they were practicing their customary rights to fish, and customary fishing is something that the community has done for many generations. The court's magistrate recognized the customary community laws, but they were still found guilty of an offense in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA). The community continues to challenge the Marine Living Resource Act, but the minister of environmental affairs opposes the appeal.

After this article, I followed the social media platform and studied other scholarly articles such as Fay (2009), Matose (2009), Moore (2016), Sunde (2014), Binns (1995), Nkosinkulu (2015), Klopper (2008), Timmerman (2004), and many others. I decided to visit the area to conduct an investigation in December 2018. I began my master's research on this subject in 2018 in an attempt to contribute towards understanding the basis of these community conflicts over natural resources.

Generally, most rural communities in Southern Africa are traditionally dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods.² Resources such as forests for wood fuel, timber and fodder, fish, mussels, and livestock are key natural resources for their survival. Dwesa-Cwebe, a natural reserve in Elliotdale in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, is linked to a number of rural villages currently struggling against dispossession and injustice, the result of settler colonialism. Hobeni is one such village, largely populated by the black African Xhosa speaking people whose nature conservation practices were introduced and enforced during the colonial period. The Hobeni area is commonly known as eMhlanganisweni³ by the AmaBomvane.⁴ It is also commonly known that what is today called the Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve was land once owned by the local African villagers in the pre-colonial period. The determinants of the land ownership and land use changed under colonialism due to imposed management of natural resources and

protection of the coastal forests. The Hobeni community in the area became perceived as antagonistic to the Dwesa-Cwebe local ecosystem preservations.

1.3 RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The new geological age of the Anthropocene has a unique environmental viewpoint which not only recognizes the human impact in the geology, but also recognizes the biospheric impacts of human actions. This further manifests in alteration of ecological parameters, through industrialization activities (Biermann *et al.*, 2016). This situates the human within, not outside, ecological processes, meaning that conservation methods can no longer effectively work with the idea of humans as separate from nature. It can only succeed if practiced in an altered landscape. However, the South African policy-makers of Marine Protected Areas (MPA's)⁵ justify the establishment of separate enclosures as nature protection, enacted through coastal forest policies, as a positive way of protecting the marine ecosystems and close inshore fish species that would otherwise become exploited.

According to Sunde & Isaacs (2008:9), "an MPA is considered to be any coastal or marine area in which certain uses of resources are conserved natural resources, biodiversity, and historical and cultural features". Although this study concurs with this definition, it argues that MPA policies do not allow humans to partake excessively in areas consisting of abundant nature without putting a price tag. This research, therefore, examines the significance of drafting and implementing a holistic approach in conserving natural resources. This approach considers the needs of the people and their customary rights, particularly those who most depend on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods. In addition, it maintains their cultural values and customs through the use of natural resources that MPAs' policies seek to protect.

This dissertation explores the significance of the existing natural resources within an area occupied by the community of Dwesa-Cwebe (focusing on echogenic in the eMhlanganisweni village). It seeks to investigate the value of multiple species which include herds, herbs, trees, and coastal marine natural resources, such as mussels, seawater, and fish to the community members of eMhlanganisweni. It examines the value attached to nature by the community when practicing their traditional ceremonies to sustain communication and connection with their ancestors as the interaction between the locals and ancestors is performed through the execution of ritual ceremonies. It is alleged reported by some respondent that connecting with ancestors allows people to cement ties with their clan by linking the traditional rituals and their ancestors

for protection, washing misfortunes or for other traditional purposes.

Moreover, this research extensively explores local stories and the people's understanding of nature, considering the relationship they have with other non-human species. This research intends to highlight the rigid modes imposed upon the community of eMhlanganisweni by nature conservation policies, thus denying them the opportunity to practice their customary rights. It also explores how the community attempts to fight injustices and poverty despite limited access to resources. These rituals cannot be abolished as they play a significant role in the construction of personhood in the Hobeni residents and also shape and form their identity. The findings of this study suggest that there is a long-existing entanglement between the community of eMhlanganisweni and nature. The community folktales and participant observations affirm the importance of co-existing with plants, animals, and landscapes in their village, particularly in practising their customs, in order to reconnect with their ancestors.

This study further shows that although the MPAs are restricting the community from accessing commons, they continue to make use of other natural resources where there are no fences or restrictions, such as Mbashe River, grass, rangeland, herbs and so forth. These resources continue to play a vital role in their lives and rituals. The findings further suggest that without access to these resources, they are unable to connect with their ancestors, and their traditional ceremonies become muzzled.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research was guided by the following three research questions:

What role does nature play in the conduct of ritual ceremonies amongst the inhabitants of the Hobeni Area?

What are the limitations imposed on the inhabitants because of nature conservation in relation to accessing resource commons, directly and indirectly?

How have the communities dealt with the limitations in the context of their continued lifeways?

1.5 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are shaped by the three research questions:

The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between the Hobeni residents

and conserved natural resources at Dwesa-Cwebe nature reserve. There is little understanding of natural resources and the role it plays in the execution of rituals at Hobeni village. As stated by Sunde (2014), the progressive effect of a combination of colonial apartheid laws, preservation practices, racial segregation and land dispossession, have dissolved and mutilated customary standards of marine resource governance. The impact of apartheid, directly and indirectly, affected the Hobeni residents to socially construct their personhood and identity formation through the execution of rituals utilizing multiple species. This research thus seeks to understand the role nature plays in the conduct of ritual ceremonies amongst the inhabitants of the Hobeni Area.

The research also seeks to explore the limitations imposed on the inhabitants because of nature conservation in relation to accessing resource commons, directly and indirectly. The study seeks to understand how nature preservation management set limits that hinder the residents from living fulfilling lives. It seeks to understand the negative effects of nature conservation policies on the lives of this community.

Furthermore, the research seeks to explore how the communities have dealt with the limitations in the context of their continued life ways. This aim is drawn from the experiences of the residents in terms of how they go about negotiating and renegotiating the practice of their traditional rituals in the Eurocentric cannons they are subjected to, and how the negotiation goes on to shape their cultural understanding of rituals. The research seeks to understand why the residents continue to practice rituals which were performed by their forefathers; how such rituals have interfaced with the past and why they still hold a significant value in the current context.

1.6 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The conserved natural resources at Hobeni have the potential to provide sustainable livelihoods for every household at Hobeni village for centuries if the villagers do not overexploit them. The multiple resources can be utilized for the community's essential needs such as fuel to cook, grass for livelihood grazing and other purposes. The residents' views, opinions and social realities in contemporary Hobeni Village are used in this study to make recommendations. This demonstrates how humans can maintain their relationship with nature for sustaining their

livelihoods, culture, ways of being, identity and promote participatory pedagogies of conserving nature. Therefore, new approaches on how nature is governed, based on the currently lacking indigenous ecological knowledge, can help to resolve the current crisis faced by Hobeni residents. This is required because it can enhance the legitimacy of the villagers in participating in the conserved species.

One of the expected contributions of this research is to bring forward different lenses, which is providing and collecting data in different modes and for the data to be open to more than one interpretation. This can also enhance other ways of conserving nature without neither compromising relevant indigenous ways, systems that are not exclusionary, over-exploitative nor degrading their ecology.

Plumwood (1993) suggests that we change the master narrative because various stories need to be told about conservation policy. The identities of other groups should not be defined in one narrative. I argue that most conservation methods are defined based on the masters' narrative which is associated with economic development. Environmentalists have been producing biased knowledge. Extreme violence towards nature is placed on Black people and saving of violence is placed on white people. Saving nature has become a state of whiteness to reconstitute their whiteness. There is a need for a holistic approach. This research seeks to produce knowledge that is not dominant, but rather knowledge that deals with the realities of the world.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE REST OF THE THESIS

Chapter one sets the scene of the research's study. The chapter located the problem of nature conservation and cultural practice. It then discussed the problem and its context in Dwesa-Cwebe Elliotdale in the Eastern Cape. It also outlined the research questions, aims and objectives of the research as well as a justification for conducting this research which highlighted the potential contribution of this research.

Chapter two discusses the literature review that guided the study. It outlines the contribution of different bodies of knowledge to the theoretical understanding of people's perceptions and concerns with nature conservation policies.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology used in this research. It discusses the research design and methodology used in this research. It streamlines my personal experiences

throughout the journey of collecting data.

Chapter four discusses the research findings of this research. It discusses the findings on relationship between nature and the Hobeni community's rituals, as well as how the connection manifests and expands beyond the social construction of their personhood. It portrays how construction of personhood in Xhosa ethnicity is formed by detailing the functions of customary practices.

Chapter five gives a summary of the main research findings and discusses each of the themes in turn. The chapter further outlines the contributions of the study and the areas of further research and ends with a conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter unpacks the literature that guided the study. It outlines the contribution of different bodies of knowledge to the theoretical understanding of people's perceptions and concerns with nature conservation policies. It further provides a short comprehensive theoretical understanding of the effect of colonization/cultural imperialism in the South African context, specifically in rural areas of the Eastern Cape. It traces the effects of colonization and how such historical injustices detach or dismantle the relationship between the Dwesa-Cwebe community and nature. It explores the significance of cultural construction and its maintenance in the community of Hobeni to exhibit the importance of inclusivity on how natural resources are conserved. The chapter argues that there is a need to think beyond isolation when conservation policies are implemented. For instance, local people should be involved in decision making within nature conservation.

This chapter further assesses the importance of exploring complexities between multiple species, conservation, community access, customary system, and environmental injustices. It recognizes that it is crucial to engage with archival literature such as community folklores. This helps to understand the birth of environmentalism and the tensions it caused in the Dwesa-Cwebe community, mainly when they practice their rituals; how they sustain their livelihoods and the entanglement amongst them and nature.

2.2 ALTERNATIVE ONTOLOGY: COMMUNITY FOLKLORES

Community folklores are less often described or voiced out in the information produced in various scholarly institutions. Unfortunately, on one hand, most people tend to be influenced by Western scholars and many Africans are misinformed or lack the audacity, clarity of mind and access to research information in the right channels which promote African literature. On the other hand, some Western scholars who tend to research in Africa, at times, fail to consider the content, context, and cosmology by being presumptuous in their arguments and findings. This resonates with the African proverb that states that 'until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.' As a result, Western literature has dominated European writers misrepresent South African culture and their findings, in most cases, are not

content and context-based, nor are they dependable. This research conducted by a Xhosa researcher on a Xhosa community seeks to avoid the pitfalls of European narratives on African folktales.

In most cases, foreign scholars struggle to interpret isiXhosa words properly. For instance, there is a saying in isiXhosa that says 'isiXhosa asitolikwa' meaning isiXhosa should not be explained as there is no direct translation of isiXhosa words. The Western scholars often use or hire a third party to assist as a translator. IsiXhosa is a complicated language which has diverse meanings and concepts, and some words cannot be translated into English. This paper contends that most Western scholars generalize and articulate African history with false interpretations. Foreign researchers should not solely depend on African archives and the participants' responses to conclude their arguments when they are writing about Africa. Instead, they should consider participants' lived realities and experiences as well as understanding their folklores without mistranslating and misrepresenting them. This may include learning respondents' descendant language as well as learning their way of surviving before conducting research. Engaging and participating in community activities, not as a researcher but as a resident, can also greatly assist in improving the quality of the research.

This study calls upon the need to deconstruct dualism thinking. Deconstruction of dualism can enhance researchers' understanding of the relationship between what they write about and the site of research they conduct their study. What researchers also think about in the field is distinct and separable. De Klerk (2007) states that, over the last 50 years, many different thinkers across the Social Science discipline have significantly contributed to breaking boundaries in the pre-scientific assumptions of the world by engaging in the literature about different pedagogies. This way of constructing knowledge can better be achieved not only through partaking in community activities and or rituals but also from paying attention and giving respondents a chance to narrate their stories. This researcher attentively listened and documented the respondents' stories as they unfolded. He gave the residents of the Hobeni community a platform to voice out their untold stories in an attempt to produce data that is complex and rich in detail.

Piccinini (2018) posits that acceptance of the complexities of the ecosystem enhances our understanding of the existing relationship between humans and other species. Furthermore, she states that this relationship expands to humans, the environment, beings, families, and strangers.

2.3 UNPACKING THE COMPLICATIONS IN THE CONCEPT OF MULTIPLE SPECIES AND INJUSTICES OVER NATURAL RESOURCES

According to Khan (1994), apartheid policies heavily influenced South African environmental policies. The isolation of black communities from abundant natural resource areas was part of the apartheid governmental disenfranchisement techniques to blacks. The colonial process alienated blacks, “physically and spiritually estranging them from their cultural and religious links with the environment” (Khan, 1994:499). From colonialism to the present, African communities continue to be subjected to negative connotations concerning environmental awareness. These perceptions and implications are strongly deepening and continue to distort the way African communities live amongst precious resources. The perceptions are also heavily influenced by the “Natives Urban Area Act of 1923 and apartheid measures (such as Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953)” (Khan, 1994:499).

Dwesa-Cwebe is one of the rural communities affected by the apartheid regime. The 19,293 hectares area consists of land with great potential for economic, social, cultural and sustainable development. The area is filled with abundant natural resources such as grassland, marine life, coastal forest, wildlife, and so forth. The reserve, together with its neighbouring marine protected area, is located on either side of the Mbashe River. Mbashe River occupies a narrow coastal strip of approximately 19 kilometers (km) long that is between 2 km and 4 km wide on the terrestrial side extending six nautical miles out to sea on the marine side with the boundaries of the Amathole District Municipality and the Mbashe Local Municipality, (High Court of South Africa, 2016). Before and after 1994, the precious natural resources existing in Dwesa-Cwebe led to state intervention.

The DEA (Department of Environmental Affairs) in Eastern Cape post-1994 was influenced by the government policymakers and private organizations to preserve nature. It did so through hindering the local people from fishing and using the forest and NTFPs (non-timber forest products). The arguments of protecting the marine coast and making the environment a tourist attraction were derived from the decision of the Minister of Environmental Affairs and the Transkei government. In 1989 the Minister of Environmental Affairs and the Transkei government declared the Reserve an MPA (Marine Protected Area), a no-go zone.

However, the locals were in denial of this act and forcefully participated in the newly declared

MPA. It was later confirmed that three local community members were arrested and arraigned on four charges. Count 1 was attempting to fish in an MPA without permission, in terms of section 43(2) (a) of the MRLA. Count 2 was entering a national wildlife reserve without a permit in terms of section 29(1)(a) of the Decree. Count 3 was conveying into a national wildlife reserve or being within such reserve while still having any weapon, explosive, trap or poison, in terms of section 29(1)(b) of the Decree. Count 4 was willfully killing or injuring or disturbing any wildlife animal other than fish caught under such regulations as may be prescribed in terms of the Decree, in terms of section 29(1)(c) of the Decree.

