GUIDELINES for negotiating social research in communities living adjacent to transboundary protected areas: Kruger National Park

TPARI
Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiative

Statement by the Authors

As explained in more detail in the document, these guidelines grew out of several participatory workshops on negotiating research between communities and researchers in the area next to the Kruger National Park, South Africa. While the drafting of the present booklet was the work of the named authors - who take responsibility for inclusions and omissions - it is noted that the ideas reflected in the booklet were arrived at through a joint process between the authors, community members and the wider research, government and NGO communities concerned with conservation and development in South Africa. The authors sincerely thank all the contributors and apologise for any important omissions.

GUIDELINES FOR NEGOTIATING SOCIAL RESEARCH IN COMMUNITIES LIVING ADJACENT TO TRANSBOUNDARY PROTECTED AREAS: KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

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TPARI
Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiative

FORD FOUNDATION

PLAAS
Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
School of Government, UWC

iSS
Institute of Social Studies

IUCN
The World Conservation Union

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Community Forum Areas

KNP Situated in Limpopo and Mpumalanga
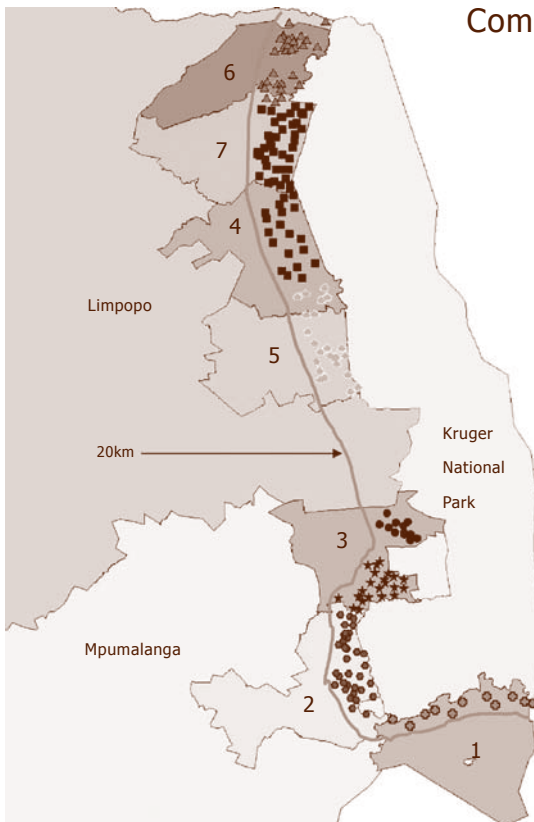
07 Municipalities

1 - Nkomazi
2 - Mbombela   } Enhlanzeni
3 - Bushbuckridge } district municipality
4 - Greater Giyani
5 - BaPhalaborwa
6 - Mutale
7 - Thulamela

30 Tribal Authorities
68 Wards
07 Communities Forums

△ - Makuya = 30 Villages
□ - Hlanganani = 48 Villages
⌂ - Phalaborwa = 24 Villages
○ - Mahlamba Ndlopfu = 12 Villages
☆ - Ntirhiswano = 22 Villages
⬡ - Lubambiswano = 34 Villages
⌂ - Malelane = 17 Villages

Many other people from Seville B and Makuleke communities participated in questionnaire surveys and interviews that provided background insights for the engagement process.

