



Market triumphalism and the CBNRM ‘crises’ at the South African section of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park

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Abstract

Transfrontier conservation has taken Southern Africa by storm, where the *modus operandi* remains simple and intuitive: by dissolving boundaries, local benefits grow as conservation and development spread regionally. However, in the case of South Africa’s section of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, political and economic change redirects benefits to support ‘modern’ economies at the expense of rural livelihoods through community-based natural resources management (CBNRM). Neo-liberal agendas promoted by government and the transfrontier park derail efforts at decentralizing CBNRM initiatives beyond markets and state control. This paper argues that ‘hybrid neoliberal’ CBNRM has arisen in private and public sector delivery of devolved conservation and poverty relief projects as ‘tertiary production’ for regional development. As a result, ‘CBNRM’ projects related to and independent of transfrontier conservation support private sector interests rather than the resource base of rural livelihoods. Concluding sections assert that CBNRM can counter this neoliberal trend by supporting the land-based economy of local users living near the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

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1. Introduction

Transfrontier conservation has taken Southern Africa by storm. The *modus operandi* remains simple and intuitive: by dissolving boundaries, local benefits grow as conservation

and development spread regionally (Sandwith et al., 2001; Ferreira, 2004). The recent trend in the region is for transfrontier initiatives to harness these benefits locally by bridging conservation and development through ‘community-based natural resources management’ (CBNRM). Supposedly scaling up CBNRM principles ensures benefits trickle down to poor, resource ‘dependent’ people near transfrontier areas (Katerere et al., 2001; Van der Linde et al., 2001; GLTP, 2004). We argue, however, that the neoliberal mode in which TFCA planners draw on ‘CBNRM ideals’ – conservation for local people that enhances natural capital and social equality – favors private sector investment in non-consumptive resource uses, rather than resource-based livelihoods (Kellert et al., 2000; Wolmer, 2003; Hughes, 2005). The assumption holds that drawing households into service sector activities, such as nature-based tourism, reduces local dependencies on natural resources in order to externalize use and environmental costs (Harvey, 2005). Nevertheless, as economic restructuring informs CBNRM and regional

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‘deagrarianization’ (Bryceson, 1996; Rigg, 2006), studies suggest that poor households continue to diversify the use of natural resources for subsistence and/or cash supplements (Cousin, 1999; Dovie et al., 2002; Shackleton, 2004). Because ‘deagrarianization’ remains incomplete, with a mix of economic sectors, we question the wisdom of neoliberalism supporting and merging with transfrontier-related CBNRM (see Banda, 2002) – the range of ‘community-based’ projects focusing on conservation and development through and/or in association with transfrontier conservation.

We argue that the CBNRM ideal underlying TFCAs in South Africa (IUCN, 2002; DAI, 2003a,b) follows what McCarthy (2005) calls ‘hybrid neo-liberalisms’: the merging of capitalism and conservation to by-pass the ‘subsistence core’ of rural livelihoods. Compared to other countries in the region, South African transfrontier planners make use of a robust national economy to buoy public–private sector investments in ‘community-based’ activities, such as tourism, to finance transfrontier conservation. Increasingly, private sector investments support ‘integrated conservation and development’ and now finance CBNRM, or tourism-based CBNRM associated with transfrontier conservation (Banda, 2002; DAI, 2003a,b; GLTP, 2004). However, as TFCAs employ such ‘hybrid’ CBNRM, projects fail to reinvest in the resource base of rural households (DAI, 2003a; Turner, 2004), privileging local involvement in low paying service sector jobs and devaluing diverse rural production strategies. Donors, funders and planners now follow this logic to facilitate transfrontier conservation that purportedly supports rural peoples’ livelihoods in the service sector (Van Amerom, 2002; Wolmer, 2003; Hughes, 2005).

Our paper seeks to examine the effects of neoliberal ‘community-based’ approaches through and in association with transfrontier conservation on livelihoods near the South African section of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (the GLTP or ‘Great Limpopo’) – Kruger National Park (KNP or ‘Kruger’).³ We contribute to the literature by describing how major political and economic transformations influence the character of CBNRM at Kruger and the GLTP, and how, in turn, project outcomes affect rural livelihoods nearby. South African agencies participating in the shift from coercive conservation to ‘conservation and development’, once supported by race-based spatial segregation, use free market principles to run community-based approaches through national and regional programs that support transfrontier conservation – a neoliberal program rooted in South Africa’s conservation elite and political economic history (see Hughes, 2005).

We suggest that the neoliberal agenda setting the bottom line for conservation policy and practice effectively produces hybridized ‘transfrontier-related’ CBNRM that misses the essence of community-based conservation: assisting impoverished communities set priorities and make

decisions for developing natural assets and social equality to reduce livelihood vulnerability *and* improve conservation (Berkes, 1989; Western and Wright, 1994; Berkes, 2004). We support this assertion by first tracing how regional developments before, during and after Apartheid have influenced devolved conservation between Kruger and the Great Limpopo. We then investigate how the deregulation of policy and practice at Kruger informs its CBNRM initiatives, and how these initiatives parallel and inform the GLTP’s program of devolved conservation.⁴ This discussion is premised on how mergers of neoliberalism and ‘devolved’ conservation at Kruger and elsewhere, extend to and connect with the transfrontier park’s initiative of using private sector/NGO support to ‘out source’ ‘hybrid CBNRM’. Following this, we draw on a case study of Welverdiend village to demonstrate how and why transfrontier-related CBNRM is ‘misaligned’ with local livelihood strategies and conservation objectives. In line with the above definition, we argue that ‘genuine’ CBNRM can support rural livelihoods in a sustainable manner, that is, investing in sufficient stocks of human, social, natural, physical and financial capital (Scoones, 1999; Ellis 2000). We contrast and compare livelihoods with project support for local capitals, including household social relations, the use of productive resources, and the sale of commodities, and examine whether such factors are supported by ‘transfrontier-related’ CBNRM. We conclude that successful CBNRM depends on how well it targets and reinvests in livelihood multiplicity, particularly natural resources.

Case study data were collected from July 2005 to February 2006 and involved a mixed-method approach among resource users, NGOs, and government officials. Semi-structured interviews were with farmers, different resource users, and traditional leaders, while intra-household interviews were with middle-aged and elderly women (totaling 30 interviews). We chose each group to ensure a representative cross-section of individuals most active in negotiating access to and use of different natural resources in the community. Middle-aged and elderly women, for example, gave historical insights into how changes in the dynamic between gender and labour were tied to regional socio-political and economic change. Three research assistants were trained to conduct a livelihood questionnaire (random sample, $n = 172$ of 300 households (57%) in half the settlement, known as Welverdiend B)⁵ to uncover the links

³ The GLTP consists of South Africa’s Kruger National Park, Mozambique’s Limpopo National Park and Zimbabwe’s Gonarezhou National Park.

