

The impact of protected areas on the livelihoods of local communities. A case of Khula village, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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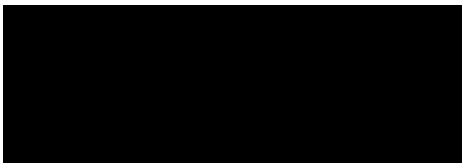
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor for her patience and unwavering belief in me. Her contributions and support have been instrumental in helping me successfully complete this study.

I would like to thank the community of Khula Village for being welcoming and for their willingness to provide invaluable information in the study.

I would like to dedicate this to my mother and sister for believing in me throughout my academic career. To all the friends and family who lifted me up when I was at my lowest, thank you!

Mama, we made it.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the lived experiences of the local communities that live adjacent to protected areas (PA) in South Africa using a case study of Khula Village which is located in KwaZulu-Natal. The literature which was reviewed acknowledges the importance of protected areas however the communities who reside close to protected areas are not fully benefiting from the protected area management, leading to conflicts between management authorities and local communities. This study has sought insight from community members in Khula Village in pursuit of the overarching research question: a) What are the benefits of protected areas management to local communities? b) What are the factors that hinder the flow of benefits? and c) How is the protected area perceived? The individuals interviewed provided data for the research questions. The findings that I gathered suggest that this community has nothing against conservation but the issue is how it is done. The community is not enjoying the benefits of conservation this has led to clashes between the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority (IWPA) and the community, unfortunately some of these clashes have often led to fatalities. By applying the political ecological approach (Robbins, 2012), as a basis of analysis my study suggests that the approach of management of IWPA is unsustainable; not involving of local people from protected areas management leads to conflict; the state control of the PA has negatively affected the livelihood of the local community. The study findings have recommendations that may help inform the government and management agencies to manage PA more sustainably.

Key words: Protected Area, Local community, conservation, conflict, exclusion, livelihoods.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM	i
Acknowledgements and dedication	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of contents	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of problem.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	3
1.3 Research objectives	3
1.4 Research questions	4
1.5 Justification of the study	4
1.6 Scope of the study	4
Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework	5
2.0 Introduction	5
2.1 Definition of terms	5
2.1.1 Protected areas	5
2.1.2 Livelihood.....	5
2.1.3 Community	6
2.1.4 Households	6
2.2 Participation of local communities in protected areas	6
2.3 Benefits of protected areas	7
2.4 Protected areas in an African context.....	11
2.5 The context: Post-apartheid South Africa	12
2.5.1 The bill of rights	13

2.5.2 Delivering ecologically sustainable development	13
2.5.3 Poverty and spatial inequality in South Africa	14
2.5.4 Protected area conservation in South Africa	15
2.5.5 The Case: The iSimangaliso Wetland Park	16
2.5.6 Integrated conservation and sustainable development	18
2.6 The integrated management plan for the iSimangaliso Wetland Park	19
2.7 Land claims in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park	20
2.8 Theoretical framework	20
2.8.1 Political ecology approach (PEA)	21
2.9 Research Gap.....	22
2.10 Conclusion.....	23
Chapter 3: Research methodology	24
3.0 Introduction	24
3.1 Research Methodology.....	24
3.1.1 Qualitative Research Methodology	25
3.1.2 Case Study	26
3.2 Data Collection Tools.....	29
3.2.1 Interviews	29
3.2.2 Document Analysis.....	30
3.3 Sampling.....	30
3.4 Data Analysis	32
3.5 Ethical Considerations.....	33
3.6 Validity and Reliability	33
3.7 Conclusion.....	34
Chapter 4: Results	35
4.0 Introduction	35

4.1 Themes	35
4.2 Research findings	35
4.2.1 Background information of the study sample.....	35
4.3 Local community experience of the management of the park by IWPA.....	37
4.4 IWP Benefits vs Perception of local community	40
4.5 Perception of the barriers to livelihood benefits from IWPA	44
4.6 Perceptions on how to improve the relationship between the IWPA and the local community.....	46
4.7 Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 5: Discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.....	48
5.0 Introduction	48
5.1 Discussion	49
5.2 Local communities' experiences: marginalisation and exclusion, conflict and conservation	50
5.3 Livelihood outcomes of IWP	51
5.4 Perceptions towards IWPA by community	53
5.5 Recommendations	54
5.5.1 Recommendations by the community on how to improve the flow of benefits.....	54
5.5.2 Recommendations for further research.....	56
5.6 Conclusion.....	56
References	58
APPENDIX 1.....	65
Interview schedule and CONSENT FORM.....	65
APPENDIX 2- ETHICAL CLEARANCE	69

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the background of the issue at hand is presented, along with the formulation of the problem statement and the study's objectives. The chapter also delves into the research questions, the importance of the study, and provides a rationale for the study.

1.1 Background of problem

Globally, the natural environment is degrading at an alarming rate. Most natural habitats are disappearing and being depleted at a rate that the environment cannot cope anymore. At the global level, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to which the European Community and Member States are parties – was endorsed in 2002 the target was to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss. This target was agreed by the world leaders and governments. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Program on Protected Areas regards the network of protected areas within Africa as the principal safeguard for Africa's rich biodiversity. Protected areas are fundamental for in situ conservation (Chape, et al., 2005). The CBD defines a protected area as a geographically set aside area which is governed by the state or a set institution to achieve conservation goals. These goals range from the preservation of endangered species or landscapes to the protection of natural ecosystems. How threats to biodiversity are distributed is not uniform, additionally financial resources are limited. Hence in order to abate these threats conservation priority areas must be established (Meyers, et al., 2000).

The IUCN has defined categories for protected areas. These categories include state-controlled conservation area and monuments (Stevens, 2014). In history, the objective of protected areas has been to preserve and conserve the natural environment. (Dudley et al., 2013). According to experts from the IUCN and UN Environment's World Conservation Monitoring Centre, protected areas cover 15 percent of the earth (World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 2016). There has been an increase in areas that are being protected, this in many ways been influenced by the notion that this is the most successful way from protected the natural environment from human activity (Stevens, 2014). This type of conservation is called fortress conservation and, in most cases, it is enforced by the government using a heavy hand, this may involve displacing entire communities from protected areas. In many cases, especially in situations involving indigenous groups the establishment of protected

areas will cause displacement and restriction to access the area. The restriction and limited access to a protected area will have negative impacts on the livelihoods of people who were dependant on the provisions of the area (Stevens, 2014). Fortress conservation has failed in achieving conservation obligations despite the stringent measures and enforcement (Stevens, 2014).

Protected areas are established primarily for the preservation of the environment; however, they offer a multitude of additional socio-economic benefits, including recreation, tourism, and job opportunities for local communities (Stolton et al., 2010). In some cases, protected areas have even been successful in enhancing the livelihoods of these communities by acting as economic engines driven by tourism. As a result, conservation has the potential to be used as a means of reducing poverty. Recognizing the role protected areas play in local communities' livelihoods, scholars and policymakers have advocated for a shift in the management of protected areas from a solely environmental conservation approach to one that involves local community involvement (Stevens, 2014). This shift not only upholds the rights of local communities to directly benefit from protected areas but also improves community acceptance of conservation goals (Augustine and Dearden, 2014).

Measuring the benefits of protected areas to local communities is a challenging task as the benefits can vary greatly among individuals and stakeholder groups (Putney, 2003). Attempts have been made to quantify the benefits of ecosystem services through categorization, however, these assessments are often deficient due to their complexity and interdisciplinary nature (Snyder et al., 2003). Additionally, these evaluations are limited in scope and fail to consider the distribution of benefits (Kettunen and ten Brink, 2013). Performing a comprehensive assessment is both time-consuming and costly, thus these evaluations are often limited to problem-based assessments such as the economic assessment conducted by the Task Force on Economic Benefits of Protected Areas of the World Commission on Protected Areas on the proposed Coastal Forest Restructuring and Protection project in Croatia. This assessment aimed to determine the contribution of forests to tourism by calculating the economic benefits of each proposed site using economic indicators, however, this method was deemed insufficient for informing decision-makers as it neglected qualitative indicators. In order to harness a holistic and accurate assessment of benefits of the forests it is important to combine qualitative and quantitative methods.

Protected areas are increasingly being recognised for their potential to contribute to the fight against poverty in developing countries. Most protected areas are located in areas adjacent to poorly developed communities. Protecting the areas requires people to work, thus creating employment opportunities for the local. The provision of employment opportunities has a substantial impact on reducing poverty, particularly for rural communities in developing countries.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The establishment of protected areas can bring benefits to the local communities, while simultaneously ensuring the conservation of the environment. However, the improvement of livelihood to local communities that are adjacent to protected area is very important. For in most cases protected areas are established on land that was being utilised both by humans and wildlife.

Overtime, the establishment of protected areas involves the process of engaging the local communities who are now considered as stakeholders of the area. This gesture of appreciating the contribution of local communities improves the chances of successfully managing the protected area. One of the key principles in the management of natural resources is the responsibility of local communities to be stewards of the areas, in playing a role in management the flow of benefits that are derived from the protected area should be accessible to the local communities.

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the livelihoods benefits derived from the protected area by the local communities.
- To understand the perception of local communities on the protection of IWP.
- To analyse the factors that hinder the flow of benefits from the protected area to the local communities.

1.4 Research questions

- What are the livelihood outcomes of protected area conservation for the local people?
- How is the protected area perceived?
- What are the factors that are hindering the flow of benefits from the protected area to the local communities?

1.5 Justification of the study

The present study aimed to shed light on the relationship between local communities and protected area management authorities, and to investigate the various impacts of protected area management on these communities. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of the effect of protected areas on local livelihoods and its potential to reduce poverty. Furthermore, the knowledge generated through this study can serve as a reference for enhancing protected area management practices in the country

1.6 Scope of the study

This study was conducted at Khula Village which is located adjacent to iSimangaliso Wetland Park. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the existing literature on the effect of protected areas on the livelihoods of nearby communities. The literature review will encompass a range of perspectives from global to local, examining the positive and negative impacts of protected areas on communities and the factors that contribute to these outcomes. The review will also highlight the existing research gaps that this study seeks to address. The chapter concludes by introducing the conceptual framework for this study.

2.1 Definition of terms

2.1.1 Protected areas

As defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2018), protected areas are designated geographic spaces that are managed and maintained with the goal of preserving nature and its associated ecosystem services and cultural values. These areas can include transnational parks, national parks, wilderness areas, community conserved areas, wildlife reserves, and archaeological sites, and serve as the cornerstone for biodiversity conservation. Protected areas not only contribute to biodiversity preservation but also provide benefits to people such as food security, access to clean water, and protection from natural hazards. Furthermore, protected areas play a critical role in combating climate change by allowing for adaptation and mitigation of its effects,

2.1.2 Livelihood

The concept of livelihood is defined by Chambers and Conway (1992) as an array of skills, assets (e.g., tangible and intangible resources), and activities that are necessary for one to sustain themselves and make a living. In simpler terms, it refers to the means of earning an income. According to Ellis (2000), livelihood is composed of assets (including natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital), the activities that are performed, and the accessibility to these assets, which is governed by various institutions and social relationships. The level of access an individual or household has to these assets, including

resources like land, financing, education, and economic opportunities, significantly impacts their standard of living.

2.1.3 Community

Mattessich and Monsey (2004) define a community as a group of individuals residing within a specific geographical area and possessing both social and psychological connections with each other and the place they call home. They further describe a local community as comprised of individuals who interact within their immediate environment, such as business owners, state institution employees, and residents, who engage in intricate transactions, including the exchange of resources, information, and support, and the development of commercial connections between local businesses and consumers.

2.1.4 Households

According to McGregor (2016), households is defined as a group of individuals who live together in a dwelling. Particularly, a household can be made up of an individual or more people who live and share food in the same dwelling/building, and may be made up of a single family or many families. A single dwelling or building can have many households if meals or living space is not shared. A household is used by many social, microeconomic and government models as a basic unit of analysis. Households are very important in the field of economics and for livelihood research. Households includes single families, different extended families, strangers living together who start sharing meals and living space.