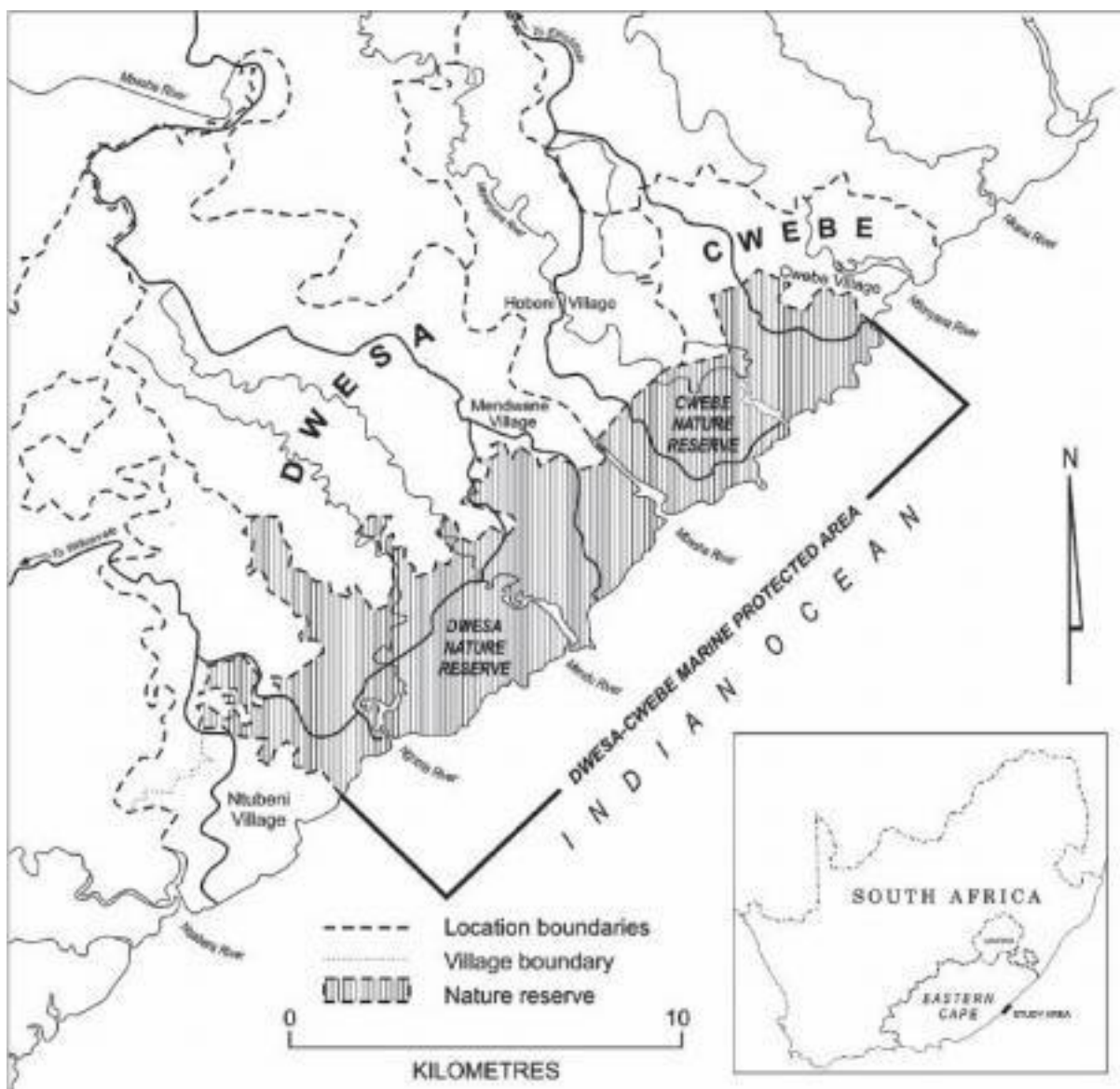


Figure 1: Map of study area in Dwesa-Cwebe portraying the Hobeni Village adjacent to the Mbashe river and Nature Reserve. <http://www.conservationandsociety.org/text.asp?>

Arguments proposed by the Minister of Environmental Affairs state that the primary purpose of the Dwesa Nature Reserve is to conserve the unique biodiversity of the coastal forests, the Southern sour veld grassland type, and the Marine Protected Area. The reserve also provides critical habitat for the survival of several collapsed fish stocks (Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism). However, the Minister failed to acknowledge the importance of marine life for the locals of Dwesa-Cwebe. The preservation ignored the customary rights of the locals. For instance, the conflict of interest began in 1994 when local inhabitants of Dwesa-Cwebe started challenging their exclusion in participating in the intertidal zone and began to disobey the law by harvesting enormous quantities of shellfish from the rocks (Attwood & Branch, 2000). One of the victims affirmed that:

I grew up as a fisherman, and my grandfather was a fisherman. Our problems started when we were prohibited from fishing here. They closed access and said it was now a nature reserve. When it became a marine protected area, we were not consulted, nor were our leaders. We were not informed that this place was going to be closed. They started arresting people who were fishing and took them to jail", (David Gongqose cited in Tshintsha Amakhaya, 2013: 2:02-3:40).

David Gongqose's response highlights the lack of communication between the government and the community. It also highlights the lack of inclusivity in policy decision making. The lack of participation of the local community of Dwesa-Cwebe in the policymaking and decision making resulted in prohibiting fishing without their due consideration. It shows how the government undermines local community needs and how their voices are silenced. The government failed to recognize that the environment is also part of social constructions. People develop relationships and bond with the environment and nature differently.

Blaikie (1995:203) argues that in the environment, "what we are doing is interpreting the landscape with the experiential, technical, cultural, and value-laden means at our disposal". He further argues that our views on the environmental issues, either global or local, are identified, interpreted, and given meaning by us. Blaikie's arguments affirm that there is a strong relationship between humans and ecology, and individuals should determine how they interpret it and respond to it. Thus, the community of Dwesa-Cwebe failed to adhere to rules which were heavily enforced by the Minister of Environmental Affairs which resulted in a court case fighting for their rights. Nonetheless, through the social media platforms, the voices of Dwesa-Cwebe local community members were heard and publicly portrayed. Lawyers were willing to

handle the case pro bono, and political activists joined in standing with the community.

2.4 ACTORS NETWORK THEORY: DECENTRALISATION OF POWER IN DECISION-MAKING

The prohibition of Dwesa-Cwebe local community from exercising their customary rights in the nature reserve can also be analysed through power dynamics. Analysing power dynamics at play in the conservation model exhibits where power is vested. Actors' Network derives from the work of Latour (2005) and other scholars. The main emphasis of this theory is to treat humans and non-humans as equal because separation of the two is difficult and creates conflicts. Latour (2005) argues that Actors' Network is a theoretical and methodological way of dealing with social theories where everything in the social and collective universes exists in always moving systems of relationship. It contends that nothing exists outside those connections. Every one of the variables associated with a social circumstance is on a similar level. As such, there are no external coercive methods to determine relations of power dynamics amongst people and nature.

In the case of Dwesa-Cwebe, it shows the relationship between the local community and natural resources forcefully taken away by those who have political power. For instance, the Eastern Cape Member of Executive Council (MEC) reinforces social injustices by prohibiting people from practicing their customary rights in the name of preserving nature. It becomes problematic and creates conflict because the existing preservation policies exclude people. However, the relationship between people and nature remains intact. Thus, there is a need for a new reformed system with regards to nature protection, which doesn't isolate the rights and the relationship of the locals with nature. In decision making, power needs decentralization into the public at the lower echelons of society. Decentralizing power will promote and enhance community participation and acknowledgment of the nodes connected to all those making decisions about nature such as politicians, governments, NGOs, private companies, and foreign investors.

It is safe to argue that most governments in developing countries are heavily influenced by private companies and donors in conservation who wield huge economic power that they use to attain political power. This might be the case in Dwesa-Cwebe. The Minister of Environmental Affairs is highly likely to be influenced by those who have economic power over him/her like private companies, and internal and external donors who are pushing their political agenda. In most cases, the main agenda is to generate income at the expense of the poor. Although the Minister continues to enforce unjust policies making sure that the marine zone stays preserved,

and the forest becomes a tourist attraction for economic development, the community is not benefitting from the income generated. The road remains in poor conditions, most people are unemployed, and schools are in poor condition. The community is in dire need of a bridge to cross the Mbashe River since many lives were lost due to drowning.

2.5 THE SHIFT IN THINKING, IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS AT DWESA-CWEBE

The assertion of preserving nature separate from people as the only way to avoid extinction, overexploitation, and environmental degradation is untrue and vague in the debate of conservation and the use of nature and commons at large. Our grandparents, the great grandparents and all my family clan descendants have been inseparable with commons and trees. Planting their own crops and hunting wild animals were some of their ways of surviving and it cannot be ignored. When South Africa became a democratic country, not only did the country amend the Constitution (of 1993 and 1996) but the bill of rights was also changed, which granted powers to the traditional leaders and granted access to the communities to participate in commons freely, the respectful and right thing to do. As argued by Ruddle (1998) in Sunde (2014:23), "the entire physical, economic and spiritual life of some communities is centred on the natural resources assemblage and the resource space belonging to that community". There is a need to revisit the customary laws of South Africa.

Aswani (2011) defines customary systems as traditional practices that synchronize the use of natural resources for cultural purposes and preserve it using indigenous knowledge. Sunde (2014:22) adds that "a wide range of customary marine resources governance systems exists throughout the world, each distinctive social context giving rise to a unique constellation of local-level institutions, norms, and rules". In many local South African governments, specifically in rural areas, local institutions tend to or are most likely to work closely with traditional leaders because most rural villages still hold significant value and trust in traditional leadership. Dwesa-Cwebe community has been identified as one of the rural areas which have traits of traditional leadership, although some members have concerns about their leaders. The Dwesa-Cwebe community has limited access to natural resources. In this study, I put forward the importance of customary systems. Although customary systems are no longer applicable in the Dwesa-Cwebe community because the preservation methods failed to consider the human needs, customary systems are not determined by access to natural resources for ritual purposes.

Moilanen *et al.* (2005:1888) states that "across large parts of the world, wildlife has to coexist

with human activity in highly modified and fragmented landscapes". A study by Dkamela *et al.* (2014:5) "shows how the system of political patronage is intertwined with the forest sector and how private interest prevails both in decision making and in day-to-day enforcement of regulations". The Dwesa-Cwebe community is currently experiencing disenfranchisement as they remain prohibited from accessing natural resources that they traditionally relied upon. Rivers & Gibbs (2011) observed conservation-criminology framework to common-pool in Abalone fishery in South Africa as their research emphasized on conservation criminology. They argued that "management of these resources by state actors without local input has exacerbated the social and economic marginalization of poor and/ or minority populations, leading to traditional interaction with natural resources being labeled as deviant or criminal" (Rivers & Gibbs, 2011:327).

On the contrary, Kolbert (2014) wrote a book titled *The Sixth Extinction*, which blames the extinction of natural resources on the effect of human beings. While several studies have addressed the issue of resource exploitation and unjust environmental laws, this study focused on the significance of human coexistence with commons and participation with full intention to promote inclusive ways of conserving nature. The tension between the local community and the state has prolonged the community deprivation for too long. People have been deprived of accessing their rights to natural resources found in their physical surroundings.

Dwesa-Cwebe remains one of the Eastern Cape areas that retain traditional knowledge and beliefs. The community practices rituals because its lives are entangled with nature. One of the female participants reported that "The sea mussels were part of the food source and they made a huge difference in their lives not to mention the importance of seawater to females who struggled to give birth and for spiritual practices" (Sunde, 2014:104).

This study also considered various species used by people to highlight their attempts in ensuring their cultural continuity. It also ensures the safeguarding of their environment from which they feed and create livelihoods while negotiating impoverishment that pervades this community. Historical records suggest that they highly rely on marine resources. This study recognized this as a significant area that needs more investigation because it shows how vital the entanglement among a community, environment, and species is. The involvement between humans and natural resources plays a vital role. Thus, the conservation methods need re-evaluation to implement inclusive plans which acknowledge nature's interconnectedness with the community, ritual practices, and customs, and it has become their way of life.

Currently, the importance of entanglement between the community members of Hobeni and nature is hindered by the separation of the conserved area, hampering them from participating. These constraints are brought upon by South African nature conservation methods that keep nature behind fences. The conflicts and complexities of nature conservation also reveal how the community members become subjected to injustices, how these injustices sit in tension with their historical beliefs, traditions, and customs in which their lives became entangled.

"Uyabona ngelaxesha abantu babezityela beziphilela kuyo-yonkee lento ye conservation; besigawula apha babebiya ngo Thongothi. U-Thongothi lelona hlahla lilapha ehlathini lomeleleyo kakhulu. Lungahlala almost ten years ubiye ngalo egadini yakho zingatyhobozi ibhokwe zingangeni phakathi because linameva liyahlababa at the same time xa ubiyele ngalo kunyuka ingca ikhuse kungangeni impahla erhalela ukutya ayikwazi ukubona ngaphakathi at the same time uyakwazi ukuzibeka izinto zakho ngaphakathi egadini zifihlakale zingabonwa. Namhlanje ayikho lonto, siphila ngokuthenga icingo. It's when ipoverity yaqala mhla sasuswa ngaphaya seza ngapha. Besizilimela apha sizityela kungekhonto isiphazamisayo sibiya ngela hlahla sizakhela izindlu apha ngamahlahla ngezi-tena kanje sibiye senze-yonke into yethu sihlale sifuya imfuyo yethu ingaphazanyiswa nto siziseza impahla zethu ngamayeza esiwakha ehlathini. Makhe-sithi mhlawumbe inkomo yakho okanye ibhokhwe yakho imithi izama ukukhupha bakhona abantu abakwaziyo ngendalo yabo ukuyikhupha xa ibonakala inengxaki yokubeleka ilikhuphe ela-takani ilibeke ngaphandle liphile lisezwe liphile. Mhlawumbi, ukuba lifela ngaphakathi uyakwazi ukulikhupha inkomo ingalimali mhlawumbe ilikhuphe lona, kushiyeke impahla ngaphakathi uyakwazi ukuyikhupha lonto iphumele ngaphandle. Zininzi izinto ezisetyenziswayo. Asizingeli ngoku asigawuli phaya, asikhinto phaya. Ewe Intlupheko ibangelwa kukususwa kwethu kwindawo zethu ezityebileyo esikwaziyo ukufumana izinto. Ezantlanzi eziya ziqale ukuphazamiseka immediately xakuthiwa masizibe because once uvale uthi andinamvume yokungena ngaphathi ndizoloba ndizakuba ukuba kwam ndizakuthatha more than necessary eloxesha ndenza I damage kanti ngelaxesha besizihlalela apha; usuke uthi usakukhanuka uyoloba ebusuku uthathe noba zimbini noba zintathu uzoziphakela uhlale and ubuyazi ukuba incinci lena ayizundenzanto uyibuyisele lonto ka catch and release besiyazi lonto, but now noba ufikile noba ingakanani uzayithatha uzoyiqhuqha uyikrwele okokuba mawube nomhluzi embhizeni and eloxesha xa uthathe ezi zincinci uyazilimaza because eziya zindala azisena-value azizuphinda-zenzento. Ezine-value zezi kufuneka zikhulile zenze ezinye. Soo yiyo kelento ndisithi yasiphazamisa lonto" (Participant A)

Translation into English

When we were living freely in our community, living the way we make sense of our daily lives without any interference from conservation methods and policies, we used to harvest in the forest for uThongothi (indigenous tree). UThongothi is the longest growing forest shrub; it can last

about ten years. Back in the day, we used to use it to protect our gardens, using it as a fence and it was safe because it ensured that the goat or any other herd couldn't break through your household fence because it consists of thorns. Therefore, any livestock couldn't pass through because uThongothi also grows grass and leaves, which hinders animals from seeing through what is in the garden. But today we no longer have access to harvest it; hence we use wire to safeguard our crops in the gardens. Poverty began on the day our access to participate in the commons in the nature reserve area was stripped. We used to farm here, building houses; we were doing everything without interference. We made sure that our cattle feed on rich grass on green pastures and were healthy and un-exposed to any disease or any danger because we also use traditional medicine that is only accessible in that forest that is conserved today. For instance, back in the days if your cow or a goat was experiencing difficulties in giving birth, there are people in the community who are naturally blessed with the gift of healing and making sure that the herd delivers a healthy offspring. If your cow or goat has a congenital disability or obstruction, we used to go to the forest and harvest a traditional medicine that can heal it. We use the herb to make sure that the unborn herd can naturally be born safe, but today, we are no longer granted access to harvest such herbs. Poverty started as soon as they prohibited us from accessing that area. Because once you have closed access to the commons, I no longer have the right to fish nor have access to other species that help us to sustain our livelihood. This resulted in fishing damage crises (ukungakhathali) (irresponsible) whereby you would fish at night and catch a small fish worth nothing. Still, because of poverty, you will take it because it's another way of putting the meal on the table. It is unfortunate because back in the days, we used to acknowledge the system of catch and release, and we understood the process of conserving. If you caught a small fish, you would release it because we realized that they have more value than the ones that are already old because the future lies on the smaller ones for reproduction.

