

STAPLEDON MEMORIAL TRUST TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

FELLOWSHIP REPORT

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Purpose of fellowship

Overall objective: To investigate socio-ecological constraints to the effective functioning of common property regimes for managing the grazing of livestock on natural rangeland, in communal areas of central Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

From a theoretical perspective the work aimed to build on the findings of my own PhD research and the work of Dr Andrew Ainslie, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This research is grounded in much of the current debate surrounding the effective reform of institutions associated with land allocation and management in communal areas of the country. Previous work has identified a situation of often weak and diffuse institutional control over the management of grazing resources, with a resultant 'free-for-all scenario' categorising resource use in most areas of the former homeland of Ciskei (Ainslie, 1999; Bennett and Barrett, 2007). Importantly, however, the situation is far from homogeneous. Some communities have managed to retain strong institutional control over the management of grazing on natural rangeland, with well-defined user groups, clear resource boundaries and an effective set of rules for grazing management; all features of recognised common property regimes. A vital aspect of this proposed research was therefore to try and identify the key social and ecological

factors, which are driving the differences in institutional control over rangeland grazing between areas.

Duration of fellowship: 26th June 2007 – 31st July 2007.

Outline of work undertaken and key findings

The fellowship was taken up at the end of June 2007 and lasted until the end of July 2007. Between 27th June and 20th July 2007, I was based in Grahamstown in central Eastern Cape Province, collaborating with Dr Andrew Ainslie at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). Grahamstown was used as a base to gain access to three research sites, in which fieldwork had already been initiated by the ARC the previous year as part of an ongoing research project on forage provision for livestock. The three villages selected were Roxeni, Lushington and Allanwater (see Figure 1). These were well-suited to the research as they showed interesting contrasts from an historical, socio-political and ecological perspective.

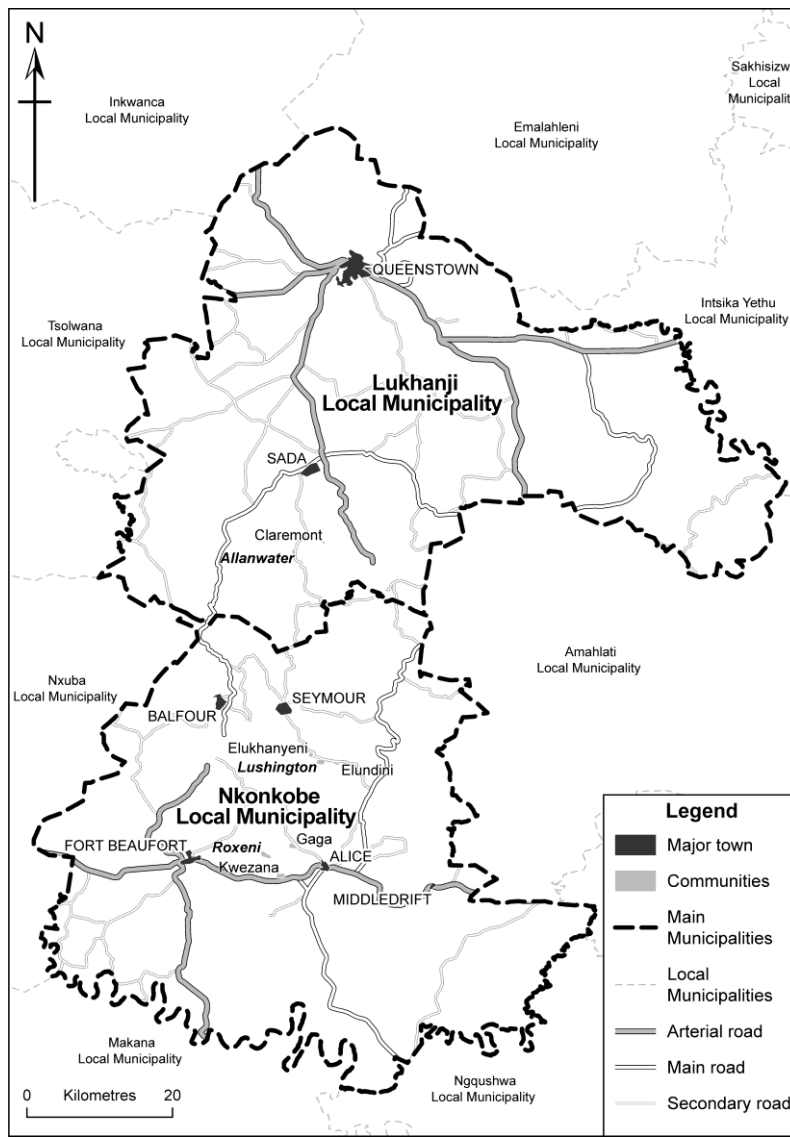


Figure 1: Location of study sites within central Eastern Cape Province.