⁴ While we acknowledge the finer conceptual and practical differences between both, ‘community-based natural resources management’ will be considered to be a part of broader ‘devolved’ conservation in South Africa.

⁵ The lead author sought local approval for this research by undergoing prior informed consent and consultations with the traditional authority of Welverdiend B in September–October of 2005. In 2005, Welverdiend proper consisted of 550 households divided by a dry riverbed into two distinct sections known as Welverdiend A and B. We chose to work in Welverdiend B because a greater number of the 300 households there had been involved in some form of community-based natural resources management.

between livelihood diversification and support from ‘CBNRM’ projects independent of or related to the transfrontier park. A policy document analysis was also carried out by both authors. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper.

2. Transfrontier conservation and community-based natural resources management

Transfrontier conservation is centre stage of a polemical debate over just how to bridge conservation and development at different institutional scales in Southern Africa. Proponents argue that by expanding protected areas across political and economic boundaries, nations, communities and wildlife benefit from social, economic and ecological multiplier effects. Conservation through transfrontier parks encompasses ‘land and sea that straddle one or more boundaries between states, sub-national units ... autonomous areas and/or areas beyond the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction’ (Sandwith et al., 2001, p. 7). Decentralizing benefits through transfrontier conservation thus requires regional programs become ‘rooted’ locally, for which CBNRM has proven most popular. As a result, transfrontier conservation initiatives have worked within, drawn on and redefined the paradigm of CBNRM, building on and extending its discourses and practices to include cross-border cooperation (see Katerere et al., 2001; IUCN, 2002).

Others, however, are more critical. Scholars flag that governing over transfrontier conservation areas is difficult as overlapping boundaries and jurisdictions increase the potential for prolonged management disagreements (Van Amerom, 2002; Duffy, 2006). They suggest that TFCA governance becomes untenable when expanding conservation territory into anthropogenic space portrayed as overly pristine and homogenous – ideologies that inform ‘CBNRM’ (Hughes, 2005). The fact that local environments are replete with political factions, economic disparities, and livelihood multiplicity, makes implementing the objective of ‘...protect[ing] and maintain[ing] biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources’ across vast regions problematic (Sandwith et al., 2001, p. 1).

Scholars writing on the genealogy of transfrontier conservation critique how broader ‘bridging conditions’ unleash management objectives across contested terrains without regard for local realities (Wolmer, 2003; Hughes, 2005, 2006). They suggest that grand theories of bioregionalism, socio-ecological cohesion, and regional economic development inform transfrontier conservation. First, ‘bioregionalism’ serves as an environmental perspective promoting broad-scale conservation such that landscape connectivity becomes a ‘socio-ecological’ imperative. Bio-regions portray people, wildlife and landscapes as ‘organic’, continuous systems wherein humans should live in ‘balance’ with nature and ‘natural’ boundaries (Orlove, 1980; Wolmer, 2003, p. 262). Second, transfrontier conser-

vation thrusts these concepts upon resource-dependent people such that humans and nature are constructed as inseparable. It follows that if local users disrupt the ‘equilibrium’ between themselves and nature by harvesting resources beyond renewal, it becomes necessary to incorporate them into alternate economic spaces where less damage is possible. This includes local involvement in tertiary sector activities that ‘support’ devolved conservation initiatives. Third, reconstructing landscapes as pristine gradually opens up spaces for private sector investment in ways that reduce local users’ investment in, or pulls them off their land (see Hughes, 2001). As conservation planners zone large, contiguous tracts of land and the species this land supports as financial assets pay for transfrontier conservation, spaces become liberalized, privatized and commodified to facilitate development that weans local users off natural resources (Hughes, 2001; Wolmer, 2003; Draper et al., 2004; Duffy, 2006). These bridging conditions inform the discursive frame, policy and practice of CBNRM in Southern Africa, ‘blurring’ policy so that it distances itself from the reality of resource dependent peoples.

2.1. The political economy of transfrontier CBNRM

Although most of these ‘bridging conditions’ have taken root in transfrontier conservation in some form (Wolmer, 2003), private sector involvement in such conservation is most pronounced in South Africa. Driven by ‘public–private partnerships’, local involvement in free-market enterprise supposedly supports regional conservation and development, effectively producing transfrontier-related ‘community-based natural resource management’ (see Katerere et al., 2001; Banda, 2002; Dzingirai, 2004).⁶ While this version of CBNRM and its outcomes touch on ‘genuine’ CBNRM tenets – *social equality and investments in natural resources* – involving local users in the private sector to finance livelihoods and conservation fails to support land-based economies.

The bridging of free market enterprise and civil society for conservation and development in South African transfrontier conservation follows what McCarthy (2005) calls ‘hybrid neoliberalism’. The concept refers to the consistency between neoliberalism and devolved environmental governance where faith in the flexibility of markets and civil society is mutually supportive in meeting supplies and demands of financial matters, conservation and local responses (McCarthy, 2005). For example, increasingly with the enclosure of commons as commodified land (Zimmerer, 2006), new property relations ‘sever’ customary ties and institutions by placing both under the auspices of self-regulating markets (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004). As privatization sets in to give ‘value’ to ‘undervalued land’,

⁶ Transfrontier-related ‘community-based natural resource management’ refers to those ‘community-based’ projects focusing on conservation and livelihood support arising directly through and/or in association with transfrontier conservation.

the market is said to allocate efficiently all goods and services from the land to resource poor farmers (Katerere et al., 2001, p. 22). That is, as commodity markets pull resource users into new market economies, the alternate cash incomes they receive are said to make them less dependent upon natural resources (and more dependent on volatile markets). As this unfolds state regulatory functions become ‘rolled back’ as devolution of regulatory responsibility is transferred to resource users, or their local government (Peet and Hartwick, 1999; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004). Combinations of private sector investment and ‘empowered’ civil society apparently improve upon state-led conservation and development due to the flexibility and efficiency of both. Transfrontier-related CBNRM builds on this discourse by expecting the benefits of tertiary economies to ‘trickle down’ to rural communities.