The above statement expressed by one of the community members of Hobeni indicates how the conservation and marine resource governance continues to subject them to complicated situations. It further demonstrates the importance of co-existing with natural resources and having access to them. It highlights what it means to them, how prohibition breaks away the relationship and the usefulness Dwesa-Cwebe community has/ or attaches to commons since it sets boundaries which did not exist before colonisation. This is in line with the study's aim of exploring how the South African conservation policies and marine resource policies are often prescribed in a very rigid mode in the Dwesa–Cwebe community.

The procedures do not only interrupt their way of life but also force them to find alternative ways of surviving. At some point, this forces the community to use subversive methods to access the resources they need, often leading ironically to the damage that the policies were

trying to protect against. The South African conservation of natural resources is at odds with the systemic inequality engulfing the community members in practicing their rights and having relationships with nature in their surroundings. As reported by one of the participants, it further forces the community to renegotiate their ceremonial practice, cultural values, and norms such as the use of *uThongothi*, *ukuzalisa imfuyo*, *ukuzala kwabafazi*, *ulwaluko*, *isiko*, *ukukhupha umntwana efukweni*. Through these injustices, the community members of Hobeni are under pressure to feed their families because of their socio-economic realities. It is precisely their historically inherited lack of life opportunities that emphatically hampers their ability to feed their families through the use of nature and practicing their traditions. However, through the use of the existing species in their village, they continue to make use of less available species to sustain their culture and ensure the continuation of ritual and cultural practices to shield the entanglement between themselves and multiple species for future generations to come.

However, these entanglements are threatened and the locals are slowly becoming obligated to find alternative ways of practicing their rituals without the use of the preserved natural species. Despite the limited relationships they now have with multiple species compared to previous periods, they remain firm in executing rituals and customary practice as these relate to their historical use of natural resources. The policies, however, continue compelling them to renegotiate their cultural practices, values, and norms. The village reiterated that without these rituals, their lives are meaningless, and the future of their tradition is at threat. This is why they continue doing them under great difficulty.

2.6 CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Unpacking the unjust practices of participating in the commons poses a question not only to the South African government but also to the Western imperialist capitalist motives, which demonstrates an eagerness to separate or detach rural people from nature to solely benefit them. On the one hand, Prinsloo (1999) articulates that colonial literacy was imposed on Africans through the book of scriptures and weapons. This proficiency made divisions amongst the people, which prompted some Xhosa individuals to be uncertain about their cultural practices. These divisions formed the strength of colonial power and the philosophy of the advancement of modernization and Christianisation.

On the other hand, Glenn (2007) argues that the apartheid system romanticised open spaces while destroying African indigenous relationships among people, nature, and commons. Could

this be the case in Dwesa-Cwebe? While Selepe (1993) talks from an authentic edge, giving a contention that most Africans are exposed to the subculture of turmoil, in this dissertation I put forward a view that the western way of life perpetuated the Africans ipseity expansionism and strengthened through cultural imperialism.

2.7 STORY OF NONGQAWUSE: MYTH VERSUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN AMAXHOSA ETHNIC GROUP

Several studies across the social science discipline have significantly contributed to understanding the histories of amaXhosa ethnicity (Ashforth, 1991; Peires, 1989; Fay, 2009). Ashforth (1991) uses the theory of Nongqawuse which has been referred to as a myth by some scholars such as Peires (1989), as a false idea which was imposed by Europeans. The Xhosa people are part of the Nguni nation and have mostly settled in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. They are pastoralists who mostly pride themselves in keeping livestock and working their land. They were very successful up until colonial disruption through land dispossession and strategic destruction of their livestock.

The prominent Xhosa folklore and anecdote states that the Xhosa people lost their livestock through false prophecy that was delivered by Nongqawuse. Nongqawuse was a teenage girl and the niece of Mhlakaza who was an advisor to Chief Sarhili. Mhlakaza had a Christian influence and was deeply religious as he had been to the Cape colony after his parents died (Ashforth, 1991). He influenced Nongqawuse as he raised her. The girl was given false prophecy in the fields at the Gxarha River. It is believed that she was told by two strangers to say that the ancestors had pronounced that all the cattle of the people must be slaughtered and that the dead will arise and will bring good fortune to the people (Edgerton, 1991). The cattle were killed and none of those pronouncements were fulfilled. There was mass starvation which led to famine and destabilisation of the great Xhosa nation, an advantage to the colonialists (Edgerton, 1991).

The Xhosa people still pride themselves in their culture and identity through their language, traditional dress, ceremonies and unique architecture. The argument presented, therefore, is that the intention was to dismantle and steal the wealth of amaXhosa, including crops and animals. Ashforth (1991) further explains that the Xhosa tribe began to lose their power and had their land dispossessed when the British started to act through colonialism. This study certainly is in line with Ashforth's (1991) arguments as the Hobeni residents pointed out that colonialism ideas

evolved with neoliberal views filled with extortion of natural resources from the area into capitalist hands.

Peires (1989) postulates that almost ten thousand people died due to Nongqawuse's vision, Chiefs became powerless, and their land became seized. This thesis argues that although some people consider the story of Nonqawuse as a myth or another storytelling that the Xhosa ethnicity uses to justify their past and present, it is essential for them to acknowledge that in different communities, storytelling is based on individual or collective subjectivities. Additionally, it is also vital to acknowledge traditional knowledge and be cognizant of different stories told by various individuals to justify different things. Peires (1990:56) cited in Ashforth (1991:584) attests that "the Xhosa people do not need white academics to give them a usable past.....The Xhosa already has a usable past, and they need an accumulation of details to understand it better. Too many details might distract attention from major issues".

With this in mind, this investigation suggests that the story of Nonqawuse cannot hinder the enlightenment of other traditional knowledge, nor should it hinder the Xhosa ethnic group from interpreting their history in their social world. Schonstein (1994) provides an insightful investigation of Xhosa literary practices, arguing that the amaXhosa ethnic group did not use writing methods back in the days. They were orally cultured people, who carefully preserved literature in their minds and memories through telling myths, legends and tales about people and animals. They also used proverbs, song lyrics, and praise poems. They had fables for the instruction and amusement of the children as well as for the explanation of natural and mythical facts (Ntentema, 2019).

This dissertation puts forward an argument that without history, none of us would comprehend our present circumstances that we find ourselves. In reality, history played and continues to play an essential role in empowering people to understand their heritage, customs and culture, not only through recorded ancient archives but also through the indigenous traditional knowledge. History, community folklore, and traditional knowledge do not just delineate our family foundation; it depicts how life verifiably lived in connection to the existing natural resources before colonization occurred.

This indicates the significance of understanding historical background as it enlightens the community to understand better the pre-existing injustices they are currently facing in their natural environment. For this reason, the historical junctures such as colonialism play a

significant role in understanding the current social injustices experienced by the community of echogenic. This research investigated and articulated the historical archives to enlighten individuals on how traditional knowledge and community folklore play a vital role in academia. I find it quite illogical for researchers to ignore such incidents when their study investigates human perceptions and effects of their lived realities which nature conservation policies subject them to.

It is evident in the South African context that apartheid was designed to push white capitalist monopoly interest and ignore other races' interests. Apartheid sold the resource interests of the majority of the population, particularly to whites. Fay (2009:1425) argues that "the colonial period created enduring cultural, socio-economic differences in Dwesa and Cwebe communities, which have continued to influence land and resources use." In Dwesa-Cwebe, a rural area near coastal marine resources and Indigenous forests, dispossession still affects the residents. The Hobeni region is brimming with precious natural resources such as timber, aquatic species, and indigenous biodiversity while the local people are languishing in poverty.

People used to have entangled relationships with the species until the government rezoned them in the name of 'conserving nature' and 'avoiding extinction'. Matose (2009) highlights how the residents of Dwesa-Cwebe used to use the existing natural resources for survival. He explained that the local people used the commons for generating income, and for survival purposes. They used and still make energy using wood collected from the trees. They also used the fertile land for agricultural purposes; used the coastal marine resources for mussel harvesting, fishing, and other cultural and spiritual ceremonies. Furthermore, the village used the fertile land for cropping maize and the grassland for their livestock and farming. This study perceives denial to practice most of those mentioned above as the effect of accumulation by dispossession, a process whereby capitalists and governments distort people's minds, invade their land or region, exploit the existing natural resources and force them to re-negotiate their traditional rituals.

Moore's (2016) study concurs with this, arguing that there are new ways of seeing and knowing nature with capital. Of late, nature is associated with and turned into a project of capitalization and industrialization. This dovetails with the Actor Network theory which emphasizes the impact of a web of interconnected relationships. This also resonates with this research question which is to understand the relationship people have with the commons that nature conservation seeks or keeps behind fences for capitalist interest. I argue, therefore, that once nature becomes capitalized, it becomes harder for the locals to have a relationship or maintain their entanglement

with it.

Colonialism entails deep history when one is interpreting the environmental and ecological contestation, particularly the issue of participating in natural resources and the existing species which are found in Dwesa-Cwebe nature reserve. Anderson & Groove (1987) argue that the idea behind the scramble for Africa was to extract African resources and to take control of productive land and exploit natural resources by generating income at the expense of the majority population. This study also concurs with the above-stated arguments as the historical background of colonization validates the contestation over natural resources and commons at Hobeni village in Dwesa-Cwebe and how they are affected. Furthermore, because the historical background is a vital starting point in understanding the historically embedded traditional knowledge, it helps this study not to misrepresent the people that informed it. Nonetheless, having an in-depth historical background paved the way for this study to show where the problem began for the village, particularly with restrictions to access the preserved resources. This dissertation further puts forward that it is also vital to understand that humans in different areas were affected differently by colonialism. It is thus crucial to navigate the background of the study focus areas carefully.

On the one hand, the study suggests that to rethink and reshape the present conservation method, we first need to look at the historical context. On the other hand, Fioramonti (2014) argues that the way we currently deal with environmental degradation creates more opportunities for extraction and exploitation because policymakers formulate policies that rest on economic reasoning and cost-benefit analysis. Thus, this research suggests that there is a need to research the implication of rethinking the practice of nature conservation policies to be more inclusive.

According to Dkamela *et al.* (2014:3) "inclusiveness of policy process refers to the participation of all stakeholders in decision making, including actors from sectors outside of the forestry sectors such as agriculture and mining and state agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs), at not only national but also regional and local levels". He further argues that involving all role players when formulating such policies will not only bring equity but will also bring greater harmony, reduce implementation challenges and limit open conflicts (Dkamela *et al.*, 2014). The meaning of inclusivity in this research places emphasis on locals having freedom of expression to voice out their concerns and thoughts with regards to how to oversee commons.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the literature pertinent to this research. It has stated that it is important for research investigating and exploring the relationships between Hobeni residents and preserved nature in the Dwesa-Cwebe area to rethink how they produce knowledge. This chapter further examined the comprehensive historical effects of colonization in the South African context using Hobeni village to validate these effects. Through such a historical reflection, this study indicated that the existing inequalities at Hobeni village are in part the result of colonialism and conservation practices. It was argued that the unjust circumstances the Hobeni village experiences show an oppressive policy framework imposed upon them, which raises questions of democracy, fairness, justice, and rights, which are historically embedded. It is evident that the South African methods and policies of conserving nature which are solely based on avoiding extinction, over-exploitation, and environmental degradation, sit in tension with the Hobeni residents' needs. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on research design and methodology used in this research. It streamlines my personal experiences throughout the journey of collecting data. It explores my journey in the field and how qualitative methods allowed me to highlight the emotional, physical, spiritual, and intimate relationship participants have with their customs and traditional norms. It also discusses the methodology employed, which also helped to explore the hierarchies that co-exist in the village itself concerning the use of nature.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

This research emanates from the interpretive paradigm philosophy, which is based on the assumption that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live. It is premised on the view that multiple participants have varied subjective meanings of their experiences. This research thus utilised a qualitative approach due to its fluidity and flexibility as it provides greater and deeper insights into contextual social phenomenon. As argued by Liamputtong (2013:1), qualitative research helps to understand the meanings, experiences, and interpretations of residents and permits the researcher to hear the voices of those who are silenced and marginalized in society. Due to its small sample size, it seeks to explore the participants' views in their natural environments without manipulating the situation being investigated.

Furthermore, this approach was ideal as this research sought to rethink and reimagine how research has been done in the social science discipline through employing investigating ethos and folklore of the residents and including them in the analysis of data as evidence. FHI (ND, p.2) states that “qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation”. Rethinking and reimaging the way I collect data enabled me to acknowledge traditional knowledge, indigenous ways, social discourses, archived data, and my personal experiences. This study promoted an interdisciplinary approach.

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The researcher used an ethnography, a type of a survey in which the researcher spends a lot of time in the field study mining rich and detailed data of the cultures and lives of small groups (Descombe, 2010). This strategy is based on the view that small villages such as the Hobeni village cannot be fully studied by just describing them from outside. The researcher has to

engross himself into their daily lives, giving special attention to their interpretation of their world. This researcher used ethnography as he understood that there was a need to complement interviews with direct observation in order to understand many of the issues that the participants could not speak about. A multi-species ethnography was used to conduct this investigation at Hobeni residence which enabled this study to reveal the deeper relationship people have with nature and the relationship nature has with humans. As Kohn (2014) suggests, applying this kind of ethnography in the field enables a researcher to examine carefully the continuities and discontinuities between human and nonhuman. Voicing out their ideas and thoughts enabled me to discover what kind of relationships/ or connection exists amongst the community members, commons, and the environment in which nature conservation policies put behind fences.

3.4 DATA SAMPLING

According to Kothari (1980), a sampling denotes the technique or procedure one uses in selecting participants for research. Since not all residents could be interviewed due to time and resource constraints, twenty four participants were selected for this interview, eleven females and thirteen males. These were selected using a stratified random sampling method in which the target Hobeni population was subdivided into representative subgroups such as gender and age groups of participants. Participants were then randomly selected paying particular attention to which strata they came from.

The population was first divided into men and women as the researcher had reason to believe that gender influenced participants' views on the researched issues. These two subgroups were further subdivided into three age groups; youth, adult/middle age and elderly as age plays a vital role in participants' subjective views on cultural and conservation issues. Four females interviewed fell into the youth age group and they were not married. These young African women were between 14 to 35 years and are thus defined as youths under the South African Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996). The other four females identified themselves as adults as they were within the 45 to 65 age group. These four middle-aged females had all been married for over eight years. The remaining three female participants considered themselves as elders because they had already retired from active labor, sustaining their lives with government pension grants and mixed subsistence farming. Of the fourteen males interviewed, five fell into the youth age group of which two were married and the remaining three were single. Four males identified themselves as adults; three were married whilst one was a widower. The remaining five male participants interviewed fell into the elderly group, two were widowers and the

remaining three were still married and resided with their wives. The male elders sustained their lives with government pension grants, crops and by selling their livestock.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

Two data collection methods were used in this chapter, interviews and ethnographic field observation (participant observation).

3.5.1 INTERVIEWS

The process of collecting ethnographic data was through interviews, which were altogether recorded and later translated into helpful information. Birch and Miller (2000) attest that a comfortable interview is immense through a normal conversation. It usually takes the form of a dialogue and may either be structured or unstructured. The reason I used these interviews was to pick up a profound comprehension of the Dwesa-Cwebe community stories.

I chose the semi-structured interviews to collect data because they enabled me to observe, take an interest, and made the participants more comfortable and open. Semi structured interviews are interviews whereby an interviewer is not strictly obligated to follow the formally structured interview questions. This enables the interviewer to probe, getting broader answers through asking open ended questions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). It was necessary to continue probing with questions like, "can you elaborate on that" "why was it so" "what did you do after"? And so forth. Panos (1999) describes the above-posed questions as open-ended; the type of questions that allow the narrator to expand upon the topic and to give their views. Deploying this method also helped the participants to express their lived experiences. The investigation of this ethnographic information included narrative writings of community stories and their views and understanding of nature. Additionally, it helped me to interact face to face with the participants and made it easier to collect or observe new knowledge as the interviews proceeded. I needed to understand the relationship they desire with nature and the implication being brought upon them by nature conservation policies. I also wanted to better understand how they renegotiate their relationships with nature that is preserved.