A number of scholars participated in the engagement process. These include: Clapperton Mavhunga (University of Michigan USA), Stuart Marks (anthropologist and independent scholar USA), Kereng Kotleng (Wits), Themba Linden (Wits), Tara Polzer (Wits Rural Facility), Kozette Myburgh (Univ. of Stellenbosch), Barbara Bugosh (Carnegie Mellon Univ.), Rael Loon (Wits Rural Facility), Stuart Miller (TPARI), Daniel Marnewick (TPARI), Deon Wilson & Mmapula Thlagale (Univ. of Pretoria), Ms M. Jiri & Ms S. Ndegwa (Univ. of Venda - UNIVEN); Abel Rangwako & Mr A.V. Ganyane (community members in UNIVEN-CRD Community Engagement Programme, Thulamela District); Helen Mmethi (H.O.D. Conservation and People Section, KNP); Louise Swemmer (Social, Economic and Tourism Research, KNP), Anna Spenceley (Independent Sustainable Tourism practitioner), Robert Fincham (CEAD, UKZN), Jane Carruthers (UNISA), Cecil Cook (Technoshare Associates & Univ. of Johannesburg), Ms Catherine Matthews (Univ. of South Australia), Brian Mubiwa, Sola Ololade & Charles Ntui (Univ. of Johannesburg), Harold Annegarn (Univ. of Johannesburg & TPARI), Renfrew Christie (Dean of Research, Univ. of the Western Cape – UWC), Maano Ramutsindela (Univ. of Cape Town – UCT), Frank Matose (PLAAS-UWC), Mafa Hara (PLAAS-UWC), Kees van Waal (Univ. of Stellenbosch), David Hughes (Rutgers University USA).

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Above: Plenary session at Main Post Indaba Workshop, November 2005

Above: Makuleke post-Indaba workshop, October 2005

GUIDELINES FOR NEGOTIATING SOCIAL RESEARCH

SUMMARY and INTRODUCTION

The objective with these Guidelines is to assist local people and social researchers to negotiate equitable research agreements. This document lays out the purpose of the guidelines, provides some background information about the process that led to this document, and provides some general principles and practical guidelines for social research in local communities.

The Guidelines have their origins in a long process of consultation, discussion and exchange between social researchers and local people, which took place in South Africa over a period of three years (2005-2008). It draws on the substantial experience of people living adjacent to the Kruger National Park with research and researchers; also on the collective experience of the informal network of researchers that participated in the development of the guidelines.

Local people have experienced research in positive and negative ways. Some communities in the area adjacent to the Kruger National Park can justifiably feel over-exposed to researchers, while others feel that opportunities and insights potentially generated by research passes them by. Yet even these often feel that some guidelines are required to avoid duplication and negative engagement.

Important is to mention that the engagement between social researchers and communities is not a matter of these two groups alone. Many facilitating, structurating stakeholders such as NGOs, parastatals conservation organisations and government organisations, are important influencing players in this engagement. Therefore, while the guidelines focus specifically on researcher-community interactions, these other players should not be forgotten and should themselves be aware of their effects in these interactions.

The guidelines outline opportunities and constraints that arise when local people and social researchers engage one another. The guidelines are not prescriptive, but raise issues and suggest ways in which these can be dealt with.

PURPOSE

The Purpose of these Guidelines is to help social researchers and local people to develop workable and ethical agreements for social research. The Guidelines aim at making explicit two broad sets of issues that tend to arise in research situations:

- Practical everyday issues;
- More abstract, often contradictory, issues and principles.

These are then addressed by way of recommended practical field operating procedures.

A deliberate effort was made to steer away from a prescriptive checklist approach, or to place reliance on actors such as the state or parastatal organisations to 'police' research. The key operating principle involved is that of negotiation and achieving an appropriate balance of interests between the parties. How can possible harm be minimised and research be made as useful as possible to local people? How can it be made simultaneously possible for researchers to act as agents of progressive change, remain committed to the generation of knowledge and the pursuit of the truth, and generate academically interesting results?

The Guidelines were compiled in the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Like every output of a negotiated process, the constitution contains contradictions and tensions between constituent elements. Accordingly the individual rights entrenched in the constitution generally cannot be regarded as absolute and have to be negotiated with different possible outcomes depending on the context.

It is in the same spirit that these guidelines touch upon some of the contradictions and tensions inherent to social research. Researchers and community members, in their mutual engagement, will encounter the tensions between their perspectives, objectives, and customary and 'modern' laws and rights. They will surely come across the paradoxes that reside in the 'fault line' between 'traditional' social science research and the many ways in which local people build up their knowledge systems.

The purpose of this document, therefore, is not to show how one might circumvent, 'resolve' or avoid these tensions. Instead it is to highlight them and to provide researchers and local people with a framework of reference that they can use to develop mutually accepted solutions in a spirit of mutual respect.