Ironically this is done by following the criticized path of earlier integrated conservation and development programs and later ‘community-based conservation’, known in southern Africa as CBNRM (Brandon and Wells, 1992; Western and Wright, 1994; Wolmer, 2003; Berkes, 2004). The ‘founding assumption [of this approach was]...that people who live close to a resource and whose livelihoods directly depend upon it have more interest in sustainable use and management than state authorities’ (Li, 2002, p. 265). Facilitators build on local interests and management capabilities, assist impoverished communities set priorities, make decisions for *social equity*, and *reinvest in natural assets* collectively to reduce livelihood vulnerability (Western and Wright, 1994; Wittayapak and Dearden, 1999). Citing the failures of CBNRM in Southern Africa, however, transfrontier planners now claim that ‘scaling up’ and so *redefining* CBNRM through corporate–private investments produces sufficient funds for livelihood support which upholds conservation as ‘genuine’ CBNRM (Banda, 2002; Dzingirai, 2004). Initially ‘the problem, they reasoned, was that CBNRM was very small in focus, often organized around remote communities who were...artificially bounded from their contiguous other’ (Dzingirai, 2004, p. 3). In turn proponents of transfrontier conservation have scaled-up CBNRM for regional redistribution under public–private sector investments. In particular, transfrontier planners increasingly outsource the ‘expertise’ of international funders, NGOs and the private sector to implement ‘hybrid’ CBNRM projects (Dzingirai, 2004). We therefore distinguish between ‘genuine’ CBNRM and ‘hybrid’ CBNRM, where the former deals with reinvestments in, and enhancements of social equality and natural assets, and the latter deals with projects involving tourism, or other private sector investments, with subsidiary environmental and cultural components.

Several problems surface by institutionalizing hybrid CBNRM into the state bureaucracy and private sector that finances and steers transfrontier conservation in South Africa. First, as governments tender out ‘community-based’ projects to private companies (DEAT, 2005), their programs and material outcomes support regulatory/man-

agement initiatives (e.g., restocking game) in line with external market demands, rather than the natural capital of livelihoods (fuel wood, water sources, etc.). Second, the corollary to this is that the economic nodes hosting CBNRM as business models are often in municipalities far from rural livelihoods, where outsiders control capital flows and markets (see Katerere et al., 2001). The programs and projects operating under the guise of ‘CBNRM’ outside of rural communities produce multiplier effects and investments in economies beyond the ‘grasp’ of rural communities. Investing in ‘pristine’ land and species that supports ‘transfrontier-related’ CBNRM with associated external infrastructure ensures that funds flow outward to the economic nodes of the tertiary sector. As a result, service sector employment opportunities privilege the incorporation of local users into tertiary production often associated with ‘transfrontier-related’ CBNRM (private or state-led). In South Africa, neoliberal forms of CBNRM place greater value in the efficiency of market structures for rural development than reinvesting in the resource base of households who labour in market economies (McCarthy, 2005). This delegitimizes genuine CBNRM.

2.2. Management changes at Kruger and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park

How, then, did the history of Kruger and the Great Limpopo’s political economy enable neoliberal ideals to influence the character of CBNRM through transfrontier conservation? Part of the answer lies in how South Africa’s political economy and Kruger’s management genealogy intersect to influence community-based initiatives at the transfrontier park. Since the late 1800s, the rise of game reserves and national parks facilitated control over the movements and livelihoods of black peasants living in what were once relatively remote, rural areas. In the 1900s, the game reserves of Shingwedzi and Sabi Game Reserves (of 1909) merged, creating Kruger under the National Parks Act in 1926, curbing farmer access to productive resources (Carruthers, 1989).

General land use policies further supported conservation agendas by displacing and consolidating black peasants for several decades before, during and after Apartheid (i.e., the Native Lands Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1960) (Eastwood et al., 2006). Before Apartheid, by resettling black farmers onto marginal ‘homelands’ between commercial farms and Kruger (as surplus labour), planners could open new spaces for commercial agriculture and conservation, reinforcing social inequality and restrictions on hunting. In time, local economic self-sufficiency became increasingly limited as wage-based employment was confined to national parks, game farms/reserves, agribusinesses, and mines further away (Carruthers, 1989, p. 192; Levin, 1997).⁷ As a result,

⁷ Carruthers (1989) notes, for example, that ‘capitalist farming interests were also antagonistic and provided a powerful lobby for reducing the size of... reserves’ (p. 195).

the strictures and markets associated with agricultural land and reserve boundaries sealed off the potential for endogenous development (Levin, 1997).

Under Apartheid in the 1950s conservation measures of South Africa National Parks (SANP) were bolstered as black farmers were confined to Native Reserves with 'betterment plans' (Sas-Rolfes and Fearnhead, 1998). In the case study district of Bushbuckridge (BBR), for example, farmers were packed onto small plots with limited arable land in two Bantustans: Lebowa and Gazankulu of 1973 (Thornton, 2002; Niehaus, 2006). Under state control, these administrations further bureaucratized the traditional governance structures of traditional leaders under 'customary law' (Niehaus, 2006), reinforcing the regional dichotomy of President Mbeki's 'two economies': the first being formal, service sectors, and the second being informal, rural agrarian sectors (Cousins, 2005). In this context, recent efforts of the South African state to liberalize its economy began to reinforce the flow of private sector benefits through decentralized channels to dominant sectors of society, rather than benefit the rural poor.

How, then, did post-Apartheid CBNRM evolve in South Africa's 'first economy' and how did the outcomes eventually link up with transfrontier-related CBNRM? Soon after the transition to democracy in 1994, the newly elected ANC government abandoned the decentralized and developmentalist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) for the neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) (Alexander, 2002, p. 49). With GEAR's policy of social spending contingent upon economic growth, the economy further liberalized without meeting redistributive targets. In terms of state-led land reform, for example, earlier interventions considered as overly bureaucratic and disempowering gave way to market-led economic reforms (Alexander, 2002; Galvin and Habib, 2003; Niksic, 2004; Fraser, 2007). With a strong capitalist economy, the country's private sector 'spill over' remained in the service sectors – the sector into which 'transfrontier-related' CBNRM was gradually sewn.

Following broader democratic changes, the board of South Africa's parastatal for protected areas – South African National Parks ('SANParks') – created a 'Social Ecology' Department in order to improve community relations for promoting conservation and development (Fabricius, 2001; Moore and Masuku van Damme, nd, p. 69). Community Forums were set up so staff could engage residents' concerns over wildlife incursions, livelihood priorities and environmental problems. The prospect of fulfilling these efforts proved difficult, however, with initiatives falling beyond the parastatal's legal jurisdiction and financial budget, prompting policy shifts and downsizing. Community 'development' became 'facilitating' (Moore and Masuku van Damme, nd, p. 70). Soon the department's financial insecurity led it to outsource services and facilities to private businesses, particularly tourism companies (Turner

and Meer, 1999; Moore and Masuku van Damme, nd).⁸ With livelihood support and education failing to generate immediate returns, the park's new policies and DEAT's (Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism) poverty relief funding, supported private sector investment at Kruger and the GLTP, forging the neoliberal turn in CBNRM for both projects.