The interviews played a vital role in this research because they helped the Hobeni community

voice out their concerns regarding how nature is conserved. This research narrates their folklore, as many of them drew references from traditional norms. The stories they told me shaped their perceptions and the entanglement they have with nature. The researcher was mindful when asking unstructured interviews to avoid making participants uncomfortable. The interview process became in-depth with every question I asked. Before I conducted interviews, I had a chance to observe the multiple species used to execute rituals and how they fit in each ceremony. My questions emphasized on the “when, why, how, where, what, and, who” in order to validate whether my observation was correct or not.

Since the participants included females, I was conscious of the emotions and the safety of the females who informed this study. I decided to apply recommendations from Geertz (1973), where he asserts that it is empirical and advantageous for a researcher to interview their participants in public spaces, especially if there is gender variation between the participants. Geertz (1973) further attests that the more the participant is comfortable, the more likely they become open with you. Birch & Miller (2000) emphasizes the importance of space/environment and the site of the research. They assert that space influences the outcomes of the investigation. For instance, if the interviews take place in crowded spaces, it can disturb not only the questionnaire process but also the response of the participants. Participants can respond to your questions for the sake of getting rid of you if they are preoccupied, or if you are becoming inconsequential or fastidious towards them. Common in many African communities, when the community performs rituals, the vast majority of the population attends the ceremony. It is not an ideal time for conducting research or to interview people unless you manage to capture the participants' attention separately from the crowd that is present at the rituals. I decided to observe during ceremonies instead of conducting interviews and follow up with the discussions after each service.

3.5.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

I also used participant observation in an attempt to obtain impartial data on this study. Participant's observation was utilized as an objective method in this dissertation to deepen my understanding of how the community of Dwesa-Cwebe engages with nature, given the challenges they face. This method enriched and helped this study to be more comparative with insightful responses, opinions, and ideas from the participants. With regard to other multiple species that are fenced, participant's observation enabled me to apply my sensory ethnography

to this study, which produced subjective data of my observation during the fieldwork. As Geertz (1973) argues, as an ethnographer, it is your role to observe, analyse, and interpret signs to understand the deeper meaning within the context of the specific area under study. I also included my personal experience in the field as a means of discovering different modes of living, being in a different environment increases one's curiosity; this challenge one's perception. My personal experiences about the complex realities of Dwesa-Cwebe expanded this research data to accommodate scholarly academic ethics, as demonstrated in my findings chapter. Community folklore was suitable for this study to validate this argument through tracing back at ways in which knowledge is produced and reproduced about nature and the community of Hobeni. Therefore, community folklores should not be taken for granted in academic institutions and researchers' production of knowledge.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered in this research were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). QCA is a useful tool for analysing a large amount of qualitative data. It allows for a systematic way of organising the data in order to understand what has been said about the topics in question, and by this process moving into a more abstract level of interpretation (Schreier, 2012; Bazeley, 2013). The researcher coded the data by arranging and interpreting the meanings of the respondents. The coding enabled this researcher to construct a proposition. Additionally, the narrative data analysis was used as the data obtained through interviews was personal.

To elaborate on this, some of the data collected was sensitive as the respondents voiced out different economic burdens and marginalization due to denial of access to the reserved natural resources. This researcher made group categories and identified themes emerging from the responses. He then grouped them in accordance. Afterward, the researcher compared and contrasted the group's responses according to the themes that emerged in each group. This did not only allow this study to identify themes but also significantly highlight the important views the respondent said as well as identifying the connection between the discussed theories above about nature conservation and the community rituals. During the transcription of the interviews, I took note of the participants' reactions while asking questions. During the transcription process, these stories effectively manifested into identifying inclusive possible conservation methods that produce outcomes illuminating some of the ambiguities in academic literature. Memos of the exact definition helped this study to be more analytic in thinking.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The participants that informed this study were given assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. They were also assured of their right to withdraw from the research at any point if they wished to do so. I also asked for permission to capture pictures during interviews and execution of ceremonies. The residents of Hobeni did not object to the use of their real names and images I captured in the field, but I preferred not to use their real names to protect their identity in case this study evokes controversy. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities Committee of the University of Cape Town.

The research was conducted in line with the Southern African Ethical guidelines and principles of conduct for anthropologists (2005). The anthropological ethical guidelines and principles are ideal for this project because they prioritized the safety of the participants. In addition, they place an emphasis on honesty, fairness, respect, and concern for others, trustworthiness, Integrity, including the principles of respect for autonomy, beneficence, no maleficence, and justice. As a result of applying the anthropological ethical guidelines, all the respondents who participated in this study were first informed about the objective of the research in their home language (isiXhosa), and all participants granted verbal consent. The use of the Xhosa language in conducting interviews was to avoid cases where participants were not linguistically competent in English. This provided for full understanding.

Through empirical and autonomous consent from the community members of eMhlanganisweni, I partook in their daily activities. I was invited by a group of men whom I had fostered a relationship with while going to the local shop to buy cigarettes. They then invited me to have a drink and asked about my background. After I fully introduced myself and explained the reason for my visit, we became well acquainted. My presence began to spread in the village; my friendliness and curiosity became more elevated. I slowly became integrated into the village, and local residents started to feel comfortable around my presence as I was consistently getting invited to different ceremonies. They began to extend invitations to attend one of the ceremonies, which was about to take place.

It was difficult for me to interview both genders in the same ceremony due to sitting allocation which will be further discussed in chapter four including cultural protocols. I decided to conduct interviews both collectively and individually to the participants that were worried. I conducted

interviews with the participants that were not married as individuals and sometimes in the company of their relatives and friends. In addition, the female participants expressed their discomfort at being questioned in the same room with their partners. The reason for this uncomfotability, I assume, was due to the patriarchal nature in the community or perhaps the fear of disclosing their views questioning patriarchal dominance in their household.

As a researcher, I understood that there were also power dynamics between myself and both genders who informed this study. I had to avoid questions that perpetuate gender norms. Das (2012) advocates the importance of approaching the field by concerning morals, welcoming, and not attempting to shift away from the ordinary but preferably interfacing with it as an ethical subject. I analysed how they engaged with space, executed rituals, and explored their understanding of nature as well as their way of life and overcoming constraints that hindered their ability to practice their rituals actively.

During my period in the field, I observed that ethics do not alter all possibilities that a researcher can encounter in the field, but it is challenging to follow hence it is difficult for researchers to apply all ethical rules. For this reason, I assume this is why many researchers stray from the guidelines and create their guidelines. Geertz's (1973) call for thick description has epitomized how sometimes overstepping barriers can deliver excellent results. In being consistent with the way that individuals whose lives are encountered, I am mindful that I must regard this data as consecrated because I was granted permission to observe, participate and assess and use the data for this study.

3.8 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS- REFLECTION

This section gives a reflection of the study as well as the limitations and challenges I encountered. Before I visited the field site, the perspectives and ideas about the importance of community-based natural resource management were not adequately considered by this dissertation. This could be because I was not aware of the massive natural resources that are conserved at Hobeni.

In the first phase of my fieldwork, I experienced challenges in gathering data since it was December holidays and everyone was busy. I had to check their availability and book appointments before time to get immense data. I had difficulties in self-observation while observing the Dwesa-Cwebe residents as it requires a lot of time. I also had to do self- reflection

in every ceremony I attended.

My initial plan was to have an equal number of males and females participants in order to balance gender equality concerning values attached to nature. I explained to each household I interviewed that the study sought to be inclusive by hearing both genders' perspectives and views because they both participate in the practise of rituals and or play vital roles and duties. I have to admit, it was not easy to get females to participate in this study because they were not willing to participate due to the respect they have for their husbands. The village remains a hierarchical society with traditional norms, customs and laws. Female participants respect their husbands by obeying the patriarchal system of the society. I managed to have only eleven female participants compared to twenty five males.

The inclusion of more female participants could have helped to determine whether the perspectives of females with regards to gender roles in the execution of rituals are static or have changed over-time at Hobeni village. If this study had included more females, it would have molded this research in a more exciting direction, which would have produced a more nuanced, denser, and thick descriptive expression informed by the many different female perspectives. Additionally, more inclusivity in the subject matter would have promoted and represented well the tapestry of the community.

Some of the interviews took place in the presence of both wife and husband. For those participants who were not married, a third party, either from the family or community, needed to be present to ensure the safety of the respondent. I envisaged this action because of gender-based violence. Indeed, most participants seemed to feel safe and were free to converse with me regardless of any subject matters. The presence of third parties did not affect their response because they chose people who they trust who are close to them, either their friends or family members or relatives.

However, I observed the feeling of uncomfortability when I interviewed married couples together. Perhaps, both couples were afraid to express their views in the presence of their partners, or maybe they were afraid of being judged or expressing issues that may cause conflict in their marriage. This observation occurred when I investigated their thoughts and views concerning gender roles in the execution of rituals. Both males and females diverted the question of modernity and equal rights to gender roles. For instance, below is the conversation

between this researcher and one of the married participants.

Interviewer: *Kudala umama-wekhaya wayetheza, apheke kwaye, wayengaphangeli Kuba uluntu lwabumbwa ngaphantsi kwezongcinga. Ngoku amaxesha atshintshile, omama bayaphangela, kweminye imizi umama nguye intloko yekhaya, nicinga ukuba ingaze intshintshe isini singaze sintshintshe naso xa kusenziwa amasiko?*

Translation

Back in the days, female duties in the household seemed static. It was socially constructed and normalized that women were supposed to cook, take care of the children, and were not expected to work. However, we are living in a new democratic country. Women are also climbing the corporate ladder, they are competitive. In some of the households, they are the breadwinners.

Male respondent:

yazi andifuni kube ngathi ndidelela umkam okanye andiyixhasi into yokuphangela kwabasetyhini. Umfazi nguye ophangelayo apha-khapha...kodwa ke mandithule ndicela ukuma apho. Kodwa ke andiliboni utshinstho elinokwenzeka ingakumbi kwelicala labafazi, lokuba bangaxhela xa kusenziwa isiko.

Translation:

You know, I don't want to seem as if I am disrespecting my wife or I am against the notion of women working. My wife is the one who works here (paused), but I would rather not comment any further. However, I do not envisage women slaughtering cows and doing manly duties, especially in the practice of cultural ceremonies.

Female respondent:

Andifuni kuwuphendula lombuzo nami, kodwa ndiyavuya ukuba ndisathobela umthetho kwaye ndizibophele kumyeni-wam nakwiminyathelo nemiqhathanga yelikhaya njengoko kulindelekile.

Translation

I would rather not comment on this question too, but I am glad I still obey and I am committed to my husband's household roles as expected from me.

Female voices were subordinated by male voices during non-gendered/ inclusive interviews. The presence of their spouses hindered them from speaking freely. For instance, the above respondents were cautious about their answers, particularly in answering questions that are gender-based or engaging in gender dialogue. It is therefore safe to say that it is more

disadvantageous to interview a couple together, especially if the conversation is a controversial topic. I observed that the more I asked questions that were either personal or challenging their societal norms, the more they felt uncomfortable. I had to change my strategy and questioning style to avoid evoking their emotions and upsetting them. After this observation, I decided to interview females exclusively to allow them to voice out their views without their husbands' intimidation. The female participants started to feel free and participated.

Investigating relationships between ancestors, customs, and natural resources is experienced differently and has the potential to evoke past traumas. Participants might be unwilling to relive those traumas. Participants of this study were willing to participate and I avoided the questions that might evoke their emotions. It is essential to withdraw immediately, divert questions away or allow participants to break in between topics that they might find triggering and sensitive.

Another shortcoming of this research is not being able to include all non-human species as part of this study. I left some non-human species because the scope of this dissertation had to be narrowed down in order to answer the research question. I also failed to access some areas due to prohibition in accessing them and traditional sacred beliefs. The species and ceremonies documented in this research are the ones that I had access to, participated in and observed only.

Geertz (1973) documents that anthropologists usually encounter some challenges on how they represent those they study through ethnography. In the process of data collection, my personality and positionality affected the interview process both negatively and positively. For instance, the Hobeni community is Xhosa, and I am from the Amahlubi ethnic group. They questioned my manhood before I could participate in their customs, particularly in the rite of passage ceremony (male initiation). They respected my manhood by granting me access to visit and participate in their rituals while also paying respect to their culture by not including me in the sites which they identified as being 'Xhosa men territories'. Given that my culture is different from that of amaXhosa, regardless of some similarities we shared, they did not restrict me in most of the sites, and I took part in many rituals recognized as a man.

Noting the evident limitations, this study does not, therefore, claim to represent all the Dwesa-Cwebe villages. It only explores the nature of past and present entanglement relationships to natural resources that nature conservation policies seek to keep behind fences particularly in the coastal marine and in the Dwesa-Cwebe Nature reserve. This study does not also claim to

represent other marine coastal resources and other South African nature reserve parks.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has narrated my journey in the field and shared the personal experiences I encountered. It further reflected on the methodological approach that was applied in this study and the reasons for the methods used to collect data, which were motivated by rethinking and re-imagining data collection. It also entailed a section on ethical considerations guiding the research before explaining some of the research's limitations/ challenges faced as well as a reflection of the whole research process. The next chapter discusses the findings of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of this dissertation. It seeks to understand the relationship between nature and the Hobeni community's rituals, as well as how the connection manifests and expands beyond the social construction of their personhood. It portrays how construction of personhood in Xhosa ethnicity is formed by detailing the functions of customary practices.

4.2 CONSTRUCTION OF PERSONHOOD THROUGH RITUALS

I visited the Hobeni site where I gathered data that informs this dissertation on 29th of December 2018. I wanted to visit the field site during the December holidays because I wanted to be present during the peak of ceremonies that are frequently practiced during this period of the year. Three weeks before I visited the field site, I had a telephone discussion with participant A to make living arrangements for my stay. One of the University of Cape Town doctoral candidates acted as an intermediary to arrange this meeting since he also conducted research in the same village. I was blessed to be in contact with participant A, one of the fishermen who had previously been arrested for fishing in the Indian ocean. He is one of the most known people in the village because of his political activism, fighting injustices brought upon by the conservation policies and as such knows more about the customary rights. He has a lot of contacts and building a relationship with him before I went to the field site helped me to familiarize myself with other people. He introduced me to his associates who also happened to be involved in activism regarding conservation challenges they face in the village.

I was informed that numerous customs are practiced in December and June to accommodate relatives who have relocated to urban areas to better their families' economic positions. I was further informed that rituals are more likely to become successful when the entire family is present. I expected to watch and take an interest in these customs with the goal of having a better comprehension of what incentivises Hobeni residents to practice rituals and the significant value they attach to such rituals in their lives.

After arriving at Elliotdale Town, which is situated approximately 40 kilometers from the Hobeni village, I travelled for almost two to three hours to get into the village. The dirt road is very bumpy, full of potholes that endanger both passengers and cars, testimony that it has not been serviced in a long time. It is so bad that it takes almost an hour to travel such a short

distance. At first, I felt at ease because I am from the Eastern Cape in Matatiele, and the bad road conditions were similar in some ways. I felt scared when it got dark because I did not know exactly where I was going. I immediately informed Participant A that I was on my way to the village, asking for his advice regarding where to get off as I was using public transport. He instructed me to give the driver my phone so that he can notify him where to drop me off.

As I was traveling along the road, one of the observations I made was villages that are situated in a flat landscape. Mountains were filled with trees and dunes, breathtaking scenery (see figure 2). I could sense and feel that I was near the coast through the smell of sea breeze.



Figure 2: Local village dunes filled with forest and nearby the coastline at Hobeni. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla.