2.2 Participation of local communities in protected areas

Ashley et al. (1998) emphasized the significance of local community involvement in conservation efforts, which can range from individual efforts to collective efforts by the whole community. Community participation in natural resource conservation and management can lead to a redistribution of power that enables communities to make decisions in the daily management of resources (Arnstein, 1969). The success of protected areas, like any other institution, relies on the cooperation and involvement of local communities, who are an integral part of it. Wells (1996) noted that local communities often view protected areas as a source of socio-economic development and improve their standard

of living through direct and indirect benefits such as selling their products without compromising their culture.

However, there has been a history of poor relationships between protected areas management and local communities, particularly in developing countries like South Africa, resulting in conflict (Urbano, 1995). Edgell (1990) pointed out that environmentalists view population growth and the need to sustain it as a threat to conservation, while local communities living adjacent to protected areas often have little influence on decision-making and are viewed as threats rather than partners in conservation (Akama, 1996). Mackinnon et al. (1986) went on to state that the social and environmental values of local communities and conservationists are often different, making the management of protected areas challenging. Conflicts can arise when there are differences in views of resource use, as the resources that locals benefit from in a protected area are valued and safeguarded.

This study aims to provide new insights into how local communities surrounding protected areas like Khula village in KwaZulu-Natal can benefit from the resources associated with the protected area.

2.3 Benefits of protected areas

The government utilizes protected areas and conservation measures as the key instruments in attaining environmental sustainability, to fulfill conservation and biodiversity objectives (Stolton et al., 2015). However, protected areas offer more than just conservation values. De Groot (1987) stressed that the advantages that are obtained from protected areas and the benefits that individuals derive from them must be considered in economic decision-making, including both market goods and services and environmental goods and services that are essential for human livelihoods. De Groot (1987) further stated that the benefits from protected areas should be balanced against development and conservation goals, where the benefits were primarily tangible and related to human livelihoods, as well as intangible values.

Protected areas provide positive values that are referred to as the benefits of protected areas. According to Hatmon and Putney (2003), tangible values are defined as those that have worth, something of merit, and can be estimated, while intangible values cannot be attached a monetary worth but rather benefit the intellectual, psychological, emotional, spiritual,

cultural, and creative aspects of human livelihoods (World Commission on Protected Areas, 2000).

According to the recommendations made at the Ottawa Conference on Conservation and Development in 1986, it was advised that the environmental goods and services provided by protected areas should be quantified in order to meet conservation goals (De Groot, 1987). In order to categorize these benefits, several frameworks have been established, with the most widely used being the Ecosystem Services Framework that was presented in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2005 (Figure 2.1). This framework divides the benefits provided by protected areas into four categories: supporting services, provisioning services, regulating services, and cultural services. (Mattessich and Monsey, 2004).

Ecosystem Services Framework.

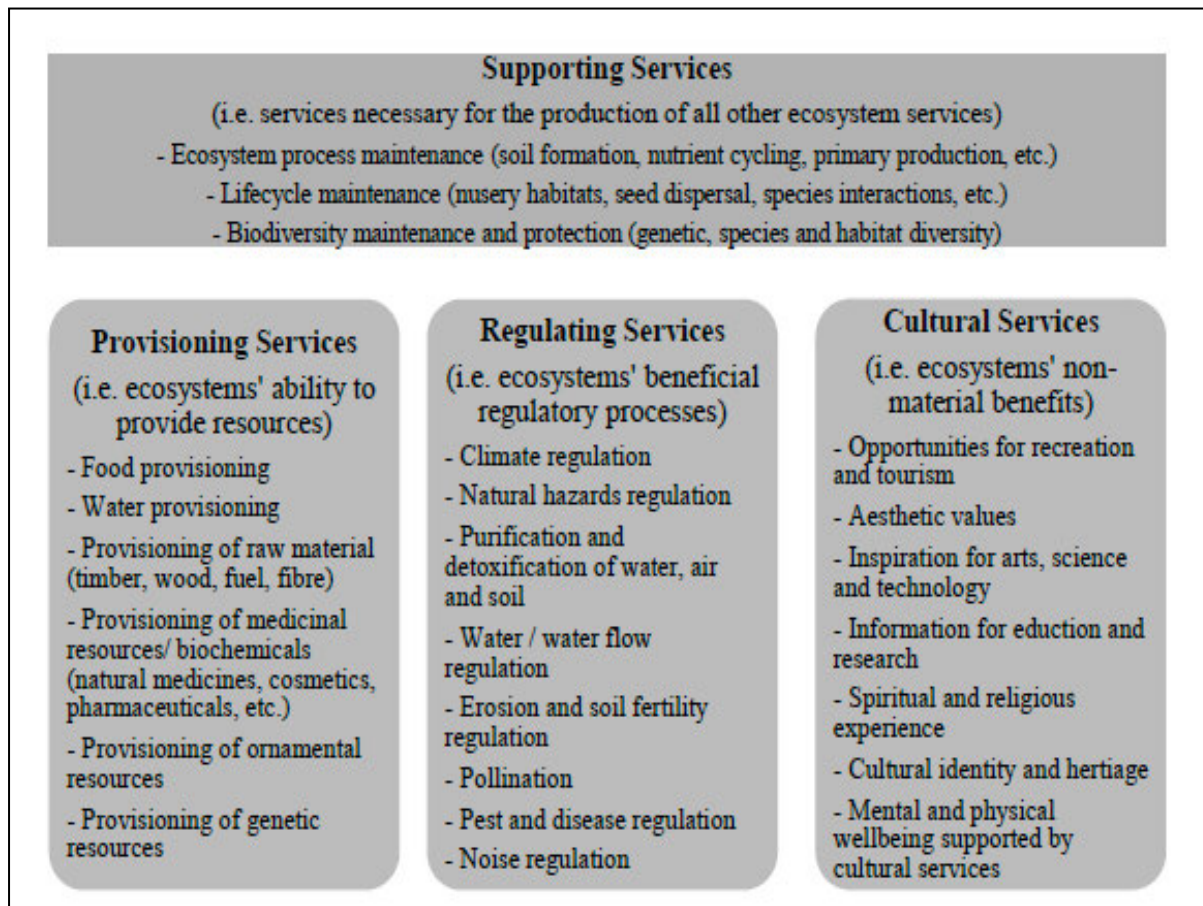


Fig 2.1 Commonly recognized ecosystem services and related goods from protected areas (Kettunen, 2013).

Stolton et al. (2010) constructed a typology that assesses the benefits that local communities gain from protected areas. This typology is based on the Ecosystem Services Framework and includes themes such as biodiversity protection, water provision, food production, health and recreation, disaster mitigation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, cultural and spiritual significance, knowledge preservation, and political stability. The Ecosystem Services Framework is widely used to evaluate the benefits of protected areas and provides a structured approach for such evaluations. The importance of assessing the benefits of protected areas is emphasized by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), which found that over 50% of global ecosystem services are either being degraded or used in an unsustainable manner. Additionally, the Organization for Economic Cooperation (2017) highlighted the insufficient investment in conserving vital conservation areas.

The Ecosystem Services Framework has gained widespread acceptance but its implementation in policy has faced criticism. Chan et al. (2012) raised issues with the framework's valuation of cultural services, claiming that its reliance on economic evaluation alone is inadequate. This narrow focus can result in the incorrect consideration of cultural services in policy decision-making. To address these shortcomings, some recommend integrating different valuation methods and taking into account social perspectives (Chan et al., 2012). The application of the framework in policy has also faced criticism, with Satterfield et al. (2013) asserting that the economic valuation of ecosystem services restricts the framework's potential and the perspective of those conducting the analysis.

According to Pabon-Zamora et al. (2008), despite the difficulties in determining the full extent of ecosystem services offered by protected areas, it is still expected that policymakers take these services into account in their management strategies. Although the Ecosystem Services Framework has its own limitations, it still serves as a starting point for policymakers to factor these services into their decision-making processes. (2008).

The establishment and maintenance of protected areas can also have adverse impacts on communities. These costs can not only affect the region or country where the protected areas are located, but also have worldwide consequences. Mackenzie (2012) found that local communities near or at the boundary of protected areas often experience negative effects, such as eviction and loss of access to resources. Many traditional indigenous lands are located close to protected areas worldwide (Stevens, 2014), and the creation of protected areas on these lands can result in displacement, loss of self-governance, restricted access to

livelihood resources, and obstacles to cultural practices and social relationships (Stevens, 2014).

The establishment of protected areas has often led to the displacement and mistreatment of local communities, a result of the "old paradigm" of conservation that prioritizes fortress conservation and excludes human presence (Stevens, 2014). This approach is based on several assumptions, including state control over protected areas, the preservation of biodiversity, the restriction of human presence and resource use, and the use of force to remove people if necessary (Stevens, 2014).

The impact of protected areas on local communities has been widely explored in academic literature. For example, Mackenzie (2012) studied the spatial distribution of impacts from Kibale National Park in Uganda and found that villages closer to the park boundary experienced negative impacts, while villages further from the park boundary received a wider range of benefits.

Miranda et al. (2016) evaluated the impact of protected areas in the Peruvian Amazon on both forest cover change and local communities' socio-economic well-being. The study found that protected areas were successful in reducing forest cover loss, but had no significant impact on local communities' economic prosperity. Reimann et al. (2011) similarly studied the impact of tourism on communities near five national parks in Estonia and found that while community members believed that park policies were too restrictive, they also believed that tourism could be beneficial for communities as long as it did not interfere with local livelihoods and traditions.

Gurney, et al., (2014) did a study across eight villages in North Sulawesi, Indonesia for over 5 years where they evaluated the short-,medium- and long-term impacts of the implementation of protected area management. Using the social data for villages with and those that do not have an integrated protected area management. They found that the villages that have the integrated protected area management implemented appeared to have been improving in terms of fighting poverty, hence concluding that protected integrated management contributed to poverty reduction. Whereas, the villages that did not have an integrated protected management approach, the indicators of poverty did not improve. Thus, showing evidence of how an integrated protected management approach benefits the communities near protected areas.

2.4 Protected areas in an African context

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2020), there are approximately 202,467 protected areas worldwide that adhere to the organization's definition, which states that such areas are "dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and associated cultural resources and managed through legal or other effective means" (p. 2). This definition serves as the basis for the current study, although the findings may prompt a re-evaluation of the definition. It is worth noting that the IUCN recognizes six different management categories for protected areas, ranging from strict preservation (Categories Ia, Ib, and II) to areas managed for human access and sustainable use (Category VI). (Table 1).

Categories of Protected Areas.

Category	Description
Ia	Strict Nature Reserve: Protected area managed mainly for science.
Ib	Wilderness Area: Protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection
II	National Park: Protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
III	Natural Monument: Protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
IV	Habitat /Species Management Area: Protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention
V	Protected Landscape/Seascape: Protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation
VI	Managed Resource Protected Area: Protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems

IUCN 2004

Table 2.1 Categories of protected. IUCN.

According to Owen-Smith (1987), the establishment and management of protected areas in Africa, particularly IUCN Category II national parks, has been characterized by a lack of consideration for the resource access and use of local communities. This has led to the displacement and disenfranchisement of indigenous populations from their traditional areas, resulting in severe impacts on their socio-cultural and economic survival. According to Adams and Hulme (2001), the "fortress" approach to conservation in national parks, which involves restricting local and indigenous access to water, wildlife, forests, and grasslands and implementing "fences and fines," has resulted in adversarial relationships between these communities and protected areas. Western (2002) emphasizes that this polarization can further lead to declines in biodiversity.

Additionally, the depletion of resources and degradation of land, including the loss of native forests, grasslands, and wetlands, have been intensified by the impoverishment of local and indigenous communities, partly due to management regulations and policies imposed by protected areas. (Adams & Hulme, 2001; Western, 2002).

In the study by Mackenzie, (2012) in Kibale National Park, Uganda out of the 25 villages, 17 villages accrued a net loss as a result of the park for the communities' livelihoods. Local, indigenous people have typically opposed and flouted colonial or state-imposed rules for resource access and use associated with national parks. Many local people who live near protected areas when they try to access the resources in the protected areas without the permission of authorities are considered poachers and are often killed onsite (Carbutt and Goodman, 2013).