BACKGROUND

Research in South Africa

During the Apartheid era social research was used by the state to justify and implement its homeland and separate development policies. Simultaneously there were many critical and dissenting voices in academia, people who often had to conduct research under difficult conditions and with some researchers paying the ultimate price for pursuing the truth as they saw it. Collectively the critical thinkers made a substantial contribution to rethinking South Africa and many continue to do so.

These experiences have left an indelible imprint on social research in South Africa. Today social researchers in the country tend to retain a strong commitment towards active engagement of those that they research and a general desire to have an ameliorative impact on their lives. They also retain a strong commitment towards pursuit of the truth and telling things as they see them. Reliance is thus placed not on 'absolute truths', but on ongoing exchange and the negotiation of meaning.

South African history has shown that the undermining of academic freedom, as with journalistic freedom, brings with it a host of consequences, most of which are harmful to the functioning of an open, democratic society. An important principle underpinning these guidelines, therefore, is that critical thinking has to be valued and supported for the greater good of our young democracy.

Simultaneously it should be evident that those exercising academic freedom will inevitably come across the faultlines of South African society, touching on sensitive and controversial issues. Keeping in mind the structurally entrenched imbalances of power in South African society, researchers have to respect community-level decision making structures and processes; so too tradition and customary law. This is a prerequisite for working in rural communities, yet simultaneously this cannot be done uncritically. This is a tension reflected also in the South African constitution where academic freedom and individual human rights co-exist with traditional and customary law.

Research on conservation in South Africa

Another strand of thought that influences social research in South Africa relates to the international discourse around the social and human dimensions of conservation and protected area management. Accordingly the overarching theme at the World Parks Congress (WPC) held in Durban (September 2003) was "Benefits Beyond Boundaries."

A major outcome from the WPC was on "The importance of engaging with the broad array of people who reside near and around protected areas...".

Alongside this recommendation, research on the social dimensions of protected areas has surged over the last decade. In particular, the South African lowveld adjacent to the Kruger National Park has become a destination for large numbers of foreign and domestic researchers. In addition, with the implementation of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, research efforts on the Mozambican side have also grown. Some social researchers tend to study processes within local communities and the interplay between conservation authorities and other policy level actors. Others focus on the role of the private sector and tourism in conservation and local development.

Researchers are well-placed to identify shortfalls and pitfalls in conservation and development practice and to influence the way conservation practitioners, the private sector and local people think about what they do. They have the capacity to act as brokers between local people and conservation, helping communities to redefine their role in conservation while helping conservation practitioners to contextualise their efforts appropriately. Researchers can also contribute towards empowerment of local people through access to (documented, formal) information about themselves and their social and natural environment. In these ways, researchers aim to contribute toward sustainable, equitable and socially just conservation policies and practices.

Above: Seminar at the University of Johannesburg, May 2007, Professor Harold Annegarn addressing international post-graduate students

Yet, despite these possibilities, practice has shown that researchers can also become a nuisance to local people. Many communities particularly along the western border of the Kruger Park (KNP) have become 'over-researched'. Many individual community members have complained about the behaviour of some researchers in the field, the tendency towards 'extractive' research, the lack of local participation in or control over the research process as well as the lack of feedback from the research being conducted. The emergence of such tensions around research practice motivated TPARI to approach the matter in a systematic, collaborative manner involving all the main parties.

Background to the Indaba that spurred the guidelines

In May 2005 TPARI and the IUCN South Africa organized an international conference in the Skukuza Restcamp in the Kruger National Park. The conference was supported by Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, USA), the University of Johannesburg (South Africa), the Ford Foundation, the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and South African National Parks. The conference brought together community members, international and local researchers and conservation practitioners. The objective was to explore three main themes:

1. How might local people achieve greater participation in and ownership of the processes and outputs of social research?

2. What are the responsibilities of social researchers who collect and interpret social information? Was there a best practice of relevance to South African conditions?

3. What are the potential benefits of collaborative approaches between social researchers, local people and conservation officials?