I was captivated by the Mbashe River (See Figure 3 below). I asked one of the passengers to enlighten me about the river, particularly its direction of flow and its origin. My fellow travellers appeared to be shocked by my question. I was convinced that they had not noticed that

I was not from around the region until one of them asked me where I am from. It was at that point that I officially introduced myself to him, and we began having an engaged discussion. I found out that he was also heading to the same village where participant A had been waiting for me. He also knew participant A, which put me at ease. He promised to provide me with more details about the Mbashe River and enlightened me that the rain had barely fallen in the previous weeks so the river would not be full. Apparently, the river is deep and many lives have been lost in it. I recalled what I was told by the PhD candidate who conducted an investigation at the same site. Furthermore, he advised me to attentively listen to the stories people will tell me about the river because most of them, according to him, are true.



Figure 3: Mbashe river in daylight when it's not fully flowing to the ocean. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla

I was informed of both the negative and positive effects of the Mbashe river.

“Njeba ubona` esa skhetshane ngaphesheya, siwela ngaso umfula (Mbashe river) ugwele ungacwelanga kuyingozi ukuwela ngaphandle kwaso. Kaloku silapha sizintlanga ngentlanga, ngaphesheya komlambo sinazo izalamane, kwaye kengoku kuye kubekho amaxesha apho kuye kunyanzeleke ukuba siwelile. Xa kukho uMcimbi/ uMgidi okanye kuswelekiwe iba sisinyanzeleko ukuba siwelile siyoncedisana nezalamane zakuthi. Kwaye umlambo awuthi namhlanje ndiyanixole, ukuba uyakuthatha uyakuthatha qha. Yilonto kunyanzelekile ukuba

uzakuwele kunyanzelekile ukuba uwele kwakusasa ukwenzela uzobuya ilanga lingekatshoni.

Translation:

You see the mini boat across the river (Mbashe river), we use it to cross the river regardless of whether the river is full or not. It is dangerous to cross on your own. This place is filled with various people from different clans, most of us have family relatives across the river. On one hand, there are certain times whereby we have no choice but to cross it because our relatives will be practicing significant rituals or we need to attend a funeral. It is a must that we as relatives and some of the community members we attend to help with the preparations. On the other hand, the river doesn't show mercy or determine which day you will cross it if it decides to swallow you, it swallows you. Hence it is important to wake up and cross the river as early as possible so that you can cross it back before it gets dark.

Question: The boat, who owns it?

Participant C: “Sesalapha elalini, lomlambo uyasinceda kodwa ke uye-uphinde ube yingozi, imiphefumlo eyathathwa ngula-mlambo andikwazi nokuyibala, kudala abantu betshona phaya yingozi lamlambo ingakumbi xa ugweleyo, ingako ke singabahlali besinesicelo sokuba uRhulumenet asakhele ibridge ukwenzela siwele singenaxhala xa siyobona izalamana zethu kwaye nemiphefumlo yabantu emininzi ingayeka ukuba semgcihekweni.”

Translation:

It belongs to the village. The river does help us but sometimes it is also dangerous. The many lives that have been taken away by this river, I cannot even count. People have been drowning there, that river is dangerous especially when it's full. As residents, we have been requesting the government to help us by building a bridge so that we can cross without any fear when we visit our relatives and the lives of many residents will stop being at risk.

Participant C: “Ewe kona uyasinceda lomlambo ingakumbi ngexesha lembalela, imfuyo yethu iye-idinge amanzi nezityalo zethu ziyatshwencha emvakoko ziyabuna xa kukho imbalela, ukuze ziqhame iziqhamo zethu ezinizni zidinga amanzi, nawo ke lawase-Mlanjeni aye abeluncedo elikhulu. Kwaye siye-sikwazi nokuyoloba phayana emlanjeni, sisezenzisa i prawns ukuloba intlazi, kaloku ezinye ziye zibalekele emlanjeni xa uLwandle lucwele kaloku lomlabo unxumelelene nolwandle. Kwaye sinentlantla ukuba sisondelene nalo-Mlambo kuba umhlaba wethu emaxesheni amaninzi uyahluma.

Translation

Yes, the river is useful to us, especially in times of drought, our herd becomes in need of water. Also, our vegetable garden shrinks and dies when drought occurs. For our garden to grow, most

of our crops need water so the water in the river plays a vital role. Additionally, we are also able to catch fish in the river using prawns as bait. Most of the sea life runs to the river when the ocean is full because the river is connected to the ocean. Nonetheless, we are lucky that we reside near the river, the land is likely to be green most of the time.



Figure 4: Above are the prawns they harvest in the river to use as bait for catching fish in Mbashe River. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla.

Figure 4 above and excerpts from the interview illustrate how the Mbashe River contributes towards the livelihoods of Hobeni residents. On one hand, it helps the community to survive drought effects as it provides water for livestock and crops. On the other hand, it also becomes a burden when the residents have to cross it as many lives have been lost hence their plea for the government to intervene by providing a safe way, such as building bridges, to cross the river.

As mentioned, the residents are currently using a mini boat to cross the river. For them to cross, they have to pay ten rand. Sometimes the community boat does not operate if the owner is not there or not feeling well. There is need for an urgent bridge because the community members complained that they are related to the Dwesa villagers who live on the other side of the river. Without the bridge, it becomes impossible for them to visit their relatives.

The Mbashe River is also used to fish. However, it depends on rain and sea level since the river is connected to the sea. The fishermen highlighted that they fish seasonally depending on the sea level and the amount of rain they receive. The river consists of fish and prawns. The fishermen help one another with prawns bait to fish. If one fisherman got more prawns than the other fishermen, they equally distribute them so that they could all have a fair chance of catching fish and sustaining their livelihoods.

I was told by my travelling companion that we were near our destination and so I should get ready to get off. Finally, my heart was at ease because my skinny body had been squeezed at the back of the overloaded van by the public transport driver. Finally, I had arrived. My traveling companion and I went separate ways after Participant A showed up. I thanked him for his gesture and humanity. Participant A showed me a way to his house and his family warmly welcomed me to their home.



Figure 5: Rondavel where Participant A and his family reside. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla

During my first visit, Participant A, a single father, his two children and his wheelchair bound mother, all resided in an old rondavel (see Figure 5). The fire damaged his second room while he was attending a funeral in another location. The children, as shown in Figure 6, were below the ages of seven years. His mother and his young children could not stop the fire since the grandmother cannot walk on her own (see Figure 7). Participant A is unemployed. He uses his children's grants, his mother's disability grant, and sells the fish he catches through illegal fishing as defined by state conservation practices around the MPA. Illegal fishing refers to fish harvesting in jurisdictional water or no-go zones without the permission of the state (de Coning & Witbooi, 2015).



Figure 6: Inside the Rondavel, with Participant A's children, preparing tea and food for their grandmother. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla.



Figure 7: Grandmother sitting on her bed, with her wheelchair nearby. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla.

As a black man, I come from a disadvantaged background having been subjected to poverty. I grew up in Eastern Cape at Matatiele in a village called Dengwane. Participant A's living conditions evoked some saddest memories of my childhood. I could recall how my cousins and I used to eat in one iron made food bowl, sharing one spoon which we circulated among us during dinner time. After school, we would all rush home since we knew lunch was eaten based on the "first come, first served", there was not enough for everyone. The person who arrived last at home would have to wait until supper so he/she can eat. In the wake of watching participant A and his family's day to day living conditions, I was touched, and wept because my feelings of being subjected to poverty were evoked.

Even though my family's childhood was marred by many socio-economic challenges, we were united as a family. To us, family meant the world, we cried together in painful days and we chuckled together in happier times. I was additionally disillusioned by our government and its legislature following twenty-five years in a so-called democratic system. It was discouraging, therefore, that most black individuals, especially in rural settings, are still exposed to such conditions.

Participant A introduced me to his associates who also happened to be involved in activism regarding conservation challenges they are facing in the village. On the second day at Hobeni, the children offered to show me the area. As I was walking with them trying to navigate the Hobeni village, I noticed that numerous houses are built on dunes at the crest of hills in an undulating landscape, which in my view were unimaginable places to situate a house. The children pointed out that they were told by their father that many households were illegally removed from the nearby flat landscape, which is approximately eight kilometers to the ocean, by the apartheid government. The houses are now built on hill crests due to forceful relocation. I was impressed that their father taught them about the historical background and the history of their origin because the vast majority of youth nowadays tend to portray our history negatively. They use it to justify their irresponsible behaviour and avoid taking responsibility for their future. However, this is not always the case. Some people are hindered and fail to achieve their dreams due to the effect of apartheid or other social, political and economic constraints.

The logical inconsistency and the contradiction of how Dwesa-Cwebe is depicted in the media tormented me. For the outside world, the media mostly depicts the beautiful side of rural areas for their agenda while the lived experiences are less depicted. Seeing Participant, A fighting for his rights to access the commons, navigating through his day to day environmental challenges, and continuously battling to sustain his family's livelihoods, shows how the purported South African democratic country still subjects its citizens to vulnerabilities. There is a need to recognize the importance of fishing either for trade or as a generator of household income and employment in the South African rural landscape. However, we should not only recognize fishing as playing a vital role in food nutrition but also acknowledge the other natural resources. These include wildlife and herbs which, when fully utilised, can provide since sustainable livelihoods.



Figure 8: Showing the dunes and hills that are now recognised as a symbol of separation of the villages which are named differently. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla.

4.3 HIERARCHY REIMAGINING

My first observation in Umcimbi ritual was seeing people of different age groups sitting in various locations within the household but all facing the kraal. I was informed that in this village, Xhosa men occupy different seating positions, especially in such traditional gatherings. Elders sit together, middle-aged men also sit among themselves, and the newly traditionally graduated men sit on their own too. This sitting order is also applied in my village. However, I did not know which group I would qualify to sit with in the Xhosa tribe. When I asked, I was told by one of the acquaintances I had just met that I should sit with the fresh initiation graduates. I sat with them and we began having conversations while we were patiently waiting for the head of the household to speak on what the ritual was about and why the community members were invited.

As we were conversing about the rituals that will take place in the next coming days, I noticed that males and females were seated in different locations. Males were sitting adjacent to the kraal, while females sat near *iguma* (an area outside the cooking area), a reflection of both gender and cultural power dynamics. As the ritual was about to begin, the grandfather and the man of the household walked to the kraal. The grandfathers started talking and singing praises. Both genders were paying attention to the male who was talking, wearing a white blanket holding an *intonga* (male wooden stick). Females praised differently compared to males. While males kept saying the clan name of the household and praised the ancestors using the word *camagu*, females were ululating. I was informed that the males and family voices need to be heard so that the ancestors can ascertain that the household is welcoming and there is no bad blood between different family clans with similar ancestors. Since they are also related, they always want peace amongst different clans.

After the head of the household had finished, the group of the newly traditionally graduated men which I was part of, were expected to begin slaughtering the offered species (goat) after *intlabi* (the family member who makes the kill) is done with his duty. On my way to the kraal, I passed by Participant A and I asked him concerning the name of the rituals. He replied that "*Kwenziwa Umcimbi ekhapha*" (they were doing Umcimbi in this household). He further told me that I have to move along with the new male graduates and participate so that I can avoid being seen as an outsider or someone who thinks he is more important than others to do the slaughtering.

Figure 8 below demonstrates that in Hobeni, as is also the case amongst many Xhosa ethnic groups, similar traditional norms concerning the meaning attached to the gender and male age group apply when the execution of ritual takes place. Age groups carried symbolic meanings of hierarchy. As stated by the Actor Network theory, these levels of hierarchies also transcended into different levels of power and respect afforded to members. There are also gender connotations regarding the associated roles with females located near the outdoor cooking area (*Iguma/iziko*) while males were located near the kraal where slaughtering often took place. The age differences also determine which space you can and cannot occupy, which seat to take and which age group you will eat the meat with and drink the traditional fermented beer with.



Figure 9: Kraal and sitting assemble during Umcimbi before the head of the households speaks showing elders sitting in the front row and middle age in the middle row. Photo by Aphiwe Magadla.

4.4 INTLABI YASE-KHAPHA: HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD SLAUGHTER

As the newly graduated males made their way to the kraal, the head of the family stood up once again and started talking. He informed all the people who were attending the ceremony that the ritual that was being practiced was the *ibhekile*. *Ibhekile* is a ritual performed mostly for seeking blessings and showing gratitude to the ancestors for their blessings. Two goats were offered to the ancestors during the execution of the ritual for the ceremony to be successful. The ritual requires fermented traditional beer, two bottles of alcohol, white and red brandy, and tobacco. I was informed that these are the things that the ancestors were fond of hence they are often used to communicate with them during the *ibhekile* ceremony.

It was further pointed out that during this ritual the individual who seeks blessings has to be in the kraal early in the morning with one of the elders of the family relatives. The elderly relatives' presence is required to show the unity in the family and respect to the ancestors. They will communicate with the ancestors but first, they have to throw a slight of the white and red alcohol including fermented traditional beers while talking. If the ancestors loved sweets,

sometimes the elders threw them too to please their ancestors while seeking blessings. After the talk, they will both drink a sip of the fermented traditional beer and return to the house.

The local residents arrived in the afternoon to celebrate, seek more blessings and express gratitude for blessings. I was informed that it is vital for a person who seeks blessings to sleep in the same house with the rest of the male elders when he is *Intlabi yasekhapha* so that he can connect with the ancestors in the kraal for the ritual to succeed the following day.

Next to the head of the family, as he addressed everyone present, was an *intlabi*. The participant stated that:

“Intlabi ibaangomnye wesapho lase-Khapa umsebenzi wayo-kukuhlaba. Intlabi ngumntu onikezwa uMkhonto ngabantu base-Khapa, ukuze abeyintlabi yekhaya kunyanzelekile ukuba kwenziwe umncimbana. Lomsebenzi wenzelwa ukwazisa abantu abadala ukuba ukuba nantsi ke intlabi yalapha kwelikhay kwaye lomsebenzi udinga nje Umgqombhoti”.

Translation

Intlabi is either a family member or a family relative who is responsible for slaughtering. Intlabi is the person who has been handed a spear by the family relatives. To become an Intlabi of a family, a minor gathering is expected. A small ceremony gets executed to introduce Intlabi to the ancestors. This ceremony only requires traditional fermented beer.

The findings suggest that the handover and renaming of Intlabi often occurs when one of the current Intlabi has grown older and has become too frail to carry out the duties of being the spear holder. The successor of Intlabi has to be a male relative of the paternal lineage of the incumbent Intlabi. According to one participant, being Intlabi comes with responsibilities, rules and regulations. These rules are based on, and specific to, the family clan. Both males and females attest that Intlabi must obey the rules and regulations which are:

“Ngokushiyana ke kwezindlu nangeziduko kuye kushiyane ukuba xa kuzakwenzeka umcimbi kuyatshiwo kuqala ukuba kuzakwenziwa umcimbi kwazibani nge date ethile. So kunyanzelekile ke ilale nooTata abandala ukuba bakhona ekhaya. Yilanto kuthwe izakwenzeka ngangomso ukuba iyolala apho before eyohlaba nentlahla ibekhona”

excerpts from interview)

“ewe noba mhlawumbi usengumfana naye aye ayolala namaxhego pha.”

Translation:

The households' clans differ. The households firstly, announce which kind of ceremony it will execute, in which day and date. It is a must that the community should be present including the elders of the households and the clan. If the ceremony is taking place tomorrow, the clan slaughter is obliged to sleep in that household.

Aphiwe: And then kula process yokuba Intlabi iyolala phana, what if Intlabi iye yalala nomfazi wayo before iyohlaba ingaba ikhona.....?

Aphiwe: In the procedure where Intlabi is supposed to sleep in the house where the ritual will be done, what if he sleeps with his wife before he uses the spear to slaughter a cow?

Interjected

“Ikhona ingxakanana”

There's a problem.

“Ibakhona ingxaki, ingaba isiko ulibhudile.”

There will be a problem; you didn't follow the ritual norms.

“Akufuneki udibane nomntu ongumama.”

You are not supposed to sleep with your wife.

“Akufuneki udibane nomkakho, uphule umgaqho.”

You are not supposed to.

“Inkomo isenongakhali.”

The cow might not scream.