In addition to DEAT's funding priorities dovetailing with Kruger policy, foreign donors also saw value in using commercial ventures to strengthen the unit's conservation and development agenda (Fabricius, 2001). The GTZ-funded project 'TRANSFORM', for example, aimed to support sustainable resource use and income generating opportunities with the Makuleke people of northern Limpopo. After claiming lands from Kruger through the state's land restitution process, planners and Makuleke leaders agreed that tourism and hunting concessions could offer local employment. However, various agreements underlying the restoration of rights to land and wildlife specified use be confined to *hybrid* activities involving conservation and commercial enterprises, particularly ecotourism (de Villier, 1998, p. 65; Steenkamp and Grossman, 2001). Although land reform supported CBNRM, the success of the Makuleke Claim was limited to economic development through service sector initiatives, rather than the use of natural resources (Mahony and Van Zyl, 2001).^{9,10}

GEAR further bolstered Kruger's hybrid conservation and development policies through private sector investments in local and regional commercial restructuring. In particular, SANParks developed extension projects around Kruger's boundaries that tied into regional Spatial Development Initiatives (SDI) (e.g., the Phalaborwa SDI). Moreover, Integrated Rural Development Programs offered SDIs support for tourism infrastructure that could draw tourists closer to municipalities, known as 'directing and focusing tourism flows' (Mpumalanga Tourism Authority, 1999, p. 3; Norton and Associates, 1999). Development success was increasingly contingent upon incorporating the rural poor into economic ventures called Small-to-Medium-scale Micro Enterprises

⁸ In order for SANParks to achieve such goals required drastic internal transformations. In particular, staff members had to become representative of the entire (non-white) population and be more open and accessible to external stakeholders.

⁹ Under the Land Rights Restitution Act, people who were dispossessed by racially discriminatory policy and practice after June 19, 1913 – the date when the Native Land Act initiated the consolidation of black owned land into 'reserves' – may claim land and/or be provided monetary compensation. Homelands accounted for only 13% of South Africa with 87% belonging to the white minority (Hall, 2004).

¹⁰ Falling under the Communal Property Association Act (CPA Act), the Makuleke filed a successful claim on lands inside the Kruger National Park from which they were originally displaced. By forming a CPA they manage land and resources cooperatively as a 'contractual park' with Kruger, with co-management boards ensuring that tourism revenues flow back to the community. In exchange, the Makuleke are obligated not to pursue agricultural activities inside the contract park (Mahony and Van Zyl, 2001). The 'successes' of the Makuleke case have yet to be repeated.

(SMMEs), which evolved as tourism ventures with a resource component (see Visser and Rogerson, 2004). Once again, since rural communities have poor infrastructure, most ‘public–private partnerships’ sponsored tourism near ‘modern’ infrastructure far from subsistence production. Regional conservation and service-based sectors in South Africa, were now gradually bridging neoliberal forms of ‘conservation and development’ under the ideal of CBNRM.

In 2000, the private sector had taken over much of the tourism infrastructure owned by SANParks-Kruger, redefining and indirectly supplanting ‘genuine’ CBNRM. Explanations for the ‘takeover’ held that ‘private operators were considered to be more qualified and equipped to run ... facilities than SANParks’ (Spencely, 2005, p. 13; SANP, 2004). SANParks’ commercialization process now offered concessionaire’s rights to use land and infrastructure for tourism inside the park, with revenue from tourism concessions funding economic empowerment and conservation initiatives in line with Kruger and the GLTP’s policies (Spencely, 2005, p. 13). Anyone who placed bids for concessions now had to follow ‘contractual empowerment obligations’ to ensure that communities could ‘capitalize’ on economic opportunities and an environmental awareness/conservation component (e.g., bush regeneration, etc.) (Spencely, 2005, p. 13). However, as even SANParks staff admit, these opportunities were a far cry from ‘genuine’ empowerment and direct reinvestments in natural resources (Moore and Masuku van Damme, nd, p. 70). Rather than reinvest in land-based economies, commercial concessions prioritized injecting revenue into tertiary markets consisting of short-term tourism jobs.

2.3. *The GLTP and KNP – a mismatch of scale?*

Kruger’s management history shows how and why state agencies and managers use ‘community-based’ initiatives to finance and bridge conservation and development independent of and in relation to transfrontier conservation. Indeed, Kruger and DEAT’s policy of working with private sector counterparts to initiate community-based initiatives was part of its ‘main program... to develop the TFCA as a mechanism for both conservation and economic development... and to that effect DEAT [and Kruger] has a directorate responsible for TFCAs... from a South African perspective’ (Spencely, 2005, p. 35). This initiative of private sector development vis-à-vis CBNRM quickly spread beyond South Africa’s borders as the advent of peace in Mozambique in 1992 enabled feasibility studies for a massive transfrontier conservation area. In 1996, the studies ran under World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding to support three pilot transfrontier conservation areas, the largest of which produced the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park in 2002, covering 35,000 km² over

Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe (GLTP, 2002) (see Map 1).¹¹

The financing of the GLTP’s biodiversity conservation initiatives relied on the private sector and support from DEAT for devolved conservation independent of and through Kruger. The transfrontier park’s own management objectives promoted (1) ‘alliances in the management of biological natural processes by encouraging [...] partnerships among the three governments, private sectors, NGOs and local communities; and (2) sustaining strategies whereby [...] communities can participate in and tangibly benefit from the management and sustainable use of natural resources within the GLTP’ (GLTP, 2002, p. 5 emphasis added). Could private sector support of transfrontier-related CBNRM fulfill this last objective?

Probably not since grand economic plans of rooting out wildlife for tourism development in support of regional economies grew stronger. Paralleling Kruger’s management objectives, the GLTP’s official plan of using nature-based tourism for conservation and development received support from its funder, the Peace Parks Foundation, and corresponded with Southern African Development Community’s (SADC) agenda of regional development through wildlife-based tourism (Wolmer, 2003; Peace Parks Foundation, 2004). Moreover, the USAID’s transboundary natural resources management initiative pumped even more money into projects supporting the sale of resource-based products to tourists visiting the GLTP (DAI, 2003a); however, while local resources were privileged as a core management concern, the projects were still tourism-based, trumping CBNRM.