To facilitate dialogue between social researchers and local people, the Indaba Project Implementation Team (PIT) initiated a process of discussions in the form of a series of meetings building up to the Indaba. These consultations continued after – particularly taking account of what came out of – the Indaba. [1]

Prior to the Indaba, a group of researchers and resource persons from within and outside the Southern African region got together to craft ways and means of establishing 'talking points'. They drew up lists of questions which the PIT and researchers based in South Africa took to the communities to seek individual views on social research. These research teams went into two of the communities along the western KNP boundary namely, Makuleke and Seville B. The former has been subject to intensive research since 1995, when the community lodged a land claim against the KNP and the erstwhile

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1. A detailed report on the engagement process is available in Conservation and Society journal, Special Edition on 'The Politics of Engagement between Biodiversity Conservation and the Social Sciences', Volume 5 Number 1, 2007. [Internet: http://www.conservationandsociety.org/vol-5-1-07.html].

National Parks Board (now the South African National Parks Board – SANParks). Research in Makuleke was linked to an on-going livelihoods research and a ten-year longitudinal study by one PIT researcher.

Key outputs of this pre-Indaba stage were the clarification of issues and their contexts, a consensus that many of the issues emerging from community research were shared by rural communities along the park boundary, and identification of additional issues affecting communities along the southern park boundary. Outputs of the community research process formed the basis for engagement between local communities and social researchers at the Indaba. Some of the main issues that came out of the pre-indaba exercise were the following:

1. Social researchers gave little feedback or benefits to local people;

2. The expressed need for more research in various communities, in spite of several being 'over-researched';

3. There was a need for mechanisms to reduce research fatigue within communities, particularly the Makuleke.

One potentially useful tool for facilitating feedback to local people, and dialogue between them and researchers was already identified at this stage, namely a community web-portal. This was seen as an important way to disseminate information within local communities and to researchers located elsewhere in the world. Such a website would also help to reduce the research fatigue resulting from the large number of researchers visiting communities and repeatedly asking the same questions.


Above: Break-away session during Makuleke Workshop, October 2005.

GUIDELINES FOR NEGOTIATING SOCIAL RESEARCH

The indaba and the process after

The Indaba involved community representatives and a range of researchers based in South Africa, the southern African region, Europe and North America, and beyond. All discussions were conducted in the English language. This enabled a greater number of researchers to engage with community representatives, though fewer community representatives felt comfortable enough to express themselves in English to the large gathering. The result was the emergence of a 'representation of representatives' by the few community participants confident enough to address the audience in English. Community representatives also felt that the importance of the issues discussed at the Indaba required the involvement of all the communities along the KNP boundary, rather than just a few. This led to a resolution that further engagement should take place after the Indaba.

The post-Indaba phase consequently involved a wider range of community representatives from all the forums (community groupings) along the western margins of the Kruger Park. Two workshops were conducted at the local level. The first was held with representatives of Makuleke community based organizations (CBOs). The approach adopted by the research team was to foreground voices of local people by giving them space to express themselves in their preferred language. The second workshop involved representatives of six of the seven forums bordering the KNP. Due to the greater diversity of indigenous languages, proceedings were conducted in English but with a fair amount of translation into indigenous languages as and when required. A critical question was whether 'community participation by representation' was the most effective means of taking the discussion forward. The literacy level in communities bordering the KNP is low and while representation of communities by the more formally educated members makes communication between ethnic groups and with outsiders easier, it creates the risk of the local elite putting their own or factional interests ahead of those of the general community. Referring to this danger does not dismiss the fact that the educated often play visionary and accountable roles in these communities.

A key output of the workshop was consensus to co-author with researchers a journal publication and a position paper on Guidelines for Equitable Best Practice and Community Empowerment. The latter would be the basis for further engagement with various stakeholders, including academic and applied research institutions, ethics committees and funding organisations. Another output of the workshop was a resolution that forum representatives should further engage directly with researchers in an international TPARI teleseminar. This seminar was held on 28 June 2006, and included representatives of all the forums along the western margins of the KNP, representing approximately one hundred and eighty (180) rural villages. Finally, two more seminars to prepare for these guidelines with researchers were held in July and August 2008 in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The following is a reflection of all of the above-mentioned activities.
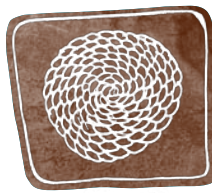
PRINCIPLES

The Guidelines are framed by a set of principles relating to the rights and responsibilities of the different parties; and the process of engagement and the core values of respect, reciprocity, equality and mutual benefit.