Aphiwe: And then njeba ndiphule umgaqho kengoku ndihambe masithi ikhale inkomo then like ingaba elasiko liphumelele? Okanye mandithi kulombuzo yintoni eyenza isiko liphumelele?

As I broke the traditional norms and values, what if I proceed and slaughter a cow, and it screams, will that mean the ritual is successful? What makes the ceremony successful?

“Kukuthobela umthetho lo uzabe uwuxelelwe kulomzi ukuwo, kuba uzakuxelelwa namhlanje uzakulala kulandlu kuzakwenziwa umcimbi kuwo, soo uzohlala nala-maxhego lamikhonto yiyole entla apha kwakho ngenxa uleleyo ikhona njeba ulele phana kulamzi. Soo awukwazi ukuya kwelicala utsibe iziko kufuneka ulale kwelicala lingeneno. Ukuba uyenzile lanto

mhlawumbi watsiba iziko ikhona into ikhona into engazukwenzeka isenongakhali lenkomo ebuhlanti, xa ingakhalanga ubhude isiko alihambanga kakuhle ngalandlela kuzakufuneka kuphindwe kuqalelwe”.

You need to adhere to the household norms and values. You are made aware of the norms of the household where ceremony will take place. You are obliged to sleep in the same room with the elders. On top of you, there is a spear that you will use tomorrow to slaughter. So, you cannot break the rules. If you do that, there is a possibility that the ceremony will not go well. Maybe the cow will not make a sound in the kraal. When this happens, it means the ceremony did not go well or as expected, the family will then have to re-do the rituals from the start.

The above excerpts suggest that Hobeni villagers adhere to the community rules to ensure that they follow and uphold the traditional norms and values that their forefathers taught them. They understand the importance of holding this position. The elders tell them that an Intlabi is supposed to sleep in the house where the ceremony will take place, together with the elders. The spears will be hanging on top of him, from the roof, while he is sleeping. He is not allowed to sneak out or have sexual encounters/relations. If he does, they believe that it will have an effect on the success of the ceremony, and something might go wrong. For instance, the cow might not howl in the kraal, and if it does not make such sounds, they take it or assume that Intlabi has broken the tradition, and the ritual is not going to be successful. This means the ritual will need to be re-done.

Sometimes the cow might not make a sound because the ancestors are not happy or have a physical and spiritual disconnection with the family. This often happens when there is no connection amongst ancestors themselves and the family. The vast majority of the informants pointed out that it disturbs them that their great grand ancestors are situated in the dispersed area they are not physically connected to. Due to forceful removal for conservation purposes from their ancestral lands to the new areas, sometimes rituals do not succeed because of this relocation. They additionally highlighted that rituals such as ibhekile and ukukhupha umntwana efukweni are more likely to succeed when the ancestors are happy, as well as physically and spiritually connected.

This suggests that there are social dynamics of behaviour when rituals are practiced. It is highly expected, depending on different household rules and regulations, to adhere to the set standards. When an individual fails, rituals such as seeking for blessing ibhekile from ancestors might go wrong. Such rituals cannot be performed without the presence of traditional fermented beer which requires fire that is built with the conserved trees. Ancestors are fond of traditional beer.

It becomes meaningless to do the practice without it. The people at Hobeni need access to such resources like trees and traditional medicine which is conserved by nature conservation. For instance, the ritual of Ukukhupha umntwana efukweni demonstrates the importance of the aforementioned connection with ancestors.

4.5 UKUKHUPHA UMWANTWANA EFUKWENI: A RITUAL OF INTRODUCING A NEWLY BORN CHILD TO HIS/HER ANCESTORS

Ukukhupha umntwana efukweni is one of the significant rituals that remain valued at Hobeni Village. The ceremony carries a symbolic meaning in their tradition. It introduces a newly born baby to ancestors of the father's clan. The ritual is performed within seven days after the mother gives birth to the child. All the participants in this study indicated that this custom is important for child assurance from evil and misfortune. They are content that the tradition is the best way to introduce the new-born to their predecessors. The ceremony is, therefore, a legacy of cultural transmission. They further declared that they grew up practicing it and will continue practicing it. However, they pointed out that the actual ways of performing rituals have changed slightly over time.

For example, back in the days, mothers were strictly forbidden to leave the hut for seven days while males were not permitted to enter the house nor see the child until the execution of the ceremony. On the seventh day, women were free to go outside with the newly conceived baby after their male counterparts had slaughtered a goat. The infants get fed/lick a unique piece of meat before anybody can eat. The child has to eat first because the ritual is specifically for him/her. The family sacrifices a goat/sheep as an offering when introducing the child to the ancestors. It also serves as an introduction of the child to the family clan. However, nature conservation policies dispersed ancestors' graves when the residences were dispossessed of their ancestral land. If the child's misfortune is not washed away, the elders have to visit their ancestors' grave which becomes hard to find because the conserved area is fenced and has changed over time. Respondents stated that nowadays, to perform *ukukhupha umntwana efukweni* ceremony requires a;

“Kuye kuxhelwe ibhokhwe xa umfazi esandokubeleka, iye ixhelwe asikelwe umtshwamu pha emkhonweni amunce asakuqhiba ukuwutya, kuye kuthiwe umkhupha emgqungweni. Kudala ke kwakuthiwa yimbheleko kuba yayiqushwa esasikhumbha, kudala belingekho ibhayi, kwakuqutshwa esasikhumbha sishukwe nethi nje azalwe uxhelwa labhokhwe kuba uzobeleka ngesasikhumbha. Ukuba azange uyenzelwe usengumntana ngenxa yesimo sakokwenu, uye

uyenzelwe nokuba sewusele umdala, yilento abafana xa bezakoluka ibe engazange walenzelwa isiko lokuqatywa, uye aqhala axhelelwe ibhokhwe kuthiwe sisikweleti iyamiswa lanto simalusa singazange simkhuphe efukweni ize ingakhathazi lonto simqalisa kengoku ngebhokhwe yokuqhibela asiqalanga ngeyokuqala kodwa ke nenxenxezo kodwa ikhona kona ibhokhwe yiyo eyokuqala”. Interlocutors

Translation

We slaughter a goat after a woman gives birth. The child eats a selective meat portion from the shank of the goat, called *umtshwamu*. The baby has to either eat or lick the meat. The procedure is called *ukumkhupha emgqungweni* (allowing the child to be seen by males and by the community with the protection from the ancestors). However, back in the old days, they used to call it *Imbeleko* because the goatskin used to be used to carry the baby on the mother's back. After slaughtering, the goatskin was prepared by males so that it can be soft enough not to harm the baby. The significance of these rituals is also visible when a male is about to go into initiation school. If the parents have not done this ritual within seven days after his birth, maybe because of family financial issues, they have to carry out this ritual before he goes to initiation school. It is a prerequisite for the ceremony to be performed. The elders then gather in the *kraal* to plead with the ancestors to perform this ritual. They then ask for guidance and protection of their child, who is about to go to the mountain.

“Qha kweminye imizi, kukho ubuchule obukhoyo kengoku kuthwe bayadibaniswa babini, ndibone ukuba kengoku liyalambhatheka isiko. Ukhona lo uzakuba ulenzelwe, ukhona lo ukhaphayo uzakutya nje ahluthe, ngelinye ixesha agule futhi kuthwe makaxelelwe eyakhe inkomo okanye ibhokhwe ngoba kaloku kuthwe babini kumtshwamu omnye” Interlocutors.

Translation

Recently in other households, there is this modernism whereby two boys will slaughter one cow, sheep, or goat in one ritual for two people. In many cases like this, the ritual will be successful for one person. For the other one, it will become meaningless because only one person will eat part of a goat shank called “*umtshwamu*.” In many cases, the second person will become sick or have misfortune. They will have to re-perform the rituals so that the rituals can be successful for both of them.

The above responses display different sub-themes that emerge from how the respondents understand their environment. These differences attest to Ashley’s (2007) arguments that people’s relationships are entangled and intertwined with many elements linked with one another. Ashley (2007) further posits that this relationship can be spiritually connected with the environment. The responses demonstrate that agency and structure influence one another. This

suggests that although the people of eHobeni live collectively in the same environment as a community, it does not necessarily mean they understand and navigate their environment in a standard set of principles. Modernity is visible in some households when they perform ceremonies such as *Ukukhupha Umntwana Efukweni*.

In spite of their differences, the community collectively acknowledged and emphasized the significance of traditional rituals, putting aside the differences in the execution process. Natural resources and multiple species such as the use of wood for fire, *Intelezi* and their livestock are also needed when ritual is performed. They continue to play a vital role in making sure that the rituals are meaningful and successful. Participants pointed out that they are collectively affected by the conservation policies which prohibit them from accessing some resources. They continued voicing their complaints so that the approach of conserving nature can be holistic, not exclusionary.

These findings demonstrate the importance of traditional lineage in the Xhosa tribe and the significance of these rituals to them. In a manner, they have become their coping mechanism. Seemingly, community access and the use of conserved nature possess a threat to species. Simelane (1996) cited in Simelane & Kerly (1998:121) contends that “a lack of information on traditional use of indigenous vertebrates results in the loss of an opportunity to promote conservation by using the species demand to develop environmental awareness and elevate sustainable resource utilization among different communities”. Simelane & Kelly (1998) demonstrate the significance of inclusion that, on the one hand, community involvement can enhance environmental awareness and conservation while, on the other hand, suppressing environmental degradation and overexploitation of species.

Overall, the community of Hobeni uses species such as sheep and goats to execute their rituals and herbs as they play a vital role in the execution of rituals at Hobeni village. They have also developed a relationship with nature in which nature conservation policies are erecting boundaries that are hindering them from having a fully functional connection.

4.6 ESSENTIAL SPECIES WHICH CONSTITUTE MEANING IN THE EXECUTION OF CEREMONIES

Although everyone within the community who was involved in this investigation concurs that a broad scope of animal species get utilized for traditional social purposes, they affirm that a ceremony becomes meaningless if they do not slaughter a goat, sheep, or cow or use some of the

herbs. However, the majority of the herbs are situated in the conserved forest and so are the other wild animals such as impalas. Therefore, they argue that they are slowly renegotiating the use of species to execute their rituals because of nature conservation. The livestock, as mentioned earlier, has a symbolic, spiritual and traditional meaning which ties the connection between them and their ancestors. In every ceremony, Inyongo (bile/ gallbladder) from an animal is used to wash the body of a person. It can also be used for the protection of the unfortunate and for the security of the household. After every ceremony, the bile remains kept in the house. In most households, it stays on the inside of the roof near the entrance door.

These animals also play a vital role as the meat is served to people who attend the ceremonies. The community members attest that preservation techniques are inconsistent with their customary rites. The species include herbs, trees, goats, sheep, cows and bushbucks as they are the centre species that are frequently utilized in the development of personhood in the Xhosa tribe. During my fieldwork visit, I had the privilege of attending a few traditional ceremonies, which include Ukukhupha umntwana efukweni, *Intonjane*, and *Ulwaluko*. They are entangled with one another in the formation of personhood in the Xhosa culture, and they are an integral part of the practice commonly known as *Umgidi* or *Umcimbi* in a Xhosa culture. *Umcimbi/Umgidi* functions through the exploration of *uKuqatywa komntwana*, *Intonjane*, *Ulwaluko* and other traditional practices and sit in strain with preservation methods.

Xhosa initiation is one of the most valued rites of passage. Boys from the adolescent stage get prepared to make a transition from boyhood to manhood. The male counterpart pointed out that *Ulwaluko* is an old practice in the Xhosa culture. The tradition is used as a teaching institution to prepare young males for the responsibilities of manhood. The male participants further pointed out that this ritual is associated with male patriarchy because it also perpetuates dominant societal connotations as to what constitutes a man.

I had an agreement with the Hobeni males that I would not include the whole process of circumcision, including how they heal the wound and what specific things are required. I therefore, do not discuss the circumcision procedure in detail. Although the locals permitted me to observe how the ritual is executed, they restricted me from writing about it. I honour their wishes by not discussing any further details with regards to initiation, particularly circumcision. If I do so now, I will be breaking my agreement with the community, which then leads to ethical violations of this study. Instead, I will dwell on the meaning and significance behind the execution of the ritual to the community.

Mhlahlo (2009:39) states that "Initiation ritual means an event that is performed in a community to mark the passage into a new stage in the life of an individual. These events have a social meaning attached and are accompanied by symbolic acts (Rasing, 1995:34, cited in Mhlahlo, 2009:39). The ritual remains secret at Hobeni village. I, too, did not get permission easily due to my cultural identity. Coming from Hlubi and Sotho culture where I undergo the rite of passage (initiation), the language that we speak in the 'mountain' differs from the language spoken by Xhosa initiates. It is because I was an outsider that I was not permitted to document the entire initiation process. I was informed by the participants that it is a cultural obligation that every male had to practice the rite of passage regardless of their age group if they want to fit and be recognized as Indoda in their society, which on its own, holds a societally constructed personhood of the individual.

4.7 TRADITIONAL REMEDIES FOR INFERTILITY

Through traditional knowledge, the Hobeni residents attest that they use marine resources to maintain their livelihoods and culture. They highlighted that the significant purpose of the sea is the seawater itself. I was informed by the village, particularly the female respondents, that seawater acts as a remedy for female infertility.

Eliciting the feelings and emotions with regards to the value attached to ritual ceremonies in Hobeni demonstrated the significance of having access not only to natural resources but to freely navigate their structural environments. The majority of the questions I posed evoked emotions revealing that the community members are still suffering from the impact of relocation and restriction to access some commons and some areas. All elderly women who participated in this research agreed that the utilization of seawater used to play a significant impact on their lives. They further stated that sea seawater was utilized for different purposes. Most importantly, it was used to cure female infertility and ukuyonqula nabantu abadala (paying a visit to the soul of the individuals who lost their lives at sea).

They used their traditional knowledge to cure the medical condition of infertility. This was done through ukukhupha ubumdaka ngaphakathi ngakumbi esibelekweni (using sea water to induce vomiting which cleans the female womb). I was informed that seawater consists of minerals and it cures and brings blessings when an individual is experiencing bad luck, whether related to sickness, infertility or any other form of misfortune. Furthermore, the women's interlocutors attested that they use seawater to cleanse their uterus so that they can be fertile. They argued that

seawater has spiritual powers of enchantment. The water consists of rich natural resources that can cleanse misfortune of not being able to give birth. However, today even the traditional healers are not permitted to get traditional herbs near the sea or perform their significant rituals which cure people. The conserved area would have been beneficial to the community of Hobeni because clinics and other health resources are far away.

It was necessary to use cultural appropriation approaches to understand and document these values in context. For instance, there were gender dynamics based on how they utilize marine resources. At eHobeni, females used to be the ones responsible for mussels harvesting whilst males were responsible for fishing. Females argued that they have to collect wood as it is their duty whilst males hunt and collecting uThongothi, for essential purposes such as putting wooden fence around the household and for fire fuel. However, herbs do not have gender barriers, both males and females collect it. This can be due to the mere fact that most herbs are collected by traditional healers and both genders can be traditional healers. The relationship between the community of Dwesa-Cwebe and nature plays a significant role in their lives. It is vital for them to regain access to commons that are conserved.

4.8 CLAN OFFERINGS DIFFER

The species used as offering differ according to the family or clan. I was informed that every household at eHobeni has a clan name that they praise which is historically embedded. One of the reasons they attach different values to the environment evolves from their differences in clans. Most households use different species when they execute rituals in a manner conforming to their clan, based on traditional historical norms for that particular ritual. For instance, participant A highlighted that as a member of the Dingatha clan, they use goats to execute most ceremonies. Their choice was informed by the first Dingatha descendants who used the same animal species in the performance of important rituals. They continue to uphold the legacy so that they cannot lose their roots and to cement ties with their great grand ancestors. Although the story of ancestors and the history of the Xhosa tribe have been criticized by several people, Participant A highlights the importance of historical ceremonies:

“Masiyilande kengoku apho kengoku izonzula khona, apho inzula khona ithi kengoku lento, okokuqala imbhang i yokuba kuxelwe emzini xa kukube kanti kukho lomncimbi kuxelwe ibhokhwe, nenkomo, okokuqala inkomo indidi zimbini ekuxhelweni, ikhona lento inkomo ithi ukuxhelwa kwayo kufumaniseke ukuba kuthwe lenkomo indala mayitshitshiswe ekhapa”.