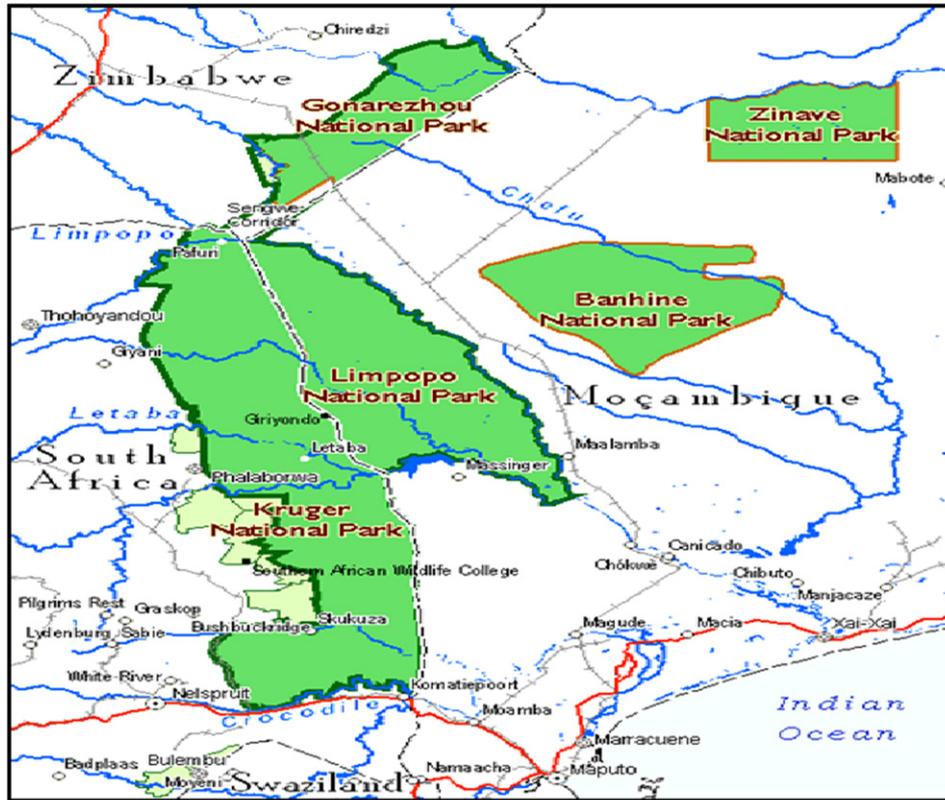
An overview of ‘people-oriented’ conservation projects near the buffer zone of Kruger and the GLTP provides compelling evidence of how private sector initiatives now frame community-based initiatives. From 2003 to 2006, an inventory of seventy-five projects financed by relevant agencies and their GLTP offices¹² near the protected areas reveals that 79% (59 of 75) were tourism-based in Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces.¹³ Few reinvest in the natural assets (goats, land, fuelwood, etc.) necessary for reducing livelihood vulnerability (see Table 1).

Planners continue to rely on the private sector to implement CBNRM projects for several other reasons at

¹¹ GLTP Implementation Process. The First International Conservation Areas Collaborative Committee Meeting October, 16, 1998. Polana Hotel, Mozambique.

¹² These include the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), SANParks, and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF).

¹³ ‘Genuine’ CBNRM projects involve reinvestments in and enhancements of social equality and natural assets in use by households, while tourism-related ‘hybrid’ CBNRM projects are those dealing in tourism with an environmental and cultural component (wildlife watching, cultural villages etc) with degrees of local involvement. The lead author and staff of the Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiatives (TPARI) collated this inventory through an extensive review of relevant policy documents and interviews with government staff from 2003 to 2006. The list was near exhaustive as of spring 2006.



Source: Peace Parks Foundation (<http://www.peaceparks.org/gis.php?mid=251&pid=158>)

Map 1. The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

Table 1
Tourism-based CBNRM vs. CBNRM Projects Along the GLTP's
Western Boundary

Project type	Number of projects	Percentage of projects
Social Ecology KNP/DAI/DANCED – CBNRM	5	7
NGO (DAI)/USAID – CBNRM	2	3
DEAT/GTZ – CBNRM	9	12
NGO – Tourism-based CBNRM, Resource/ Cultural Component	4	5
DEAT/GTZ – Tourism-based CBNRM, Resource Component	19	25
DEAT – Tourism Related, Cultural Component	21	28
DEAT/DANCED – Tourism Related, Strictly Infrastructure	11	15
Private Enterprise, Tourism Related, Cultural Component	4	5

the national and international level. At the national level, no coherent policy framework exists for CBNRM, most projects exist as trial runs, and are tendered out to consultancy firms, while government and private sector(s) lack effective communication.^{14,15} At the international level,

¹⁴ Key Informant Interview, CBNRM Section, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, RSA, October, 2005.

¹⁵ Key Informant Interview, Community Organizer, GTZ, RSA, January 2006.

implementing 'transfrontier-related' CBNRM with local residents remains difficult because Southern African governments proclaim that, as representatives of sovereign nation-states, they are the only actors with legitimacy in negotiations concerning transfrontier issues inside their territory (Bücher and Dietz, 2005). This decision resulted in the dissolution of the GLTP's Local Community Working Group, with governments claiming that how they manage their people is a national matter over which outside managers have no influence. Most local level 'stakeholders' are now excluded from influencing the transfrontier park's community 'outreach' programme and local impacts (Munthali and Soto, 2001; Pollard et al., 2004). In an age of market triumphalism, where ideologies and bottom line now outweigh social concerns, potential investments in natural resources often by-pass rural livelihoods.

The following case study juxtaposes potential/actual support for livelihood capital and capabilities with local livelihood diversity to understand better why 'transfrontier-related' CBNRM remains misaligned with 'genuine' CBNRM objectives – *social equality and investments in natural resources* (Bebbington, 1999). We contend that examining livelihood diversification is crucial to understanding how and why current 'CBNRM' impacts upon the economies and environment of rural households in South Africa.

2.4. Welverdiend 'B' case study

Located in Bushbuckridge, Limpopo Province, households in Welverdiend B have long been engaged in and affected by the transformation of the economy of the *Lowveld*.¹⁶ Flanked by Kruger, the GLTP and game reserves to the east and agribusiness to the west, household heads labour on white-owned farms, work in primary industry (e.g., mines), and some work in service positions at protected areas (Levin, 1997; Rangan and Gilmartin, 2002; King, 2007). However, with massive structural adjustments leading to labour retrenchments, households face 'formal' unemployment levels in excess of 40% – statistics derived from analyzing wage-based employment in the 'first economy' (Pollard and Walker, 2000; Collinson and Wittenberg, 2001). Despite predictions of deagrarianization (Eastwood et al., 2006), high 'formal' unemployment, familial needs, and social conditions have ensured that the community's 550 households¹⁷ continue to use natural resources to pursue livelihood strategies that buffer risk, uncertainty and vulnerability in conditions of resource scarcity and unequal social relations (Bryceson 2002; Dovie et al., 2004; King, 2007).

Given that Welverdiend B holds these characteristics and hosts more transfrontier-related projects than other communities nearby, we examine the extent to which CBNRM supports local resource production under models of 'hybrid neo-liberalism'. We argue that the success of community-based approaches is set against and influenced by livelihood differences that 'remain tied to household history ... and degrees of connection with historical and contemporary governance institutions' (King, 2007, p. 211). We detail how transfrontier-related CBNRM can tie into and support the building blocks and diversity of livelihood strategies that counter risk due to declining resources and high 'formal' unemployment, among other social factors. After describing how many CBNRM projects still fail to support resource-based livelihoods, we demonstrate how projects can support the capital of livelihood strategies in Welverdiend. We argue that the ability of households to diversify livelihoods reflects how well they can access and use sets of capital to reduce vulnerability: rural people's ability to avoid, withstand, or recover from the harmful impacts of a shock (Sousann et al., 2001; Kasperson and Kasperson, 2001). Household livelihoods remain robust with sufficient levels and types of human, social, natural,

physical and financial capital – the basis of sustainable livelihoods.