2.5 The context: Post-apartheid South Africa

The examination of conservation measures in South Africa must be situated within the context of the country's approach to socio-economic development. South Africa has a tumultuous history, marked by the institutionalized racial segregation of apartheid, which was implemented by the National Party in 1948 and persisted for decades (Black, 1999). In 1994, South Africa transitioned to a democratic system, and subsequently established policies, legislation, and institutions aimed at addressing past racial imbalances (Ntshona, et al., 2010). The Constitution of 1996 prioritizes a rights-based approach and envisions a non-racial, non-sexist democracy for all citizens (Black, 1999). Despite these efforts, there remains a significant amount of literature that critiques the economic development path in post-apartheid South Africa, arguing that the neoliberal policies that are prevalent, such as the New Growth Path framework, fail to meet the needs of the majority of the population and instead primarily serve the interests of capital (Bond, 2011). This debate centres on the suitability of neoliberal economic doctrine in addressing poverty alleviation. While proponents of neoliberal policies argue that economic development is necessary for socio-economic development, critics argue that these policies exclude poor individuals and perpetuate poverty (Manuel, 2013). To effectively address poverty, there must be a focus on directly targeting human development. Even after 25 years of democracy, the legacy of segregation and apartheid continue to produce deep spatial, economic, and political consequences in South Africa, particularly in rural areas where poverty and environmental

challenges are prevalent and agriculture is a declining source of livelihood (Bond, 2011; Ntshona, et al., 2010).

2.5.1 The bill of rights

The examination of the impact of protected areas on the livelihoods of local communities in South Africa must be considered within the framework of the country's Bill of Rights as stated in the Constitution. The Bill of Rights encompasses human rights, including civil and political rights, as well as social, economic, and cultural rights (Mubangizi and Mubangizi, 2005). These rights include freedom of expression, gender equality, the right to form trade unions, education, healthcare, housing, and protection from crime and violence. However, the Constitution only requires the government to take reasonable measures to gradually realize these socio-economic rights (Vizard, 2005).

Despite this, the South African Constitutional Court has made decisions upholding claims of violations of socio-economic rights (Vizard, 2005). The government must take positive steps to address severe deprivation, but the Court has also emphasized that the State's responsibilities under these provisions can be discharged through policies and programs that aim to achieve human rights over time, rather than immediate fulfilment (Vizard, 2005). Violations of these obligations occur when there are inadequate policies and programs, rather than non-fulfilment itself (Sen, 1982).

2.5.2 Delivering ecologically sustainable development

According to the post-apartheid constitutional law in South Africa, not only are social, economic, and political rights recognized, but also the right to ecological sustainability (RSA 1996). Article 24 of the Bill of Rights ensures that individuals have the right to a protected environment through appropriate legislation and measures that balance conservation and ecological sustainability with justifiable economic and social development (RSA 1996). This objective is further emphasized in the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), which serves as the framework for ecological sustainability in South Africa and requires the state to uphold and fulfill the social, economic, and environmental rights of all individuals, particularly those from previously disadvantaged communities (RSA 1998). However, as noted by Hattingh and Attfield (2002), there are significant practical, conceptual, and ethical challenges to achieving ecological sustainable development, particularly in the context of alleviating poverty. Despite this, they assert that the goal of ecological sustainable development is crucial and must entail a transition away from development practices that

harm life-sustaining ecosystems and contribute to social justice. In this context, protected areas play a critical role in realizing this objective.

2.5.3 Poverty and spatial inequality in South Africa

Despite South Africa's complex infrastructure, well-developed private sector and stable economy, the nation continues to grapple with persistent social and economic inequality. This inequality is rooted in a legacy of segregation, stemming from centuries of colonial oppression and racial exploitation, which systematically excluded black Africans from the country's wealth. The discovery of diamonds in the 1860s and gold in the 1880s sparked a concerted effort by colonial powers to exploit these resources through the use of cheap labour from the indigenous population. This was achieved through the dispossession of land, forced relocation to poor areas, imposition of controls, and provision of inadequate education and a complex security system to exploit the labour force and harness the country's mineral resources. These exploitation efforts were driven by the migrant labour system, the homeland system and the bantu education system (Manuel, 2013).

As a result, the post-apartheid government inherited a nation scarred by severe poverty and inequality, with a majority of the population living without access to basic services (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen, 2013). The distribution of resources remains deeply unequal along racial lines, reflecting the institutional exclusion of the past. Black Africans continue to be excluded from access to land and space (Manuel, 2013). The most deprived areas in the country are those where people were forcibly relocated by the former government before independence, including former rural homelands and areas surrounding protected areas (Noble and Wright, 2013). This inequality is particularly pronounced in areas such as the former rural homelands and areas around protected areas, where the legacy of forced displacement under apartheid continues to impact the livelihoods of local communities (Noble and Wright, 2013). The Bantustans, or homelands, created under the former government, remain impoverished in terms of economic infrastructure and social services, and the structures of traditional leadership in these areas do not facilitate development (Hendricks, 2013).

Furthermore, it is important to note that the legacy of segregation and exclusion under apartheid continues to impact the distribution of resources and access to land and space for Black Africans (Manuel, 2013). The homeland system officially came to an end by the dismantling of the apartheid system and transitioning to a democratic state in the 1990s.

Despite the abolition of the homeland system, the inequality and deprivation in the former homeland areas remains a pressing issue for the country.

2.5.4 Protected area conservation in South Africa

During the apartheid era in South Africa, conservation was employed as a means of excluding Black Africans from their livelihoods and confining them to a system of mere laborers, rather than custodians of resources (De Satge, 2013; Hendricks, 2013). The efforts to develop areas close to protected areas were suppressed to maintain the ecological integrity of these areas, which resulted in poverty in these regions (De Satge, 2013; Hendricks, 2013). Protected areas served a significant political role during apartheid; Carruthers (1995) asserts that the establishment of the largest national park, "Kruger," in the country in 1926 was meant to bolster Afrikaner nationalism. As a result, protected areas served as tools to perpetuate and fortify the former government's power and represented territorialization, the marking of territory, to serve as drivers of modernity (Neumann, 2002).

The creation of protected areas in South Africa in the 20th century was marked by the displacement of people and the imposition of fences and fines that excluded local communities from these areas, referred to as "fortress conservation" or "protectionism" (Jones, 2006). The local populations were considered a threat to conservation, leading the conservation authorities to restrict their access to protected areas (Jones, 2006). This fortress conservation led to the formation of many protected areas the aim was to exclude the threats to conservation which were the communities that live within or close to conservation areas. Hence, these protected areas were placed under state control, and human interference was monitored by armed park officials. Even in present day, communities are fenced out and have limited access to protected areas.

The historical demarcation and state control of protected areas during the colonial and apartheid era in Southern Africa has resulted in numerous social conflicts that pose a threat to the future of natural resources (Fabricius, 2004; Jones, 2006). The IWPA Report (2008) pointed out that the conservation of protected areas in South Africa has frequently resulted in the loss of land ownership and use, as well as the decline of traditional knowledge, practices, and cultural significance. Fabricius (2004) contends that protected areas were often established in segregated homelands or on lands with unfavorable conditions such as poor soil, low rainfall, malaria, and tsetse flies, where people were vulnerable and politically marginalized, making them unable to resist land alienation, compared to those in commercial

agricultural regions. Additionally, conservation efforts were used to enforce the political objectives of segregation, as traditional African institutions that managed resource use were replaced by Western institutions and practices such as courts of law, fines, and fences.

Today, the creation of protected areas remains influenced by the ongoing conflict between northern and southern perspectives, particularly in the context of differing environmental regimes. Ramutsindela (2013) argues that the persistent drive for land for conservation gained momentum during a period of political change that coincided with South Africa's signing of the Convention on Biodiversity in 1992, which set targets for biodiversity preservation as a percentage of land reserved for conservation. Conservation and the establishment of protected areas also have far-reaching implications for post-apartheid land reform. For instance, trans-frontier conservation initiatives propose large areas for conservation, but the maps of planned parks often disregard the current locations of rural communities and their livelihoods (Ramutsindela, 2013). The rights and presence of these communities are often not adequately reflected in treaties, as only people with legal land claims are mentioned, leading to concerns that conservation priorities may restrict access to land for land reform (Ramutsindela, 2013).

2.5.5 The Case: The iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park (IWP) is situated in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality, an area with some of the most economically deprived communities in South Africa, especially near the park. According to the 2016 Community Survey, the uMkhanyakude council area had a population of 689,090 people and 151,245 households (Community Survey 2016, as cited in uMkhanyakude District Municipality 2016). The region is beset by poverty, underdevelopment, and high levels of unemployment, as well as high rates of HIV/AIDS (uMkhanyakude District Municipality 2017/18). Many residents rely on natural resources, such as ncema reeds, ilala palm, fish from the coast, and cattle grazing land, to make a living. The IWPA Report (2017) raises concerns about the increasing pressure on these resources within the park due to the depletion and degradation of natural resources in communal areas.

The IWP was named South Africa's first World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999 and was proclaimed under the World Heritage Convention Act in 2000. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority (IWPA) was created to manage the park on behalf of the state, with core

funding from the national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEAT Report, 2009). The IWPA's nine-member board represents various stakeholders, including business, traditional councils, land claimants, and government entities at the national, provincial, and local levels.

The IWPA outsources the day-to-day conservation management to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife receives its funding for function directly from provincial government. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife undertakes certain activities directly. These include land rehabilitation, fire management in the western shores of the park, cleaning and maintenance of day visitor facilities and access roads. The unit also engages with local communities which is a key function, in communication and building interventions for both staff and communities.

The IWP was created by consolidating 16 previously separate parcels of land into a unified park, incorporating former proclamations, state-owned land, commercial forests, and former military sites. The park spans 330,000 hectares, covering one third of the KwaZulu-Natal coastline and 9% of South Africa's entire coastline, with the Indian Ocean on the east and the Kosi, Sibaya, St Lucia Lake systems and uMkhuze Game Reserve on the west.

The IWP has historical significance in the environmental struggle in South Africa, having been proclaimed during the transition from apartheid to non-racial democracy. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, resistance and public debate were sparked by a proposal to mine the dunes on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia for titanium and other heavy metals. An environmental impact assessment was conducted, and an independent review panel was appointed to make a recommendation on the most appropriate land use. The panel recommended eco-tourism, which was seen as a viable alternative to natural resource extraction, and resulted in the IWP being named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999 (DEAT Report, 2017). The park meets three of UNESCO's ten World Heritage criteria, including being a representative example of ecological and biological processes, exceptional natural beauty, and a significant in-situ conservation site for threatened species of outstanding universal value. The IWP also contains four wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention and is recognized as a center of biodiversity in the Maputaland coastal plain.

2.5.6 Integrated conservation and sustainable development

The end of apartheid marked a shift in conservation efforts towards sustainable development, which balances conservation objectives with addressing social and equity issues (WCED, 1987). The concept of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) has emerged as a response to the discourse on ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, promoting participatory development, and ensuring social justice in conservation efforts (Fabricius, 2004). This evolution in thinking has resulted in the adoption of CBNRM as a strategy for balancing conservation objectives with the needs and rights of local communities. This evolution was also influenced by common property theory, which challenges the notion that common property leads to resource overuse (Ostrom, 2010). CBNRM places local communities at the center of decision making regarding natural resources (Whande, 2007).

Post-apartheid South Africa has established numerous laws, policies, and constitutional principles to support CBNRM principles such as democratic participation, secure ownership rights, benefits for community members, incorporation of local knowledge, and conflict resolution mechanisms (Fabricius, 2004; Koch, 2004). For example, the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (RSA 2003) requires the state to implement the Act in partnership with the local community, and outlines provisions for delegation of powers, apportionment of income, use of resources, access and occupation of the protected area, economic development, and knowledge exchange (RSA 2003a, Section 42).