Translation

Looking at the slaughtering practice in a deeper perspective, one of the reasons we slaughter in our household is because there is a ceremony. A goat or cow should be slaughtered, but first, you need to understand that the cow is slaughtered for two different reasons and one of those reasons is because of its age. When the cow is old, we slaughter it because it has given birth many times and it is no longer productive as it is supposed to hence we slaughter it because we want it to rest. We call this slaughtering ukutshitshisa.

“Okwesibini inkomo siye siyixele xa kukho umcimbi okanye Umgidi, nalapho ke iyashiyana, kuba ngamanye amaxesha siyixela kuba kusithiwa umntu uyaguqulwa. Xa umntu eguqulwa kunyanzelekile ukuba lonkomo ixeliweyi, ixelwe namhlanje ityiwe iphele kwanamhlanje akufunekanga uhambe nayo kuba uhamba nesinyama salapha kulomzi”. “ Kudala wayetshaba namhlanje umntu, ukuba utshabe ekuseni sekefihliwe ngoku seyixheliwe kwalenkomo kwanamhlanje kuthwe kuyakhathswa uyazilelwa ityiwe lenyama imbi ingenayo netyiwa, kuye kwaya kengoku nalapho ekubhadleni kwathwa masiyixhele singatsho ukuba siyamkhapha, siyixhelele ukuba inyama ibeninzi qha isekhona kele sizakuyixhela simkhuphe noba simkhapha sowuphelile unyaka hayikengoku imnandi kakhulu igalelwa netyiwa”.

Secondly, we slaughter a cow because of the ceremony we call ukuguqulwa komntu oswelekileyo (turning the body of the deceased or repositioning the deceased). When the deceased body is repositioned, it is necessary to slaughter a cow as an offering and symbolic respect to the family clan and most importantly to the deceased. As the family, we plead for him/her to rest in peace and become a good ancestor. The same day the cow is slaughtered, it has to be eaten in the household and no one is allowed to use salt. However, recently this ritual is delayed maybe for a year or two and its meaning is changing. Nowadays we use salt.

As mentioned above, the reason behind the practice of slaughtering the species in the ritual or undertaking is to cement ties with ancestors. The respondents emphasised how their rituals are historical embedded and why they are important. Participants further highlighted how these ceremonies are slowly changing and losing meaning because of their strict conservation policies imposed on them that prohibits them from accessing natural resources. Although the livestock that are utilized in practicing the aforementioned rituals seems to be easily accessible and available amongst various families, it is not a secret that nature conservation policies forced the Hobeni residences to negotiate and renegotiate the procedure of practicing their rituals. There is no doubt that their livestock do not have land to graze as they used to before the forest was conserved.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The Hobeni community highlights how significant, sensitive, complicated and personal it is to them to execute cultural rituals. The community also portrays an intertwined relationship between themselves, rituals, cattle, and ancestors. It further shows that there are some changing patterns in the execution of rituals such as *ukuguqulwa komntu oswelekileyo* (repositioning of the deceased). This chapter showed a direct link between nature and people's daily activities. The next chapter focuses on discussing the implications of these findings for local conservation and cultural practices and for broader scholarship.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The need for a new interdisciplinary approach has emerged in higher institutions across the globe. It seeks to engage and find amicable solutions to issues affecting societies, particularly the ones remaining poorly marginalized. The laws of the Apartheid system deprived humans of decent living which perpetuates historic and current vicious inequalities. The relationship between humans and nature was stripped away in the process because the laws were and still perceive humans as endangering nature. Humans, specifically Black people's lives, have been negatively affected and this is indelible. Therefore, tracing back the ground realities of humans and nature helps to understand their surviving modes and how entangled and indissoluble they are. It further allows us to understand that biodiversity and the local knowledge posed by neighbouring communities are inseparable. Recognizing this allows us to see how these two are intertwined and significant in promoting and sustaining people's livelihoods especially in rural areas. This also helps in maintaining the environment and minimizing the rate of natural extinction for the greater purpose of the earth as we did not inherit this earth from our long-departed ancestors but we borrowed it from our children hence the need for sustainable development that do not deprive future generations of the opportunity to enjoy the same resources.

The findings of this dissertation have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. This chapter summarises the dissertation's findings and focuses on the four themes that have emerged after interrogating the meaning of nature in Dwesa-Cwebe; human and non-human values, customary practice versus exclusionary conservation, nature as commons and sense of belonging as well as identity, social dynamics and patterns. The chapter further outlines the contributions of the study, areas of further research, and gives a summary of the study.

5.2 HUMAN VERSUS NON-HUMAN VALUES

One of the core fundamental academic approaches brought forward by environmental humanities is to change the existing narratives and discourses about human and non-human species. The theoretical insight of this research is informed by scholars such as Tsing (2013), Eduardo (2014), Simelane & Kerley (1998), Fay (2009), Kirksey & Helmreich, (2010), and, Cocks, Dold & Vetter (2012). For this reason, the counter-argument of the aforementioned scholars exposes the less narrated literature about the importance of multiple species across the

globe, particularly in Africa. For instance, Cocks, Dold & Vetter (2012:1) recognized that “conservation is still largely framed in terms of Western scientific values, with a focus on material benefits to local communities, whilst little is known about intangible values local people attach to nature and biodiversity”. Amongst the global environmental humanities discipline, a few scholars recognize the importance of inclusivity, entanglement, and interconnectedness relations between humans and non-humans.

All participants emphasized having an interchangeable relationship with nature. Even those who are slowly adapting to modernity expressed that nature and themselves depend on one another. Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed that we cannot talk about nature without incorporating humans and the other way around. The two groups; those who are adapting to modernity and those who still strongly believe in traditions in recognizing the significance of nature in their lives, were both willing to adapt to change. They all attested that they have commonalities concerning relationship with nature. They pointed out that their shared commonalities should provide a political space for the human population to engage with ecology and other pressing environmental issues.

While Cocks, Dold & Vetter (2012) indicate that acknowledgment of convivial conservation approaches is slowly recognized for sustainable ecological and social purposes, it is still a long process for the policies to be re-implemented and reshaped in the Southern African context. On the contrary, Fay (2007: 89) stated that the “critique of the notion of community has often focused on intra-community diversity while recognizing the strategic value of the notion of the community but the responses have focused on how to analyse divisions within communities, suggesting that these divisions are likely to pose significant challenges to resource management”. The findings of this research demonstrate that integration for communal nature management is less likely to occur if the power is centralized. Therefore, decision making power needs to be decentralized to locals.

This study further demonstrates that the division strategies between the community and nature are less likely to happen until the community’s voices are heard. The study then suggests two ways through which effective intra-community conservation methods can be achieved. Firstly, there is a need to recognize the value nature holds towards local communities such as Hobeni. Secondly, there is a need to recognize the value humans hold towards nature. However, this is more likely to happen if we start by acknowledging the inclusivity and entanglements between nature and humans. This remains difficult to achieve because it is less described in academia

and the South African conservation policies. Therefore, more engagement and decentralization of power is urgently needed for this to succeed.

This study concedes that a holistic approach is a starting point. The engagement among communities, government, and scholars in finding better ways to incorporate different ideas, voices, policy-making, and implementation through an interdisciplinary approach, can never be overemphasized. Furthermore, this study attests that promoting various pedagogies of conserving nature while utilizing it to sustain Hobeni residents and rural villages at large can enable us to find benevolent and good-natured solutions without harming the environment. The dissertation also suggests that scholars have the power to help develop better ways to manage natural resources and to enhance the lives of the poor. The study further advocates for the Hobeni residents, who mostly depend on nature, to sustain their livelihoods by promoting inclusivity. Using new and old pedagogies of conservation is the way forward in the process of policy implementation.

The in-depth interviews revealed that natural resources such as mussels, fish, and prawns enhance Hobeni community socio-economic status. Their indigenous ways of fishing and harvesting include catch and release methods which imply that they are aware of harvesting natural resources while sustaining them. Therefore, their harvesting and fishing strategies resonate with nature conservation policies; committed in fighting the effect of extinction and monitoring natural resources for long term sustainability. To them, this does not only ensure long term benefits for their community but also ensures nature management, environmental safety, and justice for future generations of the village.

The participants further highlighted that rituals act as a form of communication between themselves and their ancestors. The residents explained that they are culturally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually connected to their ancestors. They continue to practice rituals because they strongly believe that ancestors do exist and they are part of their lives. The majority of rituals cannot be executed without the use of nature. Rituals such as uKuqatywa komntwana/ ukukhupha komntwana efukweni, ulwaluko, Intonjane, and uMgidi/Umcimbi essentially need nature to be well executed. In addition, the respondents indicated that nature acts as a mediator which strengthens the connection and the communication between themselves and their ancestors, transferable and translucent when the aforementioned rituals are practised.

The findings highlight that the Dwesa-Cwebe community continues to hold indigenous and

modern ways of conserving nature while holding a significant value to their tradition. The informants in this research confirmed that their ways of knowing and understanding their relationship with nature are undermined and rapidly replaced with Western ways of conservation. They are confident that their ways also hold significant values and can contribute significantly.

They further argue that indigenous knowledge is not at odds with the twenty-first-century conservation methods. However, they are perceived less effective by the Western methods which, in many cases, do not consider the context and content. The researcher, therefore, argues that there is a need to critique how knowledge is produced and how it is further postulated so that we rethink how we produce and verify it especially if it influences policies such as South African conservation policy.

The findings suggest that we need to consciously identify the problem within the knowledge production cycle and observe how it manifests as a core-front that perpetuates the narrated discourses about nature in academics. This will simplify the understanding of how humans exist with nature. Furthermore, it will also demonstrate a way forward highlighting how an interdisciplinary approach plays a crucial role in coming to an understanding of pressing environmental problems. This can only be achieved through inclusiveness towards similar shared goals.

5.3 CUSTOMARY PRACTICES VERSUS EXCLUSIONARY CONSERVATION

To many people, the existing local conservation plans seem to be a response to the increasing threats posed at the already endangered species and the ecosystems. However, Cocks, Dold & Vettors (2012:1) argue that “conservation is not merely a matter of appropriate conservation technologies and management processes. It is a process that is inextricably bound up with people's values and world views on nature”. Ashely (2007) argues that an increasing body of Western literature has been expressing the loss of spiritual relationships and connections between nature and humans. Based on this premise, researchers postulate that content, context, and objectivity should be applied when emotions, either physical or spiritual, are part of the subject matter. It is thus clear many Western scholars fail to articulate and consider context and content when they research many African countries.

As suggested earlier, nature and humans have been examined in a one-sided dialogue and this

dialogue separates them and very often assumes and perceives humans as bringing harm and risk to the environment. This is not the case in many instances. For example, the Hobeni residents revealed that they have used marine resources since time immemorial. The 2012 case study of Participant A provided in this examination, exhibits how he obtained the lineage of fishing and how he cared about the environment. This suggests that the government stripped away his customary practice using exclusionary conservation methods.

The community of Hobeni describes the customary practice as having entitlement not to own the conserved resources but to access and use them. They further postulate that the resources should be shared equally by society without government interference. For this reason, this study refers to government's interference as prohibiting the community from accessing, occupying, and using the resources. Many Western scholars and government policies place the blame on humans for environmental issues. It is vital to understand that some resources are non-excludable to the community.

This researcher observed a range of cultural, customary, social, and spiritual practices at the Hobeni village. The residents used open grasslands and the mountains to search for herbs such as *Intelezi*, *Imphepho*, and *umsingizane* (grass). *Umsingizane* is used for various purposes. For instance, the residents use this grass to create ropes, make a traditional chop board for vegetables, and a hula hoop for children to play. They also used *umsingizane* to create huts to protect themselves from sun heat. *Imphepho* is used to chase evil spirits and to connect and talk with their ancestors. Despite the access of natural resources in open grasslands and mountains, the Hobeni residences remain resolute that they need to gain access to the resources that are fenced because they felt that they have used the conserved resources since time immemorial.

The respondents revealed that their connection with nature forms a part of their personhood. It is evident from the findings of this research that nature significantly contributed to the inner lives of Hobeni residents through the use of nature including forest and marine as a sacred space. The respondents further revealed that this offers a sanctuary for them to find not only peace but also to connect with their ancestors. This suggests that for the Hobeni community, nature has become part and parcel of their history, their existence, their embodied nature and their ecology. It has become a part of their identity formation. Therefore, conservation methods have intricately become a threat to their community.

It is crucial to trace the historical events to enable and inform Western scholars and parties that are involved in conservation policies to see-through that human relationship with nature is

interchangeable. Joubert (1995) traces human interaction and connection with nature using a historical perspective of animal power use in South Africa. He argues that animals protected humans during the war and further states that “the history of animal power in South Africa goes back long before the first settlement by European people at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652” (Joubert, 1995: 125).

Ashforth (2009) reiterates the story of Nonqawuse who was manipulated by the British colonials who came with an idea to dismantle and steal Xhosa ethnicity wealth including crops, animals, and land. Nevertheless, the British goals were to detach the Xhosa ethnicity from nature and its aesthetics. Furthermore, their goal was to push residents from a rich environment consisting of natural resources. Most participants mentioned that currently the commons in Dwesa-Cwebe nature reserve are preserved and they are struggling to gain full access to participate because of colonial historical effects. Therefore, there is a need to re-examine the historical background of Dwesa-Cwebe so that we can be able to understand why the residents felt they are entitled to use and have access to the conserved resources.

Sunde (2014: 211) acknowledged that “the Dwesa-Cwebe community holds a distinctive set of customary tenure rights that can be considered commensurate to Western property rights, albeit that they are conceptualised very differently”. The result of this study revealed that people have different meanings and interpretations attached to nature. Some participants mentioned that they felt isolated and limited in actively engaging with nature because of prohibition. Having access to nature is so significant to the community of Hobeni. For example, one of the females pointed out that having access to harvest mussels can enhance their standard of living by generating income out of it. The majority of males also felt that being granted access to hunt *Inyamakazi* zasendle helps them to provide for their families by putting food on the table and selling.

This highlights that not having access to Dwesa-Cwebe nature reserve resources affect local people negatively and is at odds with the community. They need the conserved resources to sustain themselves. Resources such as wood, wildlife and marine actively contribute to their daily living. It is crucial to revisit conservation methods and implement policies that are inclusive for the interest of the community. The conservation methods do not consider the concept of equity which simply states that resources should be distributed equitably. There is a set of paradigms, it is like a box and anything outside this box is unacceptable. These paradigm shifts can only happen when individuals from all perspectives of societies shift their mind sets too. Environmentalists continue separating people from nature through constraining human

beings from participating responsibly in conserving and benefiting from nature. This is why the vast majority of the Eastern Cape population remains poor whilst the corporates benefit and exploit South African and African resources at large.

Articulating the work of Kirskey & Helmreich (2010), Eduardo (2014), Shiho (2014), and Tsing (2013), the debate in the multiple species literature highlights a new epoch approach in the Anthropocene which suggest ways to improve the lives of people, nature and the earth at large. Cocks, Dold & Vettors (2012:1) highlighted that Eastern Cape Province still suffers from the effects of Apartheid policies and remains characterized by the high level of poverty, lack of infrastructure, high population densities, and inferior education opportunities. In Dwesa-Cwebe, schools are underdeveloped and lack proper resources. According to community members, the majority of the Hobeni residents are unemployed. They further mentioned that the area lacks infrastructure which results in hindering community members from actively participating in economic growth and socio-economic development. Natural resources have become not only their source of sustainable livelihood but also contribute significantly to their cultural identity formation.