The principles emphasise the notion that the Guidelines are not simply a set of rigid and inflexible 'rules of engagement'. Instead they rely on respect for the South African constitution and the South African experience of flexibility and negotiation. The guidelines accordingly encourage researchers and local people to try to understand one another's positions, constraints and fears, and the opportunities that may arise from agreement and collaboration.

1. Principle of respect
The engagement between communities and researchers should be based on mutual respect; respect for the other person, the background, culture and life choices of that person and the wider community and/or organisation(s) of which that person is part.

2. Principle of historical awareness
The northeastern part of South Africa looks back on centuries of dramatic and dynamic historical events, some of them positive, many negative. These need to be given due recognition, especially with respect to the historically disadvantaged social, political and economic positions of many communities.

3. Principle of reciprocity, mutual benefit and equitable sharing
Both parties in the research engagement process should benefit from the interaction and the tangible and intangible outcomes of research processes. Yet, due to the historically disadvantaged position of many local people, this principle warrants that extra attention be given to ensure that communities benefit from research.

4. Principle of process
The engagements between the researchers and communities should be based on a fair and equitable process of negotiation that foregrounds the principle of flexibility rather than rigidity.

5. Principle of full disclosure
Communities are entitled to be fully informed about the nature, scope and ultimate purpose of the proposed research. The research must be explained in such a way that it is understandable by community members.

6. Principle of differential needs and objectives

Different people have different needs and researchers' needs and objectives are different than those of communities and community members. In the process of negotiation between researchers and communities these differential needs and objectives need to be fully disclosed and openly discussed with an aim at accommodating the other.

7. Principle of communication and due acknowledgement

Local communities are full partners in the research process. They should therefore be kept up to date about research plans, progress and outcomes. They have the right to receive the published outcomes of research and for these outcomes to be presented to them in a way that is appropriate and understandable. They also have the right to be duly and appropriately acknowledged for their shared knowledge and cooperation. In some situations this could even lead to co-authorship by community members.

8. Principle of acknowledgement of different types of knowledge

The use of multiple knowledge systems should be encouraged, where different types of knowledge, formal (e.g. scientific knowledge) and informal (e.g. local or traditional or indigenous knowledge), are recognised for their strengths and weaknesses, and granted equal status.

Above: TPARI Team Member, Barbara Tapela, in a discussion with disgruntled Makuleke farmers, who were not part of the community workshop of October 2005.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

These practical guidelines are structured in four sections, to address the key target groups of this document: the researcher, the member of the local community, the institution behind the researcher and a general set of guidelines detailing some of the thorny issues and contradictions that almost always play a role in researcher – community interaction.

GUIDELINES FOR THE RESEARCHER

Preparation and community entry

SEEK ADVICE: the researcher should speak to local experts before starting fieldwork. Find out about local greetings, customs (including appropriate clothing), and leadership/governance institutions in the study area (including hierarchies, politics among institutions, and protocol). Moreover, find out whether there are local structures in place for research. What permission should be obtained for your research and are there any specific guidelines for research in particular communities? Remember that you are probably not the first researcher to do research on a particular topic and good preparation is therefore required in order to avoid duplication and irritation.

COMMUNITY ENTRY: The researcher must meet with the relevant local institutions to request permission to do the research locally. The researcher should introduce themselves, their institution, express their intention to do research in the area, and describe the purpose and the methods of the intended research project using understandable terms. The researcher should ideally also provide the name and contact details of his/her supervisor, especially when the researcher is busy with a junior degree.

LOGISTICS: Logistical details should be negotiated. These include: timing of the project, research methods used (culturally appropriate), employing local assistants, protocol for reporting to local authorities during the research, community exit, and feedback after the research is completed.

Benefits: Discuss community expectations of benefit. Get the leadership to explicitly state their perception of how the project will or should benefit them, and use this as a starting point for negotiating realistic benefits within the broader context of the purpose and process of scientific research, and the mandate and responsibilities of academic institutions. Take care not to generate unrealistic expectations about potential benefits from the research. Be certain to look specifically at qualitative benefits (e.g. access to networks, skill enhancement, etc.), as this is where local people can often benefit substantially from research. Ideally researchers should not pay for the right to conduct research in any particular area. Some communities may, however, demand upfront payment of a once-off research fee.