Recent efforts in South Africa have sought to integrate conservation and sustainable development within the framework of "free" markets (Buscher and Dressler, 2012), which are often based on ecological modernization (WCED, 1987; Adams et al., 2004). Approaches include payments for ecosystem services, such as the Working for Water Program (WfW), which creates jobs and training opportunities through the control of invasive species (Buch and Dixon, 2009). However, conservation remains a highly political process and is influenced by concerns over competing social outcomes and differing epistemologies (Adams and Hutton, 2007), and the role of powerful international conservation NGOs has been criticized for neglecting local needs (Brockington et al., 2006). The trade-offs involved in balancing conservation, poverty alleviation, and other development goals and the ethical dimensions of conservation within sustainable development remain controversial (Adams et al., 2004; Minter and Miller, 2011). Different forms of integrated conservation and sustainable

development projects exist, including research, direct employment, sustainable tourism, international aid, and involvement of international conservation organizations like the WWF and WCS (Alpert, 1996). Market-based instruments, such as payments for ecosystem services, are becoming increasingly popular, such as the UNREDD scheme (Blom et al., 2010).

2.6 The integrated management plan for the iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The conservation management strategy of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (IWP) is informed by the Integrated Management Plan (IIMP) which is in accordance with the World Heritage Convention Act (1999) and the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (2003). The NEM:PA Act requires that all parties, including local communities and municipalities, are consulted when creating a management plan for protected areas. The IIMP aims to encourage economic growth in the park and its surrounding communities through partnerships between the private sector and mandatory community partners (IWPA Report, 2017). This approach has been demonstrated by the success of the Thonga Beach Lodge and Mabibi community campsite, which have been recognized as models of eco-tourism partnerships (Sunde and Isaacs, 2008). However, the main priority remains the conservation of the park's World Heritage values, with a focus on "development for conservation" (IWPA Report, 2008:3).

The IWP is also involved in regional development projects such as the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) and the Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation and Resource Area (LTFCA) which are implemented by the governments of Mozambique, South Africa, and Swaziland. The LSDI aims to increase private-sector involvement and create a favorable investment environment (IWPA, 2008). The IWP is considered a "commercial asset" with the potential to drive regional economic growth. The LTFCA works to establish the conditions for a competitive international tourism destination and trans-frontier conservation initiatives are believed to offer benefits such as maintaining ecological functions, sharing management expertise, and improved enforcement (Duffy, 2006).

2.7 Land claims in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The IWP has undergone 14 land claims throughout its history (IWPA Report, 2017). As land dispossession was a key element of colonialism and apartheid, the land reform program has become a central mechanism for implementing post-apartheid policies and legislation (Ntshona et al., 2010). According to Section 25(7) of the Constitution of South Africa, any person or community that was unjustly deprived of property after June 19, 1913 as a result of discriminatory laws or practices is entitled to either the return of the property or alternative compensation (Gore and Moodley, 2013). The Restitution of Land Rights Act provides the legal framework for fulfilling this constitutional right. In the context of the IWP, successful land claims have led to the transfer of land titles to the claiming communities. Although management remains with the IWPA with the help of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, user rights are established through co-management agreements, which involve representatives from both the IWPA and the land claims committee, typically composed of members of the local tribal authority. Despite this, people have not returned to live on the land, signifying a shift in policy from viewing land as a social right to a productive asset (Nustad, 2011). Although some of the land was owned by the communities in and around IWP. The IWPA manages parts of the land on behalf of the state in cases where claims have not yet been resolved, the claims are facilitated by the Zulu tribal trust (the iNgonyama Trust).

2.8 Theoretical framework

Protected areas and parks provide an opportunity for people to experience aspects of life in a natural environment, with minimum human interference. However, since conservation efforts are to protect biodiversity in protected areas and parks, the biggest threat to the conservation efforts are humans. According to Jones (2006), the biggest threat to protected areas are the local communities that live adjacent to the areas. Hence it is important to understand how the local people interact with protected areas. To understand how local communities, interact with protected areas this study will be applying the political ecology approach.

2.8.1 Political ecology approach (PEA)

For the framing of the evaluation of the impacts of protecting areas the study drew from the political ecology approach (PEA). This approach seeks to understand the complex relationship between nature and communities through analysis of what some call the forms of access and control over resources and the impacts on livelihoods of local communities (Paulson, et al., 2003). The main theme of political ecology is the relations between nature and communities. In the 1970s and early 1980s, in responding to environmental activism an offshoot from Marxist inspired theories of society-nature relations emerged as a more pragmatic – political ecology. As an approach it tries to break down the complex metabolism between nature and society, the political ecology approach has its origin in political economy (Walker, 2005). Greenberg and Park (1994:1) defines political ecology as a synthesis of political economy, which insists on the need to link the distribution of power with productive activity and ecological analysis, with a broader vision of bio-environmental relationships. According to Peet and Watts (2013), PEA is the confluence between the principles of political economy and ecologically rooted social science. The political economy approach deals with elements of society, culture, nature, politics, and economy in the context of interactions between politics and economics. In simpler terms political ecology can be defined as the political economy of nature and environment.

The PEA acknowledges that there are various stakeholders that are involved in the conservation and utilization of natural assets, this includes both local and foreign players (Gastavo, 2017). This approach is particularly important in recognising the economic and political factors that influence the relationship between people and the natural environment. It is a fact that there are various stakeholders that influence the management and livelihoods of communities that are adjacent to protected areas. The recognition of the political ecological factors helps in attaining a better understanding of various stakeholders who have interests on protected areas.

The PEA, according to Robbins (2012) comprises three major tenets which are: (i) degradation and marginalization, (ii) environmental conflict and exclusion, (iii) the conservation and control.

In the first tenet Robbins argues that sustainable community management becomes unsustainable as a result of efforts by state authorities or firms that foster for conversation to

enclose traditional collective property which has resulted in decreased sustainability of local practice and leads to the decrease in the equity of resource distribution.

In the second tenet, the increased scarcity of resources in local communities as a result of exclusion of the local people from protected areas by any institution leads to conflict between the groups, thus conflicts are “ecologized”.

The third tenet reflects control of resources and landscapes which are contested with local groups by class, gender or ethnicity (Robbins, 2012). In the process of preserving nature there are state and international interests that have disabled local systems of livelihood production and socio-political organization. Local production practices that were historically productive and relatively benign become unsustainable due to state authorities in the struggle to control resources. The history of conservation reflects elements of coercion. The state being the biggest actor and it goes beyond just enforcing rules to foster conservation. The result is that local communities suffer (Robbins, 2012). The PEA was applied for it integrates social and natural science; in this study it was applied by mirroring its tenets to the data collected.

2.9 Research Gap

Ementon (1999) and Sirima (2010) have pointed to the difficulty in reconciling the protection of protected areas with the well-being of local communities. Despite the significance of this challenge, the best practices for governance and community benefit in protected areas have not been widely established or shared. Moreover, there is a shortage of resources and methods for making fair and effective decisions, sharing benefits, engaging communities, and evaluating social impact in protected areas. Additionally, there is a disagreement on the minimum or standard levels of community involvement and empowerment in protected areas (Nustad, 2011). The effect of protected areas on the livelihoods of local communities in the IWP has not been thoroughly explored, hence the need for further investigation, particularly in the Khula village area. To guarantee the longevity of protected areas, it is essential to enable local communities to profit from the income generated by protected areas, which will increase their support for both local communities and protected areas. This study aims to address the lack of research on the impact of protected areas on the sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction for communities (IWPA Report, 2017).

2.10 Conclusion

The issue of balancing the preservation of protected areas and the well-being of local communities has long been a challenge (Ementon, 1999; Sirima, 2010). Despite the importance of this dilemma, best practices for managing protected areas and ensuring community benefit have yet to be fully established and widely shared. Moreover, there are limited resources and tools for making fair and effective decisions, distributing benefits, engaging with communities, and monitoring social impacts within protected areas. There is also a lack of agreement on the minimum standards for community participation and empowerment in these areas (Nustad, 2011). The effect of protected areas on the livelihoods of local communities at the IWP has not been thoroughly investigated, which highlights the need for further research, particularly in the case of the Khula village. To ensure the long-term sustainability of protected areas, it is critical to make sure that local communities benefit from the income generated through these areas, which would increase their support for both the protected areas and communities (IWPA Report, 2017).

A conventional approach to protected area management that focuses solely on conservation and neglects the needs of local communities can have negative consequences. However, a new paradigm that acknowledges the rights and values of indigenous communities within protected areas is emerging, which has important implications for the distribution of benefits among boundary communities (Ementon, 1999; Sirima, 2010). The challenge of considering all benefits in management decisions lies in determining representative values for those benefits, in order to effectively evaluate decisions. Several methods exist for evaluating the value of ecosystem services, but these tend to be specific to certain services, rather than considering all services in one method. Therefore, more comprehensive assessments are necessary to truly understand the values of protected areas (Ntshona et al., 2010; Gore and Moodley, 2013; Fakir, 2000).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented literature on the importance of protected areas and their impact on communities, protected areas were discussed in the African context and narrowed down to conservation in the South African context and the importance of the participation of local communities. I presented the history of the case study and how it is managed- IWP. This chapter provides detail on the research methodology that the study is based on. According to Patton (2000), the research methodology is defined as an organized process of carrying out research, it specifically gives detail to the techniques I used to collect the data by and this is determined by the scope of the research.

The major goal of research is to get improved results by making sure that the research methodology used is logically and scientifically acceptable. For the purposes of this research, I employed a qualitative research methodology as it is suitable methodology for this study. This chapter discusses how the data for the study was collected and analysed by detailing the various forms of collecting and analysing data. Furthermore, it discusses the ethical considerations taken, the reliability and validity of the data collected and highlights the limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Methodology

According to Creswell (2014), research methodology is a process in research that states how the research was conducted and it gives detail on the techniques that the researcher used to collect data as determined by the scope of the research. Creswell further states that research methodology allows other people who read the research to evaluate the validity and reliability of the whole study just by looking at how the data was collected and analysed.

To further expand the concept of research methodology Bernard (2012), states that it is a way of systematically solving research problem. It is a science of studying the procedures used to conduct the research and how the data was analysed. The study utilized the constructivism paradigm which acknowledges that people construct knowledge based on their lived experience. This also is supported by the ideologies of political ecology, which make local communities the foundation for conservation. There are various research methodologies the

main being quantitative and qualitative research methodology. In order to collect data from communities on the impact of protected areas on their livelihoods, the study was primarily based on qualitative research methodology.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology is based on data that involves quality rather than numbers, it aims to get the descriptions, emotions and meaning of subject through the use of words (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Silverman (2002), further states that qualitative research is used to get insight on subjects' thought's regarding certain phenomenon- this gives insights to the study problem and helps derive a hypothesis for the research.

Qualitative research aims to collect data or evidence regarding a research topic from the perspective of the population; seeks to answer research questions with use of a predefined set of measures to answer the questions. This makes the research to have first-hand perspectives of the people under study this produces unique and accurate data. This is different from quantitative data which is based on statistics and numerical data. Hence this research methodology was effective in this study for my intent was to get specific information about the perspectives of the local community members of Khula village regarding IWP. The approach was useful for the purposes of this study I aimed to get rich descriptions of lived experience rather than numerical data.

Qualitative research methodology is a powerful tool when wanting to understand and interpret the complexity of reality; it is effective for intangible factors for example socioeconomic status, tradition, ethnicity, and gender roles.

In collecting the qualitative data, I made the relationship between me and the study participants to be less formal. The study participants had more room to elaborate their responses in greater detail than quantitative research using open ended questions which also helped me to probe for more information. Open ended questions and probing made respondents answer research questions in their own words rather than fixed responses, probing helped in getting the participants to further explain their viewpoint regarding research questions. Open ended questions gave me the ability to collect data that I did not anticipate, helped in explaining the data being provided and helped in getting the participant more involved in the research than what closed ended questions.

Data in qualitative research is collected in various ways including in depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, documents and records. Qualitative research allows for researchers to effectively obtain information on behaviours, socially constructed concepts, values and opinions of the people under study, thus it provides information about the human side of any research.

3.1.2 Case Study

In this study, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (IWP) in South Africa is examined as a paradigmatic case of protected area conservation. By focusing on this specific case, I aimed to gain a broader understanding of conservation in South Africa, as well as its connection to debates on sustainable development and the role of the democratic developmental state in post-apartheid South Africa. The IWP, which is located in Kwazulu-Natal, seeks to balance conservation of natural resources, socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and redress of historical injustices. I examined the impact of protected area management on the adjacent community of Khula village, where "community" is defined in the South African institutional context as a ward or tribal area governed by an elected official or iNduna. I emphasize the importance of considering the complex political, social, and economic ways in which communities are internally differentiated and the potential for unequal participation and benefit (Watts and Peet, 2004) throughout the research process.