2.5. CBNRM and livelihood capital

Given the levels of risk and vulnerability of rural livelihoods, in what ways have earlier transfrontier-based CBNRM projects supported the capital that enhances livelihood security in Welverdiend B? The number of projects involving local users in 'genuine' CBNRM was relatively low considering the community's diverse resource needs. Of the 172 households surveyed, only 12 households participated in the sole CBNRM project funded by the transfrontier conservation initiative that supported the GLTP. Since the inception of these projects, however, no other GLTP-funded project has directly focused on natural capital (or any other capital) in Welverdiend B or Limpopo province.¹⁸ Transfrontier-related CBNRM initiatives have produced mixed results.

On a negative note, the most prevalent public–private sector investments were cultural and ecological tourism promoted as local development nodes. Jointly funded by government and private nature reserves, tourism facilities sat at the community's edge or inside of nature reserves, as if to suggest both forms of tourism's success was contingent upon charismatic mega-fauna. This meant that while tourism facilities did hire several households, most infrastructure was peripheral to the community's centre and emerging economic networks. Tourist and wildlife related investments were kept outside, while poverty remained inside of Welverdiend B.

Such limited livelihood support was further exacerbated by poor communication between Kruger staff and the community. When asked if Kruger staff regularly consulted with farmers about livelihood concerns, such as crop damage from game, or if direct support was frequent, most respondents stated there was little to none. Few households (10%, 18 households) had attended a meeting with Kruger staff and, if they had, the meeting centred on conflict rather than consultation. Several farmers claimed that park staff only called meetings reactively:

'At that meeting we were talking about troubled animals from the park to the communal lands'.¹⁹

'I attended the meeting once. The KNP staff came to the *Induna* (headman) to complain about the community members who went inside the park to hunt'.²⁰

¹⁶ The *Lowveld* is Afrikaans for low-lying undulating lands consisting of a semiarid subtropical savannah comprised of Mixed Lowveld Bushveld (Shackleton et al., 2005).

¹⁷ In 2005, Welverdiend proper held a mean of 8.4 people per household on 3380 h of 'communal' lands (the population density is roughly 136 individuals per km²) (Shackleton et al., 2005). Two distinct housing clusters (Wolverdiend A and B) are split by a dried riverbed that fills with erratic rainfall from convectional thundershowers (550 mm annually from October to April) (Dovie et al., 2004). With little rain and poor soil fertility, farmers struggle to sustain production. Relatively few opportunities exist for cash employment (see below).

¹⁸ While most provincial and municipal sponsored projects rely on private sector involvement, a sole project did aim to enhance woodland resources without success and a local NGO has ensured greater access to water by the local high school. When local users were asked about other projects they had participated in, they mentioned that the municipality supported a bakery initiative (1 participant), classroom renovation (1), and a USAID-funded cultural village (1).

¹⁹ Livelihood Questionnaire, Aser Ndlovu, November 9, 2005.

²⁰ Livelihood Questionnaire, Milfe Machavi, November 9, 2005.

Rather than rely on news from the park itself, most attended meetings held by their own organization to obtain relevant information about local affairs and park management. The local Farmer's Cooperative was an important venue for information on local support for maize harvests and how the national park affects employment and agriculture including, for example, wildlife breaking through protective fencing and damaging home gardens. In one instance, as Kruger staff reacted slowly to a lion's cattle kill, community members took the initiative to summon park officials to their own meeting. Considering that Kruger staff consult infrequently and the GLTP's 'Local Community Working Group' is now defunct, few channels currently exist for locals to communicate their concerns.

On a positive note, Kruger staff have offered compensation and a few projects offer examples of relatively well-designed CBNRM. First, on one occasion Kruger staff used local channels to deliver compensation to farmers who suffered crop damage and loss of livestock. Second, although still tourism-based, CBNRM projects focusing on natural and social capital have had more success than others in supporting local livelihoods. Projects funded by the USAID's Transboundary Natural Resource Management initiative in 2001–2002 had introduced Shangaan women to 'resource-based, small-scale enterprise development' (DAI, 2003a). Known as the *Tipfuxeni Women's Empowerment Project*, the project fell under Development Alternatives Incorporated and sought to *enhance the value of natural and financial capital already in use by households*. The women participating in the Tipfuxeni empowerment project stated they had benefited by being organized and educated on reed mat crafting and that the sale of mats to tourists was a valuable source of independently produced cash.

Since this livelihood activity had facilitated the production and sale of crafts independent of the husband's authority, the activity and revenue further supported the organization and mobilization of women. Female-headed households, for example, could use the cash at their own discretion and discussed project reinvestments at meetings involving logistical planning, steps for merchandising, and new techniques for mat weaving. One participant noted²¹: 'We did occasional sales; we made R800 from the sales...' Another participant claimed: 'Yes, the program did help, the money from the sales allowed us to pay for school and buy clothes as well as other household goods.'²² The fact that women could access funds from sales directly offered them greater discretion in familial spending and potentially greater leverage in managing time independent of their husband's demands. This project shows how targeting women and adding value to the use of local resources – in this case river reeds – further rein-

vested in social, human, and financial capital such that livelihoods could buffer shocks.

Despite the potential of such livelihood support, the recent trends described suggest transfrontier-related CBNRM at the GLTP's South African section supports secondary or tertiary economies rather than the resource base of rural livelihoods. The prospect of building conservation and development from the 'inside out' – building on and reinvesting in resource-based enterprises – is given short shrift under the current structure of CBNRM. We examine next how 'genuine' CBNRM could identify, build on, and reinvest in livelihoods one capital at a time.

2.6. Human and social capital

Human capital is the first asset that 'genuine' CBNRM could support in order to enhance livelihood security. It refers to the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health important to pursuing and strengthening livelihood strategies (Sousann et al., 2001). Such skills and knowledge also 'produce' social capital: aspects of 'trust, norms and networks' that support and enhance the capability of labour (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). In Welverdiend B, interviews and the livelihood questionnaire²³ results suggest that changes in household composition and social divisions of labour are two interrelated factors that influence the strength and availability of human and social capital.

Continuous changes in household membership present problems for the allocation of labour for different activities. With many middle-aged men working in mines near the cities of Witbank and Johannesburg, elderly and middle-aged women become 'de facto' heads of household by taking on additional social responsibilities, heavier work loads, and new economic activities. Because of additional domestic responsibilities, many women find it difficult to search for and retain wage-based employment in the service sector outside of Welverdiend B. In other cases, women also take over the roles and responsibility of family members who become injured during work or fall ill from various ailments such as tuberculosis and/or HIV/AIDS (see Collinson et al., 2006). In situations where middle-age men succumb to illness, elderly and middle-aged females make time to work fields and/or harvest non-timber forest products (fuelwood, edible herbs and locusts, etc.) to provide for family needs (see next section).²⁴ Elderly men and women are also more inclined to share their pensions, labour and harvests in times of crisis than are members of the younger generation. As one elder points out:

We share our crops when things are difficult and help each other plough our fields, especially with those

²³ Conducted in 2005/2006, the livelihood questionnaire was based on a random sample of $n = 172$ of 300 households (57%) for the calendar year of 2004.