HONESTY: Be honest at all times. If there is no direct qualitative or other benefit for the community from the research, then say so. This is far less damaging to the community or the research than creating unrealistic expectations.

PROMISES: Do not make any promises or give any undertaking unless you are <u>absolutely sure</u> you will be able to honour them: always "under-promise and over-deliver". Be aware that vague expression of intention is often interpreted as a promise.

EXPECTATIONS: The researcher and local leadership should discuss their expectations of each other. Community expectations may relate to benefits, which will need to be negotiated, but they may also include issues such as conduct of the researcher while in the community, communication between the researcher and the leadership, research outcome feedback processes and adherence by the researcher to local protocol. The researcher's expectations that need to be discussed might include support and assistance from the leadership and cooperation from the community. These may also need to be negotiated

Fieldwork

RESPECT: Be courteous and respectful at all times (e.g. use local greetings, adhere to basic cultural norms, ask for permission before taking photographs, and avoid passing judgment on the local culture.). Be quick to apologise if you unintentionally offend somebody.

Field Assistance: Wherever possible, employ local unemployed people as field assistants. Get guidance from local researchers, community structures and local school headmasters regarding possible candidates and recruit them in a fair manner, aiming to have a mix of men and women. The final choice of research assistant should, however, ideally be your own. It is wise to have a simple contract between the researcher and the assistant, setting out rights and responsibilities of both parties. Interviewing a number of possible candidates as well as having a trial period is often advisable.

CAPACITY BUILDING: The researcher should try to impart useful skills to field assistants, such as by training them in the use of a GPS or a computer. The researcher can also invite the assistants to join him/her in attending meetings or doing other fieldwork, for interest and to give them exposure and new experiences.

REMUNERATION: Pay field assistants according to legal, fair and locally appropriate rates. This may need to be negotiated. It is unwise to pay respondents for information and, as a practice, could even lead to the invalidation of research results. In some cases, you may wish to compensate people for their time or effort (e.g. very long interviews, or attending long focus groups) in which case you could provide refreshments or give them

a small gift of thanks. If respondents have incurred a financial cost to participate in the study (e.g. taxi fare), reimburse them for these expenses. Always agree on expenses to be incurred ahead of the time. Take care to conduct reimbursement of any expenses in a consistent, transparent manner as this issue can easily give rise to disputes.

STAYING OVER: If you plan to live with a household for a protracted amount of time, negotiate a rent or a share the costs of groceries. Keep in mind that lodging in the local community as opposed to finding accommodation at a nearby hotel, could constitute a concrete form of benefit to individuals in the community. Be aware of the fact that jealousy could come into being as an unintended consequence.

Community exit and feedback

NOTIFY THE COMMUNITY: The relevant local leadership structure should be notified when the researcher has completed their fieldwork. This should include a short description of how the fieldwork went, any preliminary insights, expression of thanks, and discussion of the way forward. The next steps in the research process and the time that it will take before results are ready for feedback must be made clear.

Above: Participants included women representatives of Makuleke CBOs.

FEEDBACK: Community feedback of research findings and process must be regarded as part of the research process, not a voluntary add-on. The mode of feedback needs to be negotiated between the researcher and the leadership structures. Consideration should also be given to the expressed desire on the part of any general community members for feedback. General options include a verbal presentation versus a written report (or both); a leaders meeting versus focus groups or an open community meeting. A technical research report or thesis is seldom useful, and the researcher should produce a condensed summary of the research that is comprehensive, but simple and easy to understand. It should include recommendations to the community where appropriate. The value of using university or private websites as a means to provide feedback to the researched community should not be underestimated. However, the limited access to the internet by most communities neighbouring conservation areas could pose a limitation to the effectiveness of this method.

Research feedback is a bi-directional process, and the researcher should request reflection and comment on their data and interpretation of findings, as well as on the research process.