Khula Village is located about 10kms west of St Lucia, it falls within the Municipality of Mtubatuba. The main village of Khula is located approximately 12kms outside the south section of IWP as shown in figure 3.2. The inhabitants of Khula Village form an integral part of the physical surroundings, as well as the tourism amenities and activities present within the Isimangaliso Wetland Park.

Provinces of South Africa.



Figure 3.1. Map showing the Provinces of South Africa. Study area is in KwaZulu-Natal.
Source Google maps (2021).

Map of location of Khula Village.



Figure 3.2 Location of study. IWP and Location of study area (Khula Village). Source IWPA maps (2021).

3.2 Data Collection Tools

3.2.1 Interviews

I engaged a trained fieldworker to assist to conduct interviews in Khula Village so that authentic material would be collected. Face to face in depth interviews were conducted with an adult member in the chosen household. The trained fieldworker who is fluent in IsiZulu and English helped to conduct the interviews; this added in the richness of the data to be collected. The use of the local language, in this case IsiZulu, is supported by Temple and Edwards (2002). They state that language is at the center of conceptualization and the assimilation of norms of people, values and belief systems other than just as a perception-bearing instrument. Therefore, issues are best addressed in their own language. An interview schedule was used that had questions in both English and IsiZulu to guide in the data collection process. In the interviews I took notes so that I would gather as much data as I could other than verbal communication, non-verbal cues like body language and expressions to questions were also important and informed the conclusions. This gave me the power to draw my own conclusions based on the notes I took.

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:111) the benefits for using face to face interviews as a tool for data collection are as follows; firstly, interviews can be conducted even to the illiterate respondents can be interviewed, there is no need for respondent to be able to read or write. Secondly, the person conducting the interview is presented a chance to repeat his/her question in order to expound further which clears confusion or misinterpretation. Thirdly, interviews ensure that all questions are answered including difficult questions.

The disadvantages of using individual interviews includes that it is one of the most expensive data collection methods and it is time consuming, the researcher has limited number of respondents at a time. A key difficulty from conducting the interviews was that some of the respondents seemed to purposefully hide information that would have aided to the richness of the data collected.

3.2.2 Document Analysis

The researcher examined public records of IWP's activities which include published documents, annual reports and policies from 2010-2019 that address their goals and vision towards the development of communities that are living adjacent to the park. The documents that I analyzed enabled me to obtain secondary data, According to Babbie and Moutin (2006) using multiple methods improves validity and reliability of the study.

3.3 Sampling

It would be ideal for one to study the entire community, however this is not feasible considering the time frame and limited resources therefore the researcher must settle for a sample. A sample is a portion of elements taken from a population, which is considered to represent the entire population (Shenton and Andrew, 2004). It is very difficult to collect data from all the individuals in the study area, it would take years to firstly collect the data and analyse the data. Secondly it would be expensive to carry out the research. Hence, in qualitative research it is imperative to select a subset of the population under study area. The selection of the subset is called sampling and the subset is called a sample. Sampling is the process of systematically selecting that which will be examined during research. In relation to this research purposive sampling method was used (Creswell, 2014). This sampling method was preferred for it allowed me to get participants that are most relevant, who were knowledgeable about the relationship between the village and IWP. In this study a sample was taken from a community close to IWP called Khula Village. I selected the village because of the direct interaction it has with the IWP. The participants in this study had characteristics that indicate that they had interest in the management of IWP. I interviewed 12 households selected as the basic sample unit from Khula village. It served as a good model of the interaction of local communities and the protected area. In the selection of the sample, I consulted a social scientist who lives and works in the area. The 'inkosi' of the village was also consulted in order ensure that the 12 households interviewed were relevant for the study. Household heads that have been living in the village for more than 10 years were interviewed, this was to ensure validity of the data they were providing.

In my selection of the sample, I did not concentrate on just numbers rather I stressed on the quality of respondents and this was done by selecting respondents that have lived in the

village for a lengthy period. The baseline data on my secondary data was 10 years, hence in the selection of the sample I selected those that have been living in the village for more than 10 years. This selection was done with the help of a social scientist and induna. The selection of the households was based on their location, accessibility, characteristics and socio-demographic background.

In order to obtain data that was in depth with the help of the induna I used snowball sampling technique. The induna helped by showing me individuals in the village that would be open to help me with data and some of the respondents referred to other individuals that were interested in the study. According to Bryman (2004) snow ball sampling is best used to sample populations that have no sampling frame. In this case a sampling frame is a complete list of all the households in the study population. The snow ball and purposive sampling techniques were used to choose respondents. Neuman (2006:14) purports that the use of snow ball and purposive sampling techniques focus on selecting respondents that will provide data is valid and is of quality rather than just getting a representative of the population. Using purposive sampling was very useful especially when selecting respondents that are knowledgeable in the subject matter in this case the management of the IWP. The techniques were used in the selection of the respondents in the village.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 households in the village. The interview schedule was designed to get as much information regarding the research from the respondents. Which was their perceptions regarding the management of the wetland park.

Secondary data was collected to inform the study. Secondary data is the data that already exists. In this study it is the published and unpublished report by IWPA, municipality reports and newspaper articles. These secondary data sources were used to collect information to supplement the primary data collected in the in-depth interviews. The secondary data helped in understanding the establishment and the history of the IWPA, also the commitments of the authority to improve the livelihoods of local communities, and management of the protected areas.

3.4 Data Analysis

In qualitative research according to Patton (2002), data analysis is the process or rearranging systematically the interview transcripts that were drawn from the interview and the notes that the researcher took down to understand the studied phenomenon. The analysis and breaking down of the data are a strong demonstration of the researcher's skill to deduce data from the transcripts. According to Berg (2006:304), in qualitative data analysis there are three approaches that are usually used these are as follows: An Interpretive approach, where any observational data and interviews are transcribed or converted to text for analysis; A Collaborative approach, where the person conducting the research work with particular subjects with the goal of accomplishing certain objectives; and an Anthropological approach where the researcher actually has to participate in particular activities in the field with the subjects to gather data.

In this dissertation, an interpretive approach was adopted to analyse the qualitative data collected through interviews. The data collected was filtered and analysed in depth until the key information relevant to the study was extracted. The data was then categorized and linked to establish themes, which served as the ultimate result of the analysis process. The initial steps entailed transcribing the data and translating some parts of the data from IsiZulu to English. Once the data was translated and transcribed, each transcript was systematically analyzed with the goal of getting to understand the participants overall perception on the research. I used the inductive approach when coding using the following steps; Made meaning of the data, this step I had to read through the data and allowed codes to emerge, I started forming codes as I was reading; The second step was developing themes, once I understood the data more, I further analyzed into what was happening with the data to understand the themes present in the data that address my research questions. The themes were basically my findings. The findings were mirrored with the data from the secondary data.

To get the secondary data public records from IWPA, newspapers and municipality were analyzed through incorporating inductive coding, the content was put into themes similar to those in the interview transcripts. This helped me to see if IWP documents are in alignment with what is happening on the ground.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The importance of ethical considerations in research is widely recognized as they establish the norms and standards for conduct that differentiate between right and wrong (Burgess, 1989). Ethical considerations are crucial in ensuring the integrity of research by preventing fabrication and falsification of data, and promoting trust and accountability among researchers. Adhering to ethical standards also helps to gain public support for research by demonstrating compliance with guidelines related to human rights, animal welfare, legal compliance, safety standards, and conflicts of interest (Burgess, 1989).

In this dissertation, I made a conscious effort to adhere to the fundamental ethical requirements of honesty and confidentiality in their research methods, as outlined by Burgess (1989). The study participants' names have been kept confidential and informed consent was obtained from all 12 respondents. Additionally, the researcher has taken steps to ensure that the study did not cause harm to any participants and respected their anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality throughout the research process. I obtained permission to conduct the study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and obtained ethical clearance from the University Ethics Committee. The participants were made aware of the nature and purpose of the study and were informed that there would be no monetary or other implications for them as a result of participating in the research.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

I used a combination of methodological techniques in order to aid in the validity of the study. The methods and techniques I used in this study should have passed the test of reliability and should provide findings and results which can be retested in similar conditions. I employed triangulation of evidence to strengthen my research, thereby enhancing its trustworthiness. Triangulation refers to the utilization of multiple forms of data and various methods of data analysis to improve the validity of the study (Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Moreover, Shenton and Andrew (2004) argue that minimizing bias to the greatest extent possible is a practical approach to achieving higher validity. To ensure the validity of my data, I utilized a combination of different methodological techniques. In line with Creswell's (2014) perspective, I aimed to attain external validity through theoretical relationships, enabling the generation of generalizations. Developing a formal case study protocol was essential in meeting the validity requirements of my research.

Thus, results should likely be able to generalize the phenomena. Joppe (2010), defines reliability to the extent that the findings can be consistent over time, were the findings give an understanding of the perception of the total population being studied. To help with reliability of the study, I included the purpose of the study in consent form. Furthermore, I ensured that I interpreted the data objectively, and demonstrated clear interpretation of the data. I ensured that the presentation is transparent. The study results and findings are rich and I supported my findings.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology which I used for this study. Furthermore, this chapter provided justification of the use of qualitative research approach. The chapter gave in depth detail on how the data was collected and how the data was analyzed. The chapter gave justification of the tools used to collect the data. In addition, the chapter further discussed the validity and reliability and study limitations pertaining the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter of the thesis focused on the research methodology employed in the study. Specifically, it aimed to address the following questions regarding the case study: (1) What are the socio-economic effects of protected area conservation on local communities? (2) How is the protected area perceived by these communities? (3) What are the barriers to the flow of benefits from the protected area to the local communities? To gather data, the study utilized a qualitative research methodology, incorporating political ecology as the main theoretical framework and utilizing thematic analysis techniques to organize and present the data. A case study approach was taken, utilizing public reports from the IWPA and in-depth interviews with residents of Khula village, which were recorded and not altered in any way. The results of this study aim to add to the existing body of knowledge on the experiences of communities living near protected areas in South Africa. It may also be significant in informing strategies for improving protected area management at IWP and across the country. This chapter presents the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the interviewees, including their age, gender, education level, occupations, and experiences. It also delves into their perceptions of the protected area, its impact on their livelihoods, the challenges they face, and potential measures to address these challenges. (IWPA Report, 2017).

4.1 Themes

I compared the main themes which were gathered from the findings with that of the themes that emerged from the literature review. The data presented was derived from the transcripts that were drawn from the interviews and public reports. After the gathering the public reports and conducting interviews, I analysed the data by searching for common information between the respondents. The analysis was done more than once, the patterns that emerged were grouped under key themes.

4.2 Research findings

4.2.1 Background information of the study sample

The interview schedule that I designed was used to also collected demographic data. The number of males interviewed was higher than that of females, the sample is more

representative of males than their counterparts but both sexes are represented. Responses were divided by the number of total participants interviewed (12) and multiplied by 100 to get the percentage of response rate for the interview questions. For the age and gender of the range of 16 years to 25 years there was zero participants, while in the 26 years to 35 years age category there were 2 male respondents (17%). The age category 36 years to 45 years there were 4 respondents, 2 female (17%) and 2 males (17%). For the 46 years to 55 years category there were 4 respondents, 1 female (8%) and 3 males (25%). In the 55 and above they were 2 respondents 1 female (8%) and 1 male (8%). There were 4 female respondents (33%) and 8 male respondents (67%).

Demographic summary

	Females	Males	Females %	Males %
16-25	0	0	0	0
26-35	0	2	0	17
36-45	2	2	17	17
46-55	1	3	8	25
55+	1	1	8	8
TOTALS	4	8	33	67

Authors own creation (2021).