²⁴ All quantitative data in this section are taken from a household livelihood questionnaire conducted in 2005.

²¹ Key Informant Interview, Grace Mabilane, September 19, 2005.

²² Key Informant Interview, Gloria Maribe, September 15, 2005.

who do not have any cattle available for plowing. We will help them and share our harvest. But this isn't done much anymore.²⁵

In cases where husbands worked in mining, the flow of money back to the wife or other family members was patchy and intermittent. The electronic transfer of the husband's mining salary into the bank account his wife could access was often insufficient to meet familial needs. Female respondents stated they often received less than their husbands had promised, claiming family money was spent on a lavish and 'secret life'. Many women coped with such financial insecurity by creating personal savings accounts for immediate needs and emergencies. Other women felt their mobility was further curtailed by their husband's jealousy and abuse, prompting women to pursue flexible activities to overcome such obstacles.²⁶ Many women started 'home-based' industries to 'buy' financial flexibility including, for example, the 'buying and selling' of produce (e.g., oranges) from white-owned farms where they or their husbands work(ed), selling non-agricultural goods such as partitioning 'credit' for cell phone use, and/or selling homemade goods locally (e.g., popcorn). As such, the innovative ways women support their families in adverse conditions suggests that CBNRM projects can enhance the capacity of women to engage in livelihoods that reinvest in domestic and extra-domestic production that complements conservation (e.g., the planting of fruit trees of economic value).²⁷ The potential for women to represent themselves may strengthen their positions during and beyond familial decision making – which partly redresses social inequality – and arises when women engage in culturally relevant livelihood activities through 'genuine' CBNRM.

2.7. *Natural capital: non-timber forest products, vegetable gardens, and field plots*

Natural capital is the second asset CBNRM could support in Welverdiend, referring to 'natural resource stock from which resource flows useful to livelihoods is derived' (Scoones, 1999, p. 7). Once under peoples' control, natural capital yields its value as assets that serve as the building blocks 'upon which households are able to undertake production. . .' (Ellis 2000, p. 31). The capability of households to move beyond survival depends on their ability to exploit and capture the flow of benefits from productive assets. In Welverdiend B, non-timber forest products and different crops partly fulfill this role.²⁸

2.8. *Non-timber forest products*

Fuelwood remains a critical livelihood asset for households in Welverdiend B. In 2004, nearly all households, at 89% (153 of 172 households surveyed), had collected fuelwood for domestic purposes (cooking and heating), while 3% (6) purchased wood, with the remaining 8% (13) not collecting any.²⁹ For the entire sample, 158 tonnes of fuelwood were collected in 2004, with women and their daughters collecting more regularly than men, who often collected wood in larger quantities (Twine, 2005).³⁰ Although only 12 households sold wood, the sale of wood for fuel also generated cash income.

There is growing evidence that fuelwood demand is high as quantities become increasingly scarce: it remains a primary source of local energy, construction material, and now a commodity for sale to a growing rural population (Dovie et al., 2004; Twine, 2005).³¹ Nevertheless, even though most users (87%) responded that the availability of fuelwood was insufficient, many stated they would continue to harvest 'illegally' because they relied on wood as a cheap source of fuel, that it was in their 'culture' to harvest, and that few social institutions regulated the use of fuelwood in communal lands (Dovie et al., 2004; Twine, 2005). With the region's scarcity of fuelwood well documented, it stands to reason that CBNRM projects must enhance woodlands through afforestation for livelihood and conservation (Bembridge and Tarlton, 1990).

2.9. *Vegetable gardens, field plots*

Growing different crops for cash and subsistence remains an important natural asset that enables households to smoothen irregularities in domestic consumption while offering them the potential to secure additional cash income through sales. In 2004, households grew tomatoes (37% of households) and spinach (36%) most often, while onions (19%) and beet roots (17%) were grown less frequently on smaller home plots. Those who grew more tomatoes, onions and spinach sold them locally, with the latter two being sold most frequently. Maize (28%) was grown on medium sized arable fields in the same year.³² Only two farmers with holdings greater than 2 ha produced

²⁹ Those who had not collected fuelwood claimed to be sufficiently wealthy to purchase electricity credits as a substitute.

³⁰ For example, one male headed household collected 50 bakkie (Afrikaans for pick-up truck) loads of fuelwood in 2004, which amounted to 25 tonnes of wood in one year (4 wheel barrows = 1 bakkie = 0.5 tonnes).

³¹ While poorer households are likely to be more dependent on wood as fuel for cooking and heating, 'wealthier' households also use fuelwood for cooking meals because it is 'free' and 'desired', even if it is more difficult to acquire.

³² Home gardens are cultivated lands (± 0.5 ha) on plots that flank houses in residential areas, while medium sized arable plots are >1 ha in size and further removed from the house (High and Shackleton, 2000).

²⁵ Key Informant Interview, Orphelia Mintane, August 27, 2005.

²⁶ Key Informant Interview, Lucy Kablane, November 1, 2005.

²⁷ On 1 October 2006, 7,76ZA Rand made for 1US\$, while 9.85ZA Rand made for 1€. www.xe.com.

²⁸ Land tenure also remains important in that access to suitable usufruct holdings influences the extent to which local farmers and resources users can produce vegetables and roots crops, and potentially access private holdings as political and economic collateral. For this reason many lament that the Chief and/or Induna's (headman) control over land makes it difficult to petition government for private title.

a maize surplus for sale, with most growing just enough maize for domestic consumption.

Several environmental and economic factors limit the ability of farmers to produce greater numbers of high quality vegetables for consumption and sale. In addition to a lack of rain and a broken dam hindering irrigation, few options exist for local growers to sell their vegetables in the community. Most vegetables sold in local stalls are third grade produce purchased from white-owned agribusinesses. The resale of non-local vegetables at higher prices partly substitutes the local sale of vegetables and acts as a disincentive to grow locally. Moreover, the ability of farmers to access external markets in Acornhoek remains limited because stalls there are also filled with crops from commercial farms – a legacy of Apartheid era planning. Given most households cultivate crops in such adverse conditions, it is clear that households value such production and that targeted CBNRM can support farmer access to local markets and irrigation for rural resource production.