Possible interventions based on the research findings could be identified, where relevant. However, the involvement of the researcher in such interventions needs to be made explicit and the relevant role-players (e.g. community leadership, conservation agencies and the government) need to be identified. w

If a student is not able to give feedback on their research project (e.g. they get a job and move away), feedback becomes the responsibility of the supervisor.

GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMUNITY

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: You have the right to know what a researcher wants to do, how the researcher aims to do the research and what is expected to come out of the research. You have the right to know the expected role of people in your community in the proposed research. You also have the right to agree or to not agree to participate.

You have the right to ask for more clarity from a researcher, or to get a third person involved to help you understand the research aims and outcomes.

You are entitled to go beyond the researcher and get directly in touch with a researcher's supervisor or institution to better understand the constraints on the researcher, but also to let the supervisor or institution know if anything is inappropriate, unclear, etc. The researcher should cooperate with you if you so wish to contact his/her supervisors/institution.

PAYMENTS: If you are officially assisting the researcher as a research assistant, you are entitled to be paid for your time. The exact amount should be negotiated with the researcher before you start work. However, be aware of the fact that most researchers, particularly from South African institutions, operate on a small budget. They may also be constrained by their institutions as to what fees may be paid to research assistants. In the end, however, payments should always be fair.

OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH: You should always know how to obtain feedback about the research. This could take place in different forms which are generally discussed with the leadership of the community or leading institutions in the community. These could include oral or written feedback. Oral feedback could take place with the leadership, larger groups or general community meetings. The printing and binding of entire academic reports (theses) is expensive and only one or two copies may be made available on a community level. You may nonetheless request that several copies of a summary report of the research be made available in printed form. Once you have been given feedback about the research and the researcher's analysis and conclusions, you may respond to these and discuss your views with the researcher. Should you have any

Above: Farm workers whose views on social research were elicited.

serious concerns you may discuss your perspectives with the researcher's supervisor or institution. Universities are likely to respond where ethical issues are involved. However, they are unlikely to do so where issues of interpretation are concerned and the final outcome of the research will ultimately depend on the researcher. Nonetheless, you have the 'right to reply' to any academic work or article.

REPOSITORY: It helps to have a central repository within the community where research reports are collected and kept for all community members to access and learn from. This can also help in negotiating with new researchers coming to your community. If researchers have access to research already conducted in your area, then they will generate research that may be more useful to you.

RESPONSIBILITIES: Obviously, with rights also come responsibilities. If you negotiate an arrangement with a researcher, you should keep to your side of the bargain. Especially important are issues of good and open communication, honesty, fulfilling promises or undertakings given to the researcher, etc.

GUIDELINES IN GENERAL

The following are issues that will (probably) come up during the negotiation between the communities and the researcher during the research process. They are issues that are contested and harbour contradictions and thus have to be dealt with by the partners in the research process.

LEGITIMACY: The researcher should engage with the relevant local leadership structures before starting research. However, the legitimacy of structures presenting themselves as "the leadership" or representing "the community" is often contested. The researcher can get caught between two or more competing institutions, networks, factions or groups. By the same token, the legitimacy of the researcher also has to be assumed by the community. Few communities are research-smart enough to demand to see the researcher's status with their institution.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM: Local ownership of research implies that local communities drive the research agenda. Local ownership of research can be of value in dealing with issues of local concern and to generate ideas about how to resolve problems faced by the community. Communities have the right to ask researchers whether their research could also address some issues of practical concern to them. Local people also have the right to ask researchers not to conduct research on topics that they find offensive.

However, there are limits to the notion of community ownership of research and not all types of research can be conducted in this manner. Local ownership is not a prerequisite for benefit from research. Nor can all research necessarily be directed towards solving practical problems and issues faced by the community.

Researchers also have their own ideas and interests and may want to pursue these, as opposed to something of interest to the general community or the community leadership. Researchers generally place much value on the notion of academic freedom. Namely, that academics should have freedom to conduct critical research of their choice without censorship by any party.

Along the same lines the international scientific community places much emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and the progress of science to the benefit of all humankind. This is supported by the South African Constitution which states that everybody has the freedom to do academic research in pretty much the same way as journalists have the right to report the 'truth' as they see it.