Of the respondents five had a tertiary qualification (42%) and the rest had secondary education, meaning the respondents were able to read and write, thus there were literate. The respondents were not required to submit their academic records to authenticate their claims, it questioned about their occupation, it was apparent that their employment required at least a secondary education. For instance, one respondent was a bookkeeper, and the majority worked in the tourism industry as guides, cashiers, managers and small business owners. The level of education is pivotal in people's understanding of matters which reflects their perception in relation to real life situations. It is assumed that those that have secondary education and above are objective and critical rather than subjective and moved by emotion (Mackenzie, 2009). Mackenzie (2009), went further to state that there is a high correlation between the level of education and level of reasoning. The respondents were objective in the interviews and showed a deep understanding of what was being asked and the relationship that the community shared with the park. They were also conversant with the history of the area and challenges that they were facing that were related to the protected area.

For employment 6 out of the 12 interviewees are formally employed. Of the 6 formally employed (2 of them are women and 4 are men), 3 respondents were self-employed, and all

had business contracts with IWP, 3 were unemployed, but interestingly they all acknowledged that they get manual work from time to time at the IWP. All respondents acknowledged that the IWP is a major source of income for the people living the community and surrounding areas.

This shows how important IWP is to some extent providing employment opportunities for the community. From the research it suggests that there is a level of interdependence between IWP as an employment agency and the communities adjacent to it. According to Barry-Jones (1995), interdependence is the dependence of more than two parties on each other over one or many aspects. Nine of the respondents that are formally employed and self-employed acknowledged that they receive above the minimum wage (R3500.00) monthly, the other three who are unemployed do not have a consistent income.

4.3 Local community experience of the management of the park by IWPA

The history of dispossession and unequal access to natural resources continues to haunt the continent, including South Africa, where the majority of conservation spaces are still plagued by the legacy of displacement caused by apartheid. In order to address these issues, the IWPA aims to balance conservation and sustainable development through its management plan, which prioritizes the integration of tourism, local community development, and conservation. The park authorities aim to attract economic investment and create job opportunities to make the park a tourist attraction, and by valuing conservation products, the local communities close to the park can benefit from private tourism. The IWP plan considers land as a productive asset, and transferred claimed land title deeds to itself as the overall manager, with the goal of positively impacting local communities. However, the World Heritage Convention Act of 1999 restricts access to the park's natural resources, which are essential to the livelihood of local people. (Ementon, 1999; Sirima, 2010; Nustad, 2011; IWPA Report, 2017). The plans of IWPA have to adhere to the statutes of the World Heritage Convention Act. Conservation objectives are given priority to uphold the World Heritage status. When the park was pronounced a World Heritage Site, there was change for the local communities, new rules were imposed to manage the conservancy. Thus, to protect the conservation the locals were fenced out and other rules that enhanced exclusion were implemented. According to Gumende (2009), there has been significant clashes between the conservation authority and the local people in Khula village for the community members are often found trespassing

into the park and conducting illegal activities, such as killing wild animals, fishing and harvesting vegetation purposes without being given permission from the wetland authority.

Some of the local community's socio-economic activities clash with conservation. According to the IIMP of 2011 there are a number of activities that are not allowed in the park or require one to have the IWPA permission (in form of a licence, permit or a receipt). There are a number of permits that are challenging to the local community these include:

- General entrance permits, these are given at entry points. They allow certain marine activities, access to the beach, game drives and use of facilities such as viewpoints, hides and picnic sites.
- Special access permits, these are required for access into wilderness and sanctuary zones.
- Special operating permits, these are based on a contract between the IWPA and concessionaire (any individual or organisation that has been given a permit). These permits are subject to a number of operational conditions for example accommodation facilities and boat tours.
- Resource use permits for example fishing licences and harvesting of *juncus kraussii* locally known as incema grass.

The failure to adhere to the IWPA rules and restrictions has led to clashes between the authority and local people. The clashes between the IWPA and the local people has resulted in a number of fatalities. On the 16th of September 2020, Celimpilo Mdluli, 30, who was part of a small fishing co-operative was fishing near St Lucia Lake and was shot dead by the park rangers (Independent online, 2020). Masifundise Development Trust says in a statement (Fishing Industry news online, 2020) *"The weaponised policing of conservation areas, in the name of biodiversity protection, has led to the killing of a person who believed, and had been told by Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, that he had the right to fish where he was fishing."*

On the 3rd of November 2016, the IWPA confirmed the death of a poacher who was killed by a group of game rangers that were observing rhinos in the park and intercepted the poachers which led to a shootout (SA People online, 2016). The number of deaths and people injured in the clashes between the rangers and the local people is unaccounted for (Carbutt & Goodman, 2013). The loss of human life makes the clashes between the conservation authority and local people from the community a great concern.

The people interviewed in this study sample had negative attitudes towards IWPA. For the parks rules and conditions negatively affects the local people's livelihoods as it excludes them from the park. The local development options are governed by IWPA. The clashes over time have brought discontentment among the participants. The participants had this to say about being excluded:

Participant 3 *"The moment they built fences and gates we were automatically kicked out of the park"*.

Participant 5 *"We will be arrested if we get anything from the park without permission, from our ancestors being the owners of the land to us being now labelled poachers"*.

Participant 4 *"We do not have much say in our way of life, our way of living is controlled by iSimangaliso, hence at times we are not on the same page in terms of development efforts"*.

Participant 2 *"Most of the things [socio-economic activities] we do for a living clash with conservation aims of iSimangaliso"*.

Participant 11 *"We cannot develop our communities the way we want, the iSimangaliso [iSimangaliso Wetland Authority] are always monitoring and we do things according to what they want...we cannot fish without permission"*.

Pertaining to exclusion, the research found that IWP management decision making structures and policies on conserving the world heritage site are strongly influenced by discourses around global conservation. According to the iSimangaliso Integrated Management Plan (IIMP) 2017-2021 it states that *"in order to ensure to World Heritage values are not compromised, conservation objectives need to be foremost, with the emphasis on development for conservation"*. IWPA is mandated by the government to make decisions for the running of the park. In terms of governance, the local municipalities around iSimangaliso are just stakeholders. According to No.57 of 2003: The National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, Chapter 1 Section 7 stipulates,

"(1) In the event of any conflict between a section of this Act and (a) other national legislation, the section of this Act prevails if the conflict specifically concerns the management or development of protected areas; (b) provincial legislation, the conflict must be resolved in terms of section 146 of the Constitution; and (c) a municipal by-law, the section of this Act prevails".

Section 38 (1) further stipulates that *“The Minister, in writing- (a) must assign the management of a special nature reserve or a nature reserve to a suitable person, organisation or organ of state”*.

iSimangaliso wetland park authority reports directly to the National Minister of Environmental Affairs (iSimangaliso Integrated Management Plan, 2017-2021), the municipality’s influence in the running of the park is limited. The wetland park being the second largest protected area in South Africa stretches over many municipalities, thus making municipality influence even more difficult. This, results in limiting the municipalities influence on socio-economic development in communities adjacent to the IWP. Khula village is less developed and basic service delivery is poor as compared to other areas around. Most local community’s development plans must be approved by IWPA and this usually takes time. The development plans may clash with the conservation authority’s mandate.

Local community participation in protected areas has not transformed post-apartheid, the local people remain excluded in the management of the conservation parks (Alpert, 1996). The study participants of Khula Village had this to say regarding participation in the management of the park:

Participant 2 *“iSimangaliso was supposed to ask the permission of us the local people to declare it a World Heritage Site, they did not, it’s daylight robbery, iSimangaliso is a stolen space. It’s confusing that we haven’t even got to see the papers that says that this park is a World Heritage Site”*.

Participant 4 *“We not included in planning in any way”*.

Participant 11 said: *“We do not have running water, some houses do not have electricity as compared to other places like Mtubatuba, St Lucia and Nordale”*.

Participant 9: *“Our community is poorly developed and we have challenges in service delivery”*.

4.4 IWP Benefits vs Perception of local community

The researcher reviewed the iSimangaliso integrated management plan (IIMP) 2017-2021 and annual reports for 7 years from 2012 to 2018. The vision of the IWPA is to create the greatest conservation-based tourist attraction that is fuelled by local communities. The IWP

aims to develop a model for protected areas management putting communities at the centre of any conservation strategy. According to the iSimangaliso Integrated Management Plan (IIMP) 2017-2021 the people in Khula should be benefiting through: (a) short term revenue sharing with land claimants, this revenue is supposed to benefit the local community, (b) people in Khula will be partners in providing tourist accommodation (c) employment opportunities for the locals to make an income through tourism revenue.

The annual reports suggest that IWPA economically empowered local people by: (a) training local business owners and partnering with them, (b) sharing its revenue with local communities, (c) creating employment opportunities, (d) offer bursaries to local students for tertiary institutions. The IWP authority overarching objectives are to maintain the world heritage status. The community's socio-economic wellbeing is not prioritized before the environment. The researcher asked the study participants what benefits the locals derive from the IWP and found that the above-mentioned benefits according to the annual reports and the iSimangaliso Integrated Plan are not fully being experienced by the local community.

The perception of the local people in Khula Village contradicts what is reported by IWPA. The majority of the participants are dissatisfied with the flow of benefits from the conservation area. The participants' perceptions are negative and this is acknowledged in the iSimangaliso annual report of 2018, where the CEO (chief executive office) says *"One of the long-standing challenges the organisation has been facing for many years was the negative perception that various stakeholders, especially local communities, had about iSimangaliso. Local communities were vocal about the inability of the Authority to provide meaningful economic benefits and conducive platforms for the people living around the Park, to be heard and their issues resolved"*. This remark that was made by the CEO corresponds with the perception of the participants.

On revenue sharing the majority of the respondents expressed that they are not receiving any revenue, from the respondents the revenue is not shared openly and there is no concise information about the finances. This is what the study respondents had to say:

Participant 6 *"We do not get much from the park for there are a few people who benefit...there are a few families that are benefitting. The people who are directly employed and those that have connections"*.

Participant 8 *“There is no clear information regarding the money that the park allocates for the community, and how the money is distributed...it is not clear of the development that the money is doing. Looking at how our community does not even have proper roads”.*

Participant 5 *“We do not get much from the park for there are a few people who benefit, there are a few families who benefit”.*

Participant 4 *“Those who are connected get financial benefits, there is no clear information when regarding money that is distributed by the wetland park is distributed”.*

In contrast to the perception of the local community IWPA is not financially performing well, it is the government that is financing the operations of the park. In the financial year of 2017-18 seventy-nine percent of its costs were funded by the government, the park revenue was fourteen percent, and other investments seven percent (IWP annual report 2018).

The infrastructure in Khula Village is poor, the roads are in disrepair and, the accommodation is also dilapidated due to poor building standards. Since the village is an extension of the wetland park, it also suffers from wetland conditions when it rains its prone to flooding. The tourist's accommodation is mainly for the local tourists and for the people who work in St Lucia and Mtubatuba. There is not enough funding to support the people in Khula Village as partners in tourism accommodation. I enquired about how the accommodation that was meant for tourists and how this has benefitted the community, this was what the respondents had to say:

Participant 1 *“The lodges are now rented out to the tenants that are mostly workers who work around iSimangaliso...The people who own the guest houses do not even live in Khula Village, so even if they were making money the money does not benefit the village”.*

Participant 2 *“Most tourists get their accommodation in St Lucia for it is better than the here [Khula village], St Lucia has better buildings, better roads, better houses so tourists go stay there”.*

Participant 6 *“When is raining there maybe flooding and the roads become difficult to use, there is no money for building good buildings foreign tourists go to St Lucia instead”.*

In terms of employment opportunities created by IWP, the uMkhanyakude region as a whole and the areas surrounding the Park, are some of the poorest communities in the country (Umkhanyakude District Municipality , 2017). IWPA goes to acknowledge that many of the

local people are dependent on natural resources from the park for survival. The depletion of resources in the communal areas encourages the encroachment into the park. The job opportunities that are created by the IWP are not enough to cater for the unemployed population in the village. Hence the region remains with a high unemployment rate.