2.10. Physical capital

Physical capital is the fourth set of assets that CBNRM projects can support, and involves basic infrastructure and production equipment that enables people to pursue their livelihoods (Sousann et al., 2001). In Welverdiend B, access to and use of livestock and machinery, among others, supports production for direct family consumption (meat and milk) and agricultural activities (e.g., farm implements for ploughing and tilling). An array of traditional and modern implements are owned, shared, hired out and/or traded in the community. Households, however, remain capital poor. Only 24% (41) of households used cattle for meat and milk (6%) and ploughing (6%), with most indicating that cattle served as major investments. Those who could access cattle found them too thin and weak for ploughing and only one operable tractor could be hired out for ploughing. In some cases, the fact that local water was too salty forced many farmers to water their cattle in neighbouring villages. With few extra-local investments in water conservation, tractor upkeep, and animal husbandry, clear opportunities exist for CBNRM to reinvest in the amount and quality of physical capital in Welverdiend B.

2.11. Financial capital

Lastly, CBNRM must support local access to and use of financial capital: economic assets that are essential for the pursuit of different livelihood activities (Scoones, 1999). In Welverdiend B, these consist of old-age pensions and child support grants, which support the conversion of other assets into goods for sale in commodity markets. With few 'formal' wage-based employment opportunities, elderly (>60 years of age) and younger households rely on government (social security) and private sector pensions as pri-

mary sources of cash income.³³ With few exceptions, most pension cheques go to retired male heads of household: twenty-four percent of households (41) received pension cheques, amounting to R780 per month with an overall total of R16,610. Due to demographic shifts, however, the livelihood impacts of pensions are short-lived, since elders care for adopted children and their children's children. Although their children may receive child support grants, the fact that the live-in family finds securing employment difficult, depletes both forms of social assistance.³⁴

In cases where neither the husband nor wife produce single income streams, families made ends meet by tapping those economic opportunities natural resources made available to them. Several families sold maize (total of 480 kg) on larger plots of land, but failed to reap significant returns on their harvest (R600). Of the 91 households that had collected Marula nuts (12,086 kg), eight families sold Marula nuts (total of 615 kg) generating a total of R3690. While non-timber forest products usually yield small returns, their potential for financial support is considerable when compared to other local sources of income, such as from 'buy and sell' activities (Shackleton, 2004). CBNRM's potential to buoy Marula production and sales has yet to be realized in Welverdiend B – a resource investment proven to be successful in the *Lowveld* (S. Shackleton, 2004; Shackleton and Shackleton, 2004a,b).

With retrenchments increasing levels of formal unemployment in the former 'homelands', residents fall back on agriculture, animal husbandry, and the use of non-timber forest products to sustain production (Batterbury, 2001). The use of a range of capital supports local production and consumption, serves to supplement cash incomes, and offers producers degrees of independence from external economies. Although many households may prefer service sector employment, most also realize that the land upon which they live supports familial needs in times of shock and vulnerability. In this context, then, transfrontier-related CBNRM must focus on supporting and enhancing the value of local natural resources for production, consumption and market sales inside and outside of Welverdiend.

³³ While 69% of households were involved in some type of wage employment, the vast majority was intermittent and menial, amounting to only R1000 per month for 62% of households. Nevertheless, of the total, only 13% of these households earned more than R3000 per month. Mean monthly income per household from all income streams was R1612. The few formal employment opportunities for which locals are qualified are usually filled and include service provisions such as cleaning, guiding, and cooking at game reserves and Kruger National Park. Twenty-three households (13%) were employed at Kruger or game reserve averaging about R1500 a month.

³⁴ Child support grants amounted to R180 per month with a total of R34,860 for the entire household sample (one disability grant offered a monthly allowance of R780). Roughly 60% of households received a social assistance allowance of R304 per month during 2004 (with total remittances amounting to R52,250).

3. Conclusion

Transfrontier conservation continues to be upheld as an effective means for promoting regional development and securing vast spaces for conservation. The fact that transfrontier conservation supposedly delivers tangible benefits to communities makes it an appealing alternative for politicians, planners and practitioners. In South Africa, it is presumed that the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park holds untapped potential for broad and local solutions to ‘conservation and development’, the basis of which rests in the nation’s historical development. These assumptions underpin the country’s effort to ‘scale up’ the discourse of CBNRM into transfrontier conservation as a form of ‘hybrid-neoliberalism’.

The ways in which planners facilitate ‘hybrid’ CBNRM continue to support private sector investment in local tourism initiatives in line with the South African state’s tendency to ‘deregulate and devolve’. The flexible markets of the private sector and devolved governance over natural resources now merge as ‘hybrid’ CBNRM that supplants excessive state control and intervention – the local basis of ‘hybrid neoliberalism’ (McCarthy, 2005). Once scaled up, the merger of new markets, private sector investments and ‘empowered’ civil society now defines ‘transfrontier-related’ CBNRM, with resource users being pulled into tertiary economies at the expense of rural resource production. As such, CBNRM at the transfrontier park reflects South Africa’s rural economic development scheme of broad scale, wage-based employment in industry and service sectors. Rather than focus on the core aspects of rural livelihoods, CBNRM has taken the form of service sector industry through public–private partnerships. In fact, rural areas where CBNRM should support the renewal of woodlands for livelihoods – areas which densely settled people actively use – remain the target of tourism development under the control of private nature reserves.

The South African government’s neoliberal push under the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program is part of a broader continuum of regional economic development. The recent shift from developmentalist ideals to market driven economic security permeating the country’s political economy, reduces focus on social welfare with the aim of stimulating regional economic development through the deregulation of state services. Transfrontier conservation and CBNRM are embedded in and now follow the same path of ‘hybrid neoliberal’ development. National, provincial and municipal authorities concerned with environment and tourism ‘contract out’ private companies to facilitate and implement CBNRM programs and projects, while those on stand-by remain at the fringes of the ‘second economy’. Increasingly, these projects have become commodified in ways that support business ideals to provide local users with hard cash whilst making them less reliant on local capital, particularly natural assets. This results in a policy platform that reproduces the dichotomy of the ‘two economies’: one

modern and one traditional (Cousins, 2005). Under GEAR, policies and programs favour the former, believing that ‘modern’ means will employ ‘traditional’ users. Increasingly the binary dualism of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ informs conservation and development in rural communities.

Our case study encapsulates this situation. While households struggle to find ‘formal’ wage-based employment, an increase in the scarcity of productive resources keeps them capital poor as they attempt to strengthen their livelihoods. Still, while diverse livelihoods span ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ economies, transfrontier-related CBNRM projects continue to focus on the latter as if to assume the former has little inherent value. The fact that natural resources supplement livelihoods tends to be neglected as private sector investments are privileged in what are considered externally dependent cash economies. If transfrontier conservation is to move beyond rhetoric, supporting livelihoods *and* conservation, it must reopen channels for consultation and livelihood solutions rooted in local economies and spheres of extra-local production – a planning objective that factors in the compatible nature of local and protected landscapes.

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