Just like the notion of community ownership, the notion of academic freedom is not absolute. Knowledge can be 'owned' through property rights. Just because a researcher has written down the knowledge of others should not automatically mean the property rights belong to the researcher.

Left: Members of TPARI Team, Conrad Steenkamp and Lamson Maluleke facilitating a session. Right: Post-indaba workshop

Can local ownership of knowledge and academic freedom go hand in hand? If so, how? There are no easy answers to this and local people and researchers have to develop agreements which reflect their specific needs in each instance.

NEPOTISM: The researcher should employ local assistants. However, if these are allocated by the leadership or by outside (conservation) agencies, this creates opportunities for nepotism and jealousy. For this reason, it is better to request or facilitate a process involving more people, such as a traditional council or community development forum, in identifying possible candidates.

BENEFITS: Benefits is an arena where the greatest asymmetry of power lies. The anticipated benefit to the researcher (publication, a degree) is almost a given, and is not in the hands of the community. However, benefits to the community (or lack there of) are almost entirely in the hands of the researcher, except in the most empowered communities. Having said that, unrealistic community expectations regarding benefits, often based on a lack of understanding of scientific research, is a common feature of community-research relations. Therefore, the importance of clarifying and agreeing on these benefits up front is essential to dispel any misconceptions or false expectations of benefits from either side. Then again, we need to think about things taken for granted by researcher, which constitute unrealistic expectations of benefit that need to be challenged.

CONTRADICTIONS IN INTERPRETATION OF DATA: Communities should have a chance to reflect and comment on the research findings. However, what if community members and the researcher disagree on the interpretation or representation of the results, especially if community members feel that it presents a picture of their society which they do not like? How is balance achieved between constitutional rights such as freedom of speech on the one hand, and human dignity on the other?

GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONS

Of course, researchers and local communities are not the only ones involved in the academic research process dealing with social issues around protected areas and conservation of natural resources. It is crucial to also acknowledge the role of funding and academic institutions that often post constraints and demands on researchers. The following are some general guidelines directed to research enabling institutions to facilitate a more equal and equitable relationship between researchers and local communities.

ADEQUATE TIME AND FUNDING: Arguably the most important issues is to give students/ researchers adequate time and funding to be able to adhere to the (first) steps in these guidelines, especially related to preparation and entry into the community. Also, taking the view that community feedback is an important component of ethical social research means that adequate provision needs to be made available for this in the funding and time schedule. Funders may even want to stipulate community feedback as a prerequisite for a successful funding proposal.

ASSIST IN PREPARATION: Research and funding institutions are vital to ensure that students are well prepared to go to the 'field' with realistic expectations and the tools to respectfully interact with potential 'research subjects'. It is especially the task of the supervisor to ensure that students have a realistic idea about local communities in South Africa, their historic disadvantages and their current socio-political and economic situation.

BE APPROACHABLE: Make sure that the student / researcher carries a letter from the institution he/she is attached to stating the aims of the research, its expected outcomes and contribution to the community, as well as an address where the supervisor can be contacted in case community members wish to clarify issues around the research.

Above: Barbara Tapela in focus group discussion with ordinary male members of the Makuleke community.

CONCLUSION

Communities realize that research can be beneficial to them. Researchers agree that it is not possible to do research without the local people. The best practice is one that achieves the community's expectations of research and the researcher's expectations about his/her own research. Researchers need to be aware that any research that does not benefit the community is often regarded as a violation of the community's right over their own knowledge and space. Therefore, they must balance their quest for "academic freedom" with a sense of respect for people's ways of living not bound by academic rules and regulations. In turn, communities need to be aware that such demands for benefits and control over research may upset the rules, regulations, and methods that the researcher's institution insists on. Such institutions may turn out to possess the benefits that communities demand from the researcher, while the very same "controls" that communities insist on and that the researcher finds to upset his/her academic freedom are actually the same ones that create and maintain the knowledge the researcher is coming to collect in the first place. For these reasons, it is important for the researcher and the community to realize that they are resources to one another and ensure that together, they keep channels of communication and negotiation open throughout the research process.

Above: Post Engagement Process. What have we learnt?

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"Deku's Tree" in Old Makuleke: A reminder of local communities' heritage within Transboundary Protected Areas.

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