The majority of the respondents agree that people in Khula are poor, heavily dependent on government grants and resources from the park. The situation in the village has led to some people resorting to crime this includes carjacking, and robbery, as well as illegal fishing and poaching animals in the park especially rhinos for their horns, which have a high value in black market (Jones, 2004). Participants pointed out that they struggle to make a living and provide for their families and this occurs in the unequal environment:

Participant 4 *“It is heart-breaking to be poor and 5 mins away you get into St Lucia and see white people and foreigners living their best lives yet us the people who were driven away from their land are suffering”.*

Participant 5 *“The people who manage the park have big expensive cars, yet we struggle to provide decent meals to our families”.*

Participant 11 *“The youth since they are not employed have turned to crime and poaching in the park. iSimangaliso [wetland authority] has tried to do business training programs but it all fails because it is difficult to do business among people who do not have money”.*

In terms of offering bursaries to tertiary students, a few of the participants commended the effort but majority are disgruntled. The participants perceive that IWPA can do much more by improving infrastructure of schools in the village both primary and secondary. In addition, some participants think that the bursary program benefits those that are connected to the IWP officials. Other participants did not even know about the bursaries. This is what the participants had to say on the bursary program of IWPA:

Participant 1 *“There should be money set aside for development, but I am sure it is misused by the political elite, those who are connected to the management of iSimangaliso. There is corruption I remember when my niece who qualified for the scholarship that is offered by iSimangaliso, she could not get it for she had no one she knew”.*

Participant 6 *“I do not know that there are bursaries”.*

The exclusion of the local people from the park, has also had a negative social impact. This further causes resentment between the locals and the wetland management authorities. When I questioned the respondents on the social impacts that are as a result of the park being enclosed, most of them displayed hostility, the findings show that the village's social practices have been negatively affected, this is what the respondents had to say about the disruption of their social livelihood:

Participant 1 *“Our ancestors are in the wetland park and there are ceremonies that can only be done close to where they lay. However, our mediums are denied access to the park, and it is hard to access some parts of the park since it is fenced and restricted. There is no special permission given to the lands since we are treated as foreigners in our own land”.*

Participant 4 *“The fencing of the fence has had negative impact to our cultural activities we have some forefathers that are buried within the park and for us to prosper as a people, they [forefathers] have to bless us, but unfortunately, they can't bless us anymore for we cannot enter were there are resting”.*

Participant 10 *“We cannot do rituals on beaches, often times we are stopped by park officials”.*

Participant 6 *“It is becoming difficult to practice some of our cultural practices some of them have to be done near the ocean but we can do this freely without being harassed by iSimangaliso [wetland authority]”.*

4.5 Perception of the barriers to livelihood benefits from IWPA

The study findings show that there are a number of actors involved in the conservation and utilization of natural resources found in the park, these include local and international stakeholders as acknowledged by the PEA. Findings suggest that there is political influence from the management of the park resulting in the hindrance of the flow of benefits to the local communities. Since 1994, state institutions have come under scrutiny over mismanagement and corruption. However, the iSimangaliso wetland park authority has been having clean audits, suggesting that it is being managed well. However, the study which was interested in finding out the local community's perception on the flow of the park's benefits which would reflect on the management of the park suggest otherwise.

This is what some respondents had to say about the flow of benefits:

Participant 4 *“There must be accountability and the community should be told what exactly they’re benefiting from the park. There is a lack of concise communication between the community and the park management of the area”.*

Participant 6 *“Resources are being misused by iSimangaliso, only the officials from the organisation that are benefitting and those that have connections”.*

Participant 1 *“Corruption there are reports of money being diverted to individuals’ pockets. Funding from government and the revenue generated by the wetland authority is being misused”.*

Participant 5 *“Local community businesses do not get any tenders at the park”.*

According to Wilson and Ramphela (1989) there are different ways in which corruption manifests, it can be incidental, systematic, it can be judicial, administrative, legislative or political in nature. It includes the abuse of power to enrich oneself or the people that one is close to through processes like nepotism and misappropriation of funds. In the case of IWPA, according to the accounts of the local people there are traces of corruption.

I was further interested in exploring whether the park is beneficial to the conservation of animals and vegetation (to see whether there are barriers to the benefits of conservation), respondents had this to say:

Participant 3 *“The animals are freer than some African people and are eating better and enjoying better pastures of land...so in terms of conversation the IWP is doing very well, that is why this area is still attracted many white people [tourists] ...there are a lot of trees and animals in the park...but however there are some officials [iSimangaliso wetland park officials] that are involved in poaching of rhino horns”.*

Participant 4 *“The problem is that some of the people who are supposed to protect the animals are also poachers and pay some local people to go kill rhinos for small money, yet they get big money for the horns”.*

Participant 7 *“Some of the people who work at the park grew up in the village, so at times they can do deals with poachers and if there are big people [management of IWPA] involved deals are done, but the poachers do not get much money as compared to the officials “.*

The findings suggest that poaching is complex and involves a network of people including park officials, and respondents were not open about it. However, most respondents suggest that the people [poachers] that are most at risk are the local people even though they do not benefit as much as the people in the background.

4.6 Perceptions on how to improve the relationship between the IWPA and the local community

The relationship between conservation authorities and local communities is critical in the pursuit of environmental goals. To try to enhance the relationship the researcher asked the study participants if they had any recommendations on what would help improve their relationship with IWPA. These are some of the recommendations by the respondents:

Participant 3 *“Build an independent body that will monitor the revenue that is directed to the community. Which will be community based”.*

Participant 4 *“Give special permits to access the parks and become custodians of the park”.*

Participant 4 *“The livelihoods of the people living in Khula Village should be held as valuable”.*

Participant 5 *“What the government is doing is not working, foreign tourists are not going to come stay in the accommodation that we have...but build guest houses within the village based on what on our everyday living and have like one or two rooms at each household that has the electricity and the basics. Have the tourists live like the local people before they go to the wetland”.*

4.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present the findings of the study that was conducted in Khula Village to assess how the protected area management affects the livelihood of the community. This chapter presented themes that were relevant to the research study. The themes were identified by analysing the responses given by the participants from the transcripts from the interviews and the official reports from IWPA. The themes that were most cited by the participants include exclusion, conflict between the local people and park

authorities, and mismanagement by IWPA. Chapter 5 will discuss the key themes that were identified in conjunction with the political ecological approach. As well as the conclusion and recommendations that will be based on the findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore the impact of protected areas on local communities in South Africa, and Khula Village was used as a case study to be able to gain insight on the lived experiences of residents living adjacent to protected areas. Through examining the respondents who participated in the study I have gained insight on the livelihood impact of the iSimangaliso wetland park on the locals, their perception of the management of the park and what hinders the flow of benefits and recommendations.

The literature review of this study covered some themes that emerged from the study. In literature it is argued that for the success of any protected area the local people should be at the centre of any conservation effort (IUCN, 2020). In integrated conservation and sustainable development, the pursuit is to ensure that biodiversity is protected whilst also addressing social and equity issues. The iSimangaliso integrated management plan was implemented to strive for the development of local communities living adjacent to the park. However according to the study, the local communities are not prioritised in the conservation management of the park.

My data has been analysed by using interviews collected from the local community members from Khula village. The decision to use the qualitative methodology for this study made the researcher able to gather important data from the lived experiences and an in depth understanding of the way the wetland is being managed is beneficial to the locals.

The methodology approach which I used allowed me to have an adequate sample to do an in depth study, conducting in depth interviews and document analysis to address the following research questions:

- What are the livelihood outcomes of protected area conservation for the local people?
- How is the protected area perceived?
- What are the factors that are hindering the flow of benefits from the protected area to the local communities?

This chapter discusses the findings of the study that were critically examined using the political ecological approach in relation to the themes that have been identified. This chapter will also provide conclusions and recommendations on the impact of protected areas.

5.1 Discussion

The local community residents of Khula village are facing various challenges that affect their livelihoods. These challenges include poverty, poor service delivery and provision of housing development, this has resulted in the resentment of the wetland park authority. Which is perceived as a vehicle for the livelihood's challenges. This has been seen in the most protected areas in South Africa where the local communities are not benefitting from conservation. The research findings support that the black people displaced in the effort to protected biodiversity are still being marginalized and their livelihoods are not prioritised. The narratives of respondents show that there is much discontentment, the locals are not happy with the way the park is being managed, for they have not benefitted from the land that belonged to their ancestors.

The way the participants describe their livelihoods demonstrates that the management of the park is not improving their livelihoods. The research demonstrates that to some extent the black Africans are still marginalised in the effort of conservation, the local community is not benefitting as much from tourism. The tourism industry is still predominately white.

The main study findings can inform the current literature on the state of protected area management in the country where the local people are not fully enjoying the benefits that are promised by conservation authorities. The main conclusions of the study are a) the IWPA rules and restrictions have had negative impact on the livelihoods of the local people of Khula Village and has led to various clashes between IWPA and the locals; b) most of the people interviewed had a negative attitudes towards IWPA; c) the barriers to IWP benefits to the community include mismanagement and corruption; d) and majority of the respondents think that the park has played an important role in the conservation of plants and animals, however poaching remains a threat to conservation efforts.

In the field of political ecology, it is impossible to survey the field entirely, for there are so many actors involved which is very complex. In the study I analysed the descriptions of my respondents using the political ecology approach (PEA), which according to Robbins (2012) has three major tenets which are: (1) degradation and marginalization, (2) environmental conflict and exclusion and, (3) conservation and control.

5.2 Local communities' experiences: marginalisation and exclusion, conflict and conservation

The PEA's first tenet is based on degradation of environment and marginalisation of local communities. Robbins (2012), asserts that environmental systems go through change when there is an over utilization of natural resources, and will require the state to intervene. Under this narrative traditional sustainable community management is hypothesized to become unsustainable and, as a result state authorities enclose traditional collective property. This is reflected by evidence from the study where the local community of Khula's traditional land use was seen to be unsustainable and the government took their land and fenced the community out in pursuit of conservation. By applying this tenet, I argue that, the local communities especially from black African communities are marginalized. Accounts from the respondents, suggests that opportunities to obtain benefits are not equal between communities. According to these accounts St Lucia which is mostly populated by white people, reflects that the legacy of apartheid is still evident. It is also a legacy of inequality. In terms of tourism, the local people directly benefit from selling their art and craft to tourists. However, when it comes to accommodation for the tourists it is St Lucia that benefits more, for the infrastructure in Khula is very poor. In the marketing of IWP, on their official website does not mention the local communities, thus the park operates in a vacuum.

By interpreting the narratives of my participants, my findings reveal that the black African community's livelihoods are not fully considered in conservation thus the enclosure of the park results in the decrease of equality of resource distribution. The community is excluded not just geographically from the park but further in the management of the park. This challenges the reports that claim that the policies and reports that claim that the community is the centre of conservation development. The study respondents argue that IWP are working as a closed system, were only a privileged few can access. This lack of participation fuels resentment and increases the likelihood of conflict between the authorities and local people.

The second tenet of PEA is environment conflict which explains the exclusion of local communities to the management of conservation at the IWP. The assumption by Robin (2012) is that the exclusion of the indigenous people from protected areas by state authorities or private firms leads to conflicts. According to the narratives of the participants and desk

review there has been ongoing conflicts between the local communities and the management authority and some clashes between the two groups. Most of the participants are not happy with how the community is excluded from the running of the park. This is also linked to barriers to the flow of benefits. The conflict between the IWPA and community members is mostly ecological based on the precept of conservation. Due to the scarcity of resources the locals will ‘infringe’ into the park in order to access resources like food, herbs and cultural resources, this infringement is seen as illegal and the park authorities will do what they can to ‘protect’ the park which may result in killing of people.

The findings show that there is conflict between the local people and the IWPA, caused by the exclusion. The exclusion of the local people deprives management access to valuable knowledge, expertise and policy inputs that will be beneficial to all the stakeholders involved in the conservation effort. The fencing of the wetland park has had an impact on the livelihoods of the local people in various ways. The local people have limited access to services like provisioning services (food provision, raw material –such as timber and wood, and medicinal resources) and cultural services (spiritual and religious experience and opportunities for recreation).

Applying Robbins’s (2012) third tenet conservation and control of resources and landscapes has been contested with local groups (by class, gender and ethnicity) as a result of the efforts to preserve nature. In the effort to conserve the environment local livelihood and socio-political systems are disturbed. Local livelihood practices and methods that were historically sustainable have been interrupted through the authority’s conservation efforts. In supporting this tenet, the research findings affirm that the history of conversation clearly reflects elements of force used against the local community. The findings support protected area conservation good for protecting biodiversity, most of the respondents concur that the management of the park has helped preserve nature. Furthermore, the local community members have no problem with conversation but want to be involved in conservation and also want to benefit from it.