5.4 NATURE AS COMMONS

Looking at the historical context and the understanding of the relationship between commons and humans, the elderly respondents pointed out that the existing commons were managed without overexploitation before the arrival of the colonizers. Although colonizers sought to destabilize the relationship indigenous populations had with nature, they maintained their relations through morality and environmental concerns. However, with the intrusion of colonizers and their obsession with power, they sought to control crop-production as well as controlling human relationships with nature. This was done through enforcement of rules and regulations stipulating how to access nature. For instance, the Apartheid regulations did not take into consideration that they were limiting people access to their subsistence way of living. Besides, these regulations were enforced upon poor communities and still are. It is time to challenge these laws instead of supporting the colonizers' ideas and those held by some academics. Doing so is the starting point for positive change.

However, we first need to acknowledge that the colonial ideology of conserving, protecting, and preserving nature contradicts itself. This is because as the approach seeks to protect nature, it is also posing a direct threat. Many policies are drafted and implemented based on the outcomes of

research about the primary protection and preservation of nature. Researchers should incorporate methods that were used to conserve nature without excluding humans or perceiving them as a threat to nature. If the locals are denied access to use the resources, they will often overexploit them when they gain access either legally or illegally. It also leads the residents questioning their value, health and rights, and justice in this country. I argue that one cannot allow the health and living conditions of the Hobeni community to be underestimated or trivialized.

However, it is also vital to recognize the effects of environmental degradation and the future of natural species. This study is not against conservation and sustainability, but it reiterates that in the process of moving with modernity, indigenous ways of nature preservation should be considered too. It is only appropriate to implement a holistic approach for nature management, not only in Eastern Cape, but across Africa to attain social justice and the rights of the communities, particularly in rural areas. As Guha (2001) argues, the current conservation ideologies are not eliciting or drawing on historical context but seeks to reshape the whole conservation method with the new twenty-first century modes of living.

Fay (2009) also highlighted that we cannot ignore the effect of the forceful intervention of the Apartheid regime. He ascribed this to the fact that colonizers seized the rich environment when they observed potential economic gain. Dwesa-Cwebe is one of the few areas in Eastern Cape Province with land filled with rich resources such as timber, marine life, and indigenous biodiversity. The area became a prey to the predators which are colonizers. Fay (2009: 425) further states that the socio-economic factors at Dwesa-Cwebe highlight that the colonial scars remain a challenge and they socially determine the use and accessibility to natural resources.

The elderly participants revealed that dispossession distorted their lives when colonizers invaded their land and region. Youths remain adamant that their lives would have been different if their forefathers and grandfathers were not forcefully removed from their original region. The respondents postulated that the feeling of exclusion has been painful and emotionally disturbs their ways of being. They are uncertain about their future as a Xhosa ethnicity. Most participants, particularly the elders, traced their history to enlighten us on how relocation negatively affected them. They pointed out the importance of customary rights in the execution of their rituals and cultural transmission, as aforementioned.

The current controversial injustices depicted in the media platforms highlight the fight against the denial of locals' rights to participate in commons. Guha (2001) states that the conservation

ideology precaution is to ensure that the colonial effect of environmental degradation and accumulation by dispossession can be erased and formulated suitably in more inclusive sustainable methods. However, the result showed that Hobeni participants are against the implemented conservation methods. They indicate that they are not efficient and well organized. If the exclusion is part of their modern conserving methods, there is no concise explanation of achieving maximum prevention if it happens at their expense.

The participants indicated that the government has failed them a long time ago and protest is the only solution that can bring justice and for their voices to be heard. Protests have become a symbolic action for seeking justice and customary rights to access resources. The residents observed and are aware of the impact brought upon them by the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other conservation stakeholders which is isolating and forcing them to negotiate and renegotiate their customs and traditional knowledge. They are forbidden access to natural resources such as marine resources, wild animals, herbs, forest, and other resources inside the Dwesa-Cwebe nature reserve. This affected them because it not only hindered them from executing their rituals well but also disturbed the construction of personhood in their tribe. For this reason, the community fears that their entanglement with nature is threatened by the conservation methods. Simelane & Kerly (1998) attest that the use of animals, and their parts, for traditional cultural purposes have received very little attention. Furthermore, different cultures perceive and use animals for different purposes concerning their cultural beliefs.

The findings show that they do not only use natural resources as an alternative since public health care facilities are far from their communities but healing themselves has been practiced for generations and is part of their indigenous knowledge. Prohibition to access marine resources has hindered them from executing their customary practices. For this reason, a study by Simelane & Kerly (1998), listed seven concerns and problems experienced by traditional healers in obtaining vertebrates used in traditional healing.

Simelane & Kerly's (1998) summary of concerns and problems experienced by traditional healers in obtaining natural species they used to heal are limited because they only focus on animals. Not all traditional healers use vertebrates to heal. Some traditional healers use invertebrates. Other studies show that there is a high demand for invertebrates for traditional healers. In the analysis, the name of the invertebrate animals consists of "indigenous or folk classification, differing substantially from scientifically accepted zoological ones, yet showing alternative cultural insight" (Herbert *et al.*, 2003:15).

However, both studies associate traditional healers with the capitalocene, failing to recognize other types of traditional healers who are gifted with traditional healing and whose main purpose is to heal their community without putting a price tag on the services they offer. For instance, one of the participants in this study was a traditional healer. She pointed out that she is gifted to heal her community, and further attested that she uses marine resources and occasionally uses vertebrates and invertebrates. She also mentioned that mostly she uses herbs to perform her traditional healing. She indicated that it is hard for her to practice her gift of healing because the herbs she usually uses are conserved and they are less likely to grow in her home gardens. She further posited that unless she relocates to a new community where all the natural species are freely accessible, her gift is slowly going to waste without access to the conserved areas in her village.

These findings show that humans, microbes, animals, plants, and fungi are all interrelated to one another and they should not be separated. Addressing such information is vital as it enables the conservationist and the people who draft policies to break-away the commonalities of global discourses based on how nature should be conserved. Furthermore, it also demonstrates the political lenses behind the militarisation of conservation and the existing economic debate which contradicts anthropocentrism narrative. This dissertation calls for the need for an interdisciplinary approach of conserving nature being proposed by environmental humanities particularly with regards to the concept of multiple species to emphasise the central role of mankind in ecology. It also highlights the vital role it can bring to the community of Hobeni.

This raises the demand for the change of policy on how the South African conservation system conserves natural resources, particularly in rural areas. Seemingly, the majority of the participants mentioned that most protected areas like Dwesa-Cwebe nature reserve promote eco-tourism, but the communities do not benefit from it. They further raised a question as to why almost all the conserved and protected areas tend to promote eco-tourism if the resources are in demand for the sustainability of their livelihood including their health and the rest of the people residing in rural areas in Eastern Cape.

According to Eduardo (2014), humans and non-humans share history since the beginning of human creation. The relationship between human and non-human species is inseparable. Chaos begins immediately when you disengage humans from natural resources. The community of Hobeni described life as meaningless and difficult, without having relationships with natural resources. Their lives are embedded in nature, natural resources offer the feeling of closeness to

earth, makes them alive and spiritual, as well as giving their lives meaning and a sense of belonging. The participants further reiterated that it is wise to encourage their children to understand their roots and culture. They pointed out that historical context and content is important to help youths to understand and draw away from the imposed ideas about the misconceptions of 'separation between humans and non-humans species.

Youths tend to internalize this misconception which results in a change in how they execute rituals and how they will execute them in the future, including their cultural understanding. This suggests that the community recognizes the importance of understanding your roots and further encourages youths to be proud of their language and African tradition. They believe this can help youths to engage socially with pressing relevant environmental issues that are at odds with their traditions. They also pointed out that as parents it is their responsibility to be supportive and encourage cultural transmission so that they can understand the importance of preserving natural resources.

As indicated by Pretty *et al.* (2009), it is almost impossible to separate nature and humans. The authors argued that “Humans’ different cultures interact with nature in different ways and forge different relationships with their local environments” (Pretty *et al.*, 2009:101). The article further indicates and acknowledges that nature should be conserved in more community-based ways. Using this method, we can be able to identify the “positive synergies with nature, and how these synergies can be actively fostered for the future” (Pretty *et al.*, 2009:101). This depicts how cultures are complex and contribute to an individual's identity by representing relationships with the surrounding environment. “Pretty *et al.* (2009:101) adds that culture is neither static nor tenable, but rather represents elements that lead to the distinctiveness of a group of society”.

As the findings show, most participants have aspirations for their Xhosa ethnicity and have an interest in maintaining their own cultural identities. They indicated that if they were not moved from their traditional ancestral land, none of their historical connection between biological and cultural diversity would have been erased or considered separately from one another. Most participants mentioned that they have historically been able to live with the resources, and using those resources, they managed to live their ways of life through their cultural patterns without disturbance.

Geert (1973); Milton (1996); Posey (1999); and Pretty (2007) (cited in Pretty *et al.*, 2009:102) indicated that people interpret their surroundings in different ways. They concur that the

meanings attached to their surroundings differ and are intertwined. This suggests that the interjection policies which are implemented at Hobeni proved to be a great challenge not only to the community but also to non-human species. The management of the species is at risk as the area also becomes a hunting ground for minority rich elites. Moreover, colonizers continue isolating humans from nature and hinder the community of Hobeni in becoming central to their culture. Hernandez (2018) argues that maintaining humans' traditional ways of living and environmental safety is crucial and it enhances the relationship between humans and the environment through valuing each other in their surroundings.

These findings further suggest that if humans and nature are not separated, the ecological future can be in great hands as the entanglement that exists towards the two species will not be a threat. Therefore, recognizing the importance of coexistence perhaps could change human behaviour towards other species for a greater good as they always had a significant value for other species. However, when the elites and conservation policies are weakening the relationship, it poses a threat to the traditions of the community of Hobeni which can result in overexploitation of resources.

5.5 SENSE OF BELONGING AND IDENTITY

As mentioned in Chapter four, the community attested that they have been using the existing commons at Dwesa-Cwebe since back in the days. To them, the use of nature has become their way of life, their way of cultural transmission, and most importantly, it has become the construction of personhood in their Xhosa identity. They still have an interchangeable relationship with non-human species. Furthermore, the participants perceived current conservation methods as ignorant of their cultural significance and customs. These findings suggest that nature conservation policies misrepresent them as villains towards nature.

Also, the findings revealed that the Hobeni community's lives without access to these resources are slowly becoming meaningless. Almost all participants validated this argument, stating that in the Xhosa ethnicity, nature is the core-element of their foundation. They grew up surrounded by it, using it to execute their rituals and in return, nature also counted on them for its protection in the unpredictable seasonal weather. Furthermore, most participants mentioned that access to the reserved resources plays a vital role in the formation of their African identity, particularly in their Xhosa ethnicity. This is in line with this research's arguments of promoting inclusive ways of conserving multiple species whereby the community of Hobeni plays a central role between preservation of nature and the access to use it. I argue that maintaining their relationship with

nature results in maintaining their identity formation.

Providing knowledge and teaching Africans about their roots is one of their ways of raising awareness and the importance of nature in their lives. Moreover, it also becomes a learning program for the new generation to acknowledge the importance of understanding their historical modes of existence, sense of belonging, and values of their lives which are stripped away by the conservation method.

“Belongingness is the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group whether it is family, friends, co-workers, or a sports team. Humans tend to have an inherent desire to belong and be a part of something greater than themselves. This implies relationships that are greater than simple acquaintance or familiarity. The need to belong is a need to give and receive attention to and from others. Belonging is a strong and inevitable feeling that exists in human nature to belong and not to belong can occur due to choices of oneself or the choices of others. Not everyone has the same life and interest, hence not everyone belongs to the same thing or a person. Without belonging, one cannot identify themselves as clearly, thus having difficulties communicating with and relating to their surroundings” (<https://youtu.be/rgViN0rYWeI>).

This is the case in Dwesa-Cwebe. Nature conservation policies are hindering the community, making it more difficult to encourage and groom young individuals to better understand themselves and relate to their surroundings. I therefore, argue that despite the urgent need to address environmental degradation and conserving natural resources, the main challenge from the Hobeni villagers with regards to this is the lack of community participation which plays a vital role in their lives and the formation of their identities. However, conservation methods continue to inform society about its social ills, and re-brand African identities.

5.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The methods and policies of conserving nature in South Africa as the only way to avoid extinction, over-exploitation, and environmental degradation sit in tension with the Hobeni resident's needs. Based on this premise, rather than protection strategies which neglect humans, this research suggests consideration of human relation embeddedness, as it forces them to reconsider and rearrange their customary beliefs, qualities and practices. The community remains certain about the great relationship they have with other species, and strongly believe that nature conservation cannot break it away from them. This is evident and validated with other species such as trees, insects, grass, animals, and other existing species in their communal

natural habitat. It is thus crucial to explore the implications for rethinking the practice of nature conservation and their communal natural habitat. It is thus crucial to explore the implications for rethinking the practice of nature conservation.

This research suggests that inclusive pedagogies can be achieved through the use of memories of elderly people of Dwesa-Cwebe. Researchers need to have more conversation and investigate people's ideas, opinions, and reflections on what they think they have lost reflecting in their previous lives. More research is needed, one that moves away from the extractive position but rather focuses also on practices of the communities and promotes inclusivity. Publicizing how different bodies in rural areas are forced to negotiate and renegotiate their way of life shows how fixed minded the South African policy makers remain. They fail to think and implement new ways of conserving nature without excluding the community.

5.7 SUMMARY OF STUDY INSIGHTS

The study cross-examined the problem of exploitation of and access to natural resources, and how the conservation methods pose threat to the community customary practices. To understand the contestation over natural resources in Dwesa-Cwebe, it is important to trace the historical background of the area. The study showed that detachment from nature began immediately when relocation took place. The study further revealed that this process negatively affected them. This process marked a huge change in their lives. They were moved from their original ancestral land which is adjacent to the coast. The study revealed that conservation methods do not consider the concept of equity which simply states that resources should be distributed equitably. The methods remain at odds with the community needs to sustain themselves, using resources such as wood, wildlife and marine resources. It is, therefore, crucial to revisit conservation methods and implement policies that are inclusive for the interest of the community.

The findings of this study suggest that the Hobeni community and nature relationship is interdependable as they depend on one another. This suggests that we cannot talk about nature without incorporating humans, and vice versa. This provides remedies and political spaces for humans to engage with ecology and other pressing environmental issues. The study discussed that humans and nature are interconnected and the relationships that exist are complicated and multi-layered, hence they cannot be stripped away from one another. The connection between the Hobeni residents with nature forms part of their personhood and a sense of belonging. As

mentioned by Tsing (2013), we are in the phase of the new Anthropocene epoch and academic disciplines from different learning institutions should promote an interdisciplinary approach and affirm that a holistic approach in conserving nature and the planet have a greater potential not only for earth but for all.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Overall, this dissertation has put forward that it is important for research investigating and exploring the relationships between Hobeni residents and preserved nature in the Dwesa-Cwebe area to highlight that humans and nature are inseparable. It further examined the comprehensive historical effects of colonization in the South African context using Hobeni village to validate these effects. Through such a historical reflection, this study indicated that the existing inequalities at Hobeni village are in part the result of colonialism and conservation practices. The study used various scholars who conducted similar studies to compare and contrast the validating arguments. It then argued that the unjust circumstances Hobeni village experienced shows an oppressive policy framework imposed upon them, which raises questions of democracy, fairness, justice, and rights, which are historically embedded. Moreover, the dissertation denotes that traditional knowledge is vital and can contribute significant knowledge in academia.

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(What is BELONGINGNESS? What does BELONGINGNESS mean? BELONGINGNESS meaning, definition & explanation, 2020) (<https://youtu.be/rgViN0rYWeI>).

Court cases and judgements

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA (EASTERN CAPE DIVISION, MTHATHA)
CASE NO: CA&R 26/13

THE SUPREME COURT OF APPEAL OF SOUTH AFRICA JUDGMENT: Reportable
Case No: 1340/17 In the matter between:

Gongqose & others v Minister of Agriculture, Forestry &

Heard: Delivered: *Fisheries and others; Gonggose & others v State & others*

(1340/16 & 287/17) [2018] ZASCA 87 (01 June 2018)