5.3 Livelihood outcomes of IWP

The first research question of the study sought to assess how the protected area – iSimangaliso Wetland Park affects the livelihoods of the people in Khula village. In the case

of Khula village employment is an important benefit that has potential to positively contribute to the community's livelihoods. Income made from the jobs at the park directly influences the livelihoods of the people employed and their families. However, it is not limited to these households the income is also spent in the community this contributes to the livelihoods of the community although it is difficult to substantiate. To some extent the study gives evidence to support other studies that indicate that protected areas contribute in providing employment to local communities thereby contributing to the enhancement of their livelihoods. However, IWP's natural value is in sharp contrast to its local context of human poverty. Of over 640 000 people living around iSimangaliso, only 15% of the economically active population are formally employed (IWP, 2019). Most respondents have gained employment/source of income directly and indirectly through IWPA (IWP, 2019). However, this has not been sufficient to address poverty in the community. Unemployment is as high as 80% among the youth and comparing the financial reports of 2012 and 2019 there has been a 22% decline in temporary jobs (IWP, 2019).

The narrative of the reports there are strong economic and ecological development however it gives less attention to the social and cultural consideration of the local people. The IWPA is less focused on the needs of the local communities. A detailed analysis of the budget reports of conservation authorities can reveal the levels of commitment to several of the park management activities such as protection, capacity building, tourist's facilities development, research, and community development. The annual reports offer little detail in the financial commitment of community development projects. Thus, there are few specific commitments to community development projects in Khula Village, the way the reports are structured in terms of wording they are financially oriented and this view makes the community a liability not a potential partner. The business view disregards social benefits for it cannot be measured in monetary terms.

According to Gunn (1998) developments vary given the anticipated rewards to the business owners if its profit driven or social driven. He argues that communities living close to conservation areas have potential to work and benefit the conservation activities in that they can offer various services to tourists and the people who work at the reserve. The local communities are deeply knowledgeable when it comes to the area and their knowledge can be a great source of information they can work as guides to tourists. They can also be utilized as labour to do maintenance work for infrastructure like trails, fence repairs, remove invasive species from reserves, security, and road restoration.

There is an indication by the respondents that resources from the park are essential to their livelihoods. The main source of energy in the region is firewood which contributes to 82.2% of energy source (Stats SA, 2011). Not allowing people to collect firewood from the park contributes to people doing so illegally even though it is prohibited. Prohibiting fishing which is major source of food security to the people in Khula village is a threat to their livelihood. Some respondents had the opinion that the local communities should be allowed to utilise some of the resources in the park. It is important to note that the respondents were not against conservation but against exclusion from the resources that the people in the community need to sustain their livelihoods. The people in Khula village are denied access to natural resources and access to protected areas, this denies them access to ancestral grave sites for spiritual and culture purposes. This exclusion has caused there to be an ongoing and historic clash between park officials and the local people.

5.4 Perceptions towards IWPA by community

The research study sought to access the perceptions towards the management of the protected area. Most of the respondents portrayed negative perceptions in their responses, with them indicating that the management of the park has not benefitted them as a community. In my analysis some of the respondents were not against the protected area but were not satisfied with flow of benefits from the protected area to the local communities (Khula village). However, it is not easy to generalize the perceptions based on the responses of participants for in other questions there was some positive feedback. Most of the respondents in other questions asked gave recommendations to improve the management of the park, no respondent said that the fences should be abolished or that the park should be returned to the hands of the local people. This could be an indication that the local people's perception on protected area management is influenced by the flow of benefits that may get to the local communities. The benefits of the park to the community are controlled by IWPA, with most of the respondents expressing dissatisfaction by the management of the park the negative perceptions are towards the authority rather than the concept of protected area. Thus, the problem is not the protected area but how it is being protected. Therefore, in response to the second research question it would appear that respondents had positive perceptions towards the protected area for their hope for better livelihoods lies in the management of the park. The negative perception and attitudes were towards IWPA.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations by the community on how to improve the flow of benefits

For protected areas to be run efficiently there is need for communities to support conservation this is causally linked to the perceptions of the benefits that the local communities will get. To achieve conservation, the local communities must benefit, their livelihoods must be improved. For the communities to be fully support the efforts of iSimangaliso they should be involved in the planning process. For the IWP to be managed sustainably there needs active community involvement from the local communities, well established institutional framework and holistic policy framework that prioritizes the local people. Benefit sharing schemes should be established that are clear and accessible to everyone in the communities, to compensate the local people for restricting them to access resources in that park. Improving the socio-economic status of the people will be beneficial in conservation for they will be able to feed their families. If the people remain poor as the IWP management plan narrates the people will remain a threat to the park.

Active participation in the planning process of conservation will help aid conservation, when the community is involved, it will be easier to deal with poachers and even help expose the wetland officials that are corrupt, who are involved in the illegal trade of wildfire. There is potential for local communities to improve the tourism at the wetland park, the local people have ideas that can change make the area more attractive to tourist.

It is paramount for the local to be educated on the importance of conservation, hence the IWP authorities should carry out seminars, workshops, and educational programmes to ensure that the local communities may be stewards of the wetland park. These will also facilitate to get ideas on how to improve conservation and will help alleviate poverty. The IWP should understand that for the park's survival is dependent on the relationship they have with the local communities, hence without collaboration with the local communities the parks survival will be compromised. The local community may destroy the parks status. The local communities are not fully involved in decision making this is not sustainable. In that lens, the study has found that there is need for change in the decision-making process. The process now is a top to bottom approach, for this approach excludes the view and opinion of the local people. The authorities should consider the bottom to up approach, this will improve decision

making and will make the local people own the decisions made. The locals should not just be involved in the decision making process but also in the management of the park, thus more emphasis has to be put on: (i) how the local communities can sustainably manage the resources that are available for them (ii) how to structure management process to harness the opinions and voices of the local people (iii) developing an equitable benefit sharing mechanism that is clear and simple to understand (iv) initiating projects in the local communities to improve their socio-economic conditions (v) allow the local community to practice social practices in the park without affecting conservation. Focus should be on improving tourism by involving the local communities so that they benefit directly and indirectly.

The protection of the wetland park that has world heritage status transformed the interaction of local people with the park. From the findings and the document review IWPA has complied in place various policies that look at sustainable development, ecotourism, community development and natural resource management. Thus, it adheres to the statutes of the Integrated Development Plans, which are key and strategic tool for planning and implementation. the Integrated Development Plans must foster nature conservation, collaboration between various stakeholders to partner in development and ecotourism that will ensure the conservation of biodiversity while making sure that the local communities are benefitting and developing. However, the study proves that there is little to no collaboration between IWP with the local communities. This results in diverging views in the conservation effort and this compromises the conservation agenda. Because there is no collaboration between the community and the wetland management authority the objectives and principles of the conservation authority will remain a merely a documented vision. This is a serious problem in the running of the wetland authority for there is no state institution that can optimally operate in a geographical location without the support of the local people.

iSimangaliso Wetland Park reports prove that the institution has the conceptual understanding of the principles that ensures sustainable management were the environment will be protected at the same time the local people developing. However, the implementation of the policies is very weak. The relationship of the IWP authorities and local communities is weak for there is absence of a robust and transparent board that can help in the collaboration between the multiple stakeholders in conservation. The board that will facilitate community participation in the areas of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The voices of

the marginalised African people should be considered in policy development. This will make the local communities' joint custodians of the park.

5.5.2 Recommendations for further research

This study concludes that, there is need for more research in the following areas to complement the findings from the impacts of protected areas on the livelihoods of local communities:

- To analyse and evaluate how effectiveness of protected area management in development of local communities.
- To investigate the illegal trade of wildlife by Conservation authorities.
- To analyse and evaluate the revenue sharing in the context of the South African policies.
- Assess the relationship between protected areas management authorities, local government and national government.
- Examine the growth of the tourism sector in relation to the growth of socio-economic status of the local people.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in depth discussion on the findings of the research and has put forward recommendations that were drawn from the study and the local respondents. Findings to the study have suggested that the local communities are excluded from the management of the park, the local community carries a lot of hostility towards IWPA, the community is not benefitting much from the management of the park, poverty is still rampant in Khula Village. The study participants enlightened me about the deep problems that South Africa society still faces, there is still a long way to go to attempt to redress the inequality caused by apartheid.

The study revealed that the local communities do not have a positive perception towards protected area management for they benefit so little as compared to what the IWPA is gaining through tourism. This to change the IWPA should put every effort to benefit local communities and get that the protected area survival is linked to the perception of the local

people, the authority should make effort to create a good environment for sustainable conservation.

When it comes to conservation the local people that were expelled from their ancestral land will seemingly not recover from the trauma caused by the exclusion. Unless drastic measures are taken to make them [the local communities] the centre for conservation efforts. Protected areas are commercial entities, this business-driven view does not benefit the local communities for they are liabilities not as partners. Recommendations for future research work may assist in overcoming the challenges that the local communities living adjacent to protected areas experience have been provided.

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of protected areas on local communities in South Africa using the case of Khula village, which is adjacent to iSimangaliso Wetland Park, KwaZulu-Natal. The political ecological framework was used to as a framework to access the themes identified in the study.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND CONSENT FORM

The questions below used as a guide in probing for information in interviews with informants from Khula Village representatives concerning conservation and community livelihoods.

1. Would you please describe the social and economic status of people in your household and the community?
2. What are the factors influencing the social and economic status of people in your household and the local community?
3. What do you perceive to be the threats to the biodiversity (i.e. wild animals and vegetation) in the protected area?
4. In what ways has the protecting of IWP helped in the effort to protect vegetation and animals?
5. How has the protection of the park affected your household and community's livelihood (way of life)?
6. In what ways has the protection of the IWP benefited your household and the local community?
7. What factors are hindering the flow of benefits to your household and the local community from the protected area?
8. What grievances do you have against the conservation area and how do you suggest these should be addressed?
9. What do you suggest could be done to enhance the benefits to your household and the local community from the protected area?

10. What do you suggest could be done by the IWP authority to maintain a balance of protection of biodiversity (i.e., wild animals and vegetation) and the enhancement of local livelihoods?

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT

Note to researchers: Notwithstanding the need for scientific and legal accuracy, every effort should be made to produce a consent document that is as linguistically clear and simple as possible, without omitting important details as outlined below. Certified translated versions will be required once the original version is approved.

There are specific circumstances where witnessed verbal consent might be acceptable, and circumstances where individual informed consent may be waived by HSSREC.

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Greeting: Hello

My name is Ronald Mpilo Bafana from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Development Studies

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research - that explores the impact of protecting areas to local communities. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore the social and economic impacts of protecting areas to the local community. The study is expected to enroll 12 to 15 households. It will involve the following selecting households (sampling) and conducting an in-depth interview to the household. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be two months. The study is self-funded.

The study involves no risks and you are not obliged to participate, if you do participate there is no remuneration and all that is required from you is your time. The study findings will be shared with you and your name will be kept confidential.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
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4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
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Researcher: Ronald Bafana: rmbafana@gmail.com
Supervisor: Shauna Mottiar: mottiar@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT (Edit as required)

I (Name) have been informed about the study entitled (provide details) by (provide name of researcher/fieldworker).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

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Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

APPENDIX 2- ETHICAL CLEARANCE



21 August 2019

Mr Ronald Mpilo Bafana (218084753)
School Of Built Env & Dev Stud
Howard College

Dear Mr Bafana,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000044/2019

Project title: The socio-economic impacts of protected area management on the local community:

Full Approval – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 04 June 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year from 21 August 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/dd



16 January 2023

Ronald Mpho Bafana (216076132)
School of Built Environment & Development Studies
Howard College Campus

Dear RM Bafana,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000044/2019

Project title: The socio-economic impact of protected area management on the local community: A case study of Khula village, KZN, SA.

Amended title: The impact of protected areas on the livelihoods of local communities. A case study of Khula village, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 21 December 2022 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



Professor Dipane Hlaele (Chair)

/ss