Several days of intensive fieldwork were undertaken at each village and involved a combination of RRA and traditional interview approaches, to facilitate triangulation. This began at each village with an overview of the different resources available through a participatory mapping exercise (see Figure 2), which involved as many of villagers as possible and was complemented by the construction of a timeline of important events in village development (Mikkelsen 1995). Subsequently, an informal semi-structured group interview was undertaken with about 10-15 individuals at each village to provide greater detail about rangeland access and grazing management (Mikkelsen 1995, Robson 2002). The individuals involved were generally key livestock owners, mainly older males. Interviewees were purposively selected from the group work, to provide greater depth based on their personal experience and different perceptions of changes in resource use. Finally, walks were undertaken around each settlement with purposively selected key informants, to help corroborate the information from the previous work and facilitate elimination of inconsistencies (Mikkelsen 1995).

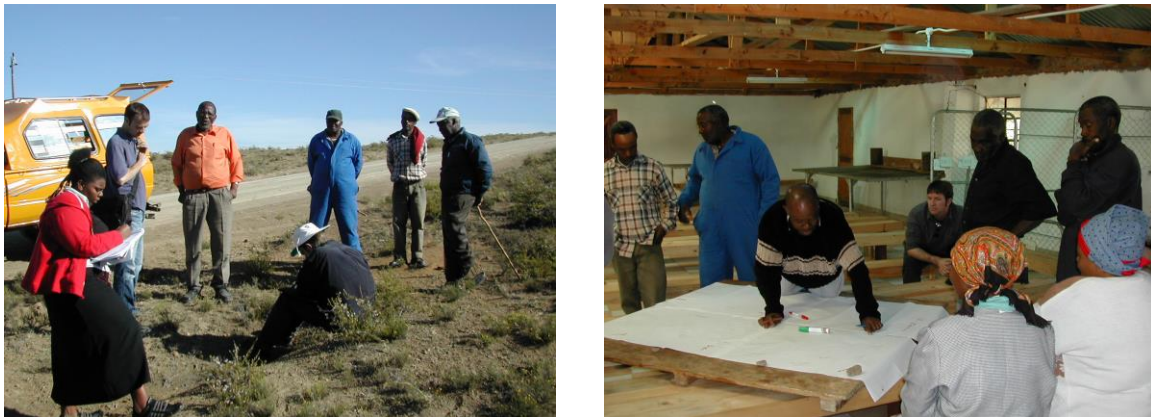


Figure 2: Key informant interview and mapping work at Roxeni village.

It was clear from the research findings that the existence of common property regimes for the management of local grazing resources varied considerably between the three case study villages.

Roxeni, as a typical village planned by the colonial authorities in the 1860s, demonstrated considerable transition in the way its rangeland resources had been managed in response to changing political agendas. Initially, a traditional form of communal management existed involving rotational resting of grazing resources and the enforcement of grazing rights under the independent jurisdiction of the community. Despite rangeland boundaries being imposed by colonial authorities a basic common property regime could be perpetuated, as the community was relatively small and the grazing resource relatively large. The arrival of betterment planning at the village in the mid 1960s, however, effectively transformed the situation to one of 'minimum common property'. With the reduction in available grazing and the centralised imposition of decisions concerning resource management, the only aspect of communal management remaining was the defined user group and its ability to enforce grazing rights within its newly fenced boundaries. Moreover, the decreased size of the grazing resource, coupled with continuing natural growth of the community increased pressure on rangeland resources and the management system. This vestigial form of common property regime continued under various guises until the destruction of the fences during the political and institutional vacuum that pervaded the region in the early 1990s. In the current post-fencing environment, the ability to enforce resource boundaries has also gone as livestock from outside the community now encroach on its grazing resources. Thus, despite the existence of a well-defined user group at the village when the research was undertaken, the situation was default 'open-access' with livestock free-ranging over the entirety of the local rangeland under no form of institutional control.

Lushington and Allanwater, as settlements on former commercial farms released to the Ciskei during the 1980s, offered an interesting contrast to Roxeni in their relatively recent engagement with land management. Since the foundation of Lushington, the community appeared not to have engaged with any form of rangeland management. Rather, the initial fencing was allowed to degenerate while grazing was undertaken on an entirely free range basis, possibly involving animals from neighbouring villages. One of the key limitations to the maintenance of a recognisable common property regime at the village was the lack of a defined institution charged with grazing management. This inability to co-operate on a communal basis in the management of grazing resources seemed to stem directly from inherent social and political divisions within the community, many of which were a legacy of apartheid planning.

In marked contrast, Allanwater had perpetuated some form of recognisable common property regime since it was first established. Even during the 1980s, when the area was administered by the Ciskei government, grazing management seemed to have been under the jurisdiction of the community. A system of

rotational resting and grazing involving fenced camps appeared to be in operation at the village. An important aspect of this was the strong definition of the user group and clear delineation of resource boundaries through the use of fencing. Thus, rangeland management at Allanwater, could be aligned with the key tenets of accepted common property theory in view of the fact that both the resource and user group were well defined and that a set of enforceable rules were in place for grazing management.

Thus, the research demonstrated that varying degrees of common property control over rangeland grazing are in place in communal areas of central Eastern Cape Province ranging from the complete open access scenario, through 'minimum' common property, to isolated cases involving maintenance of a genuine common property regime, where appropriate historical and socio-economic conditions prevail.

Importantly, the findings suggested that there are two major determinants of grazing management systems in the region. The first is the degree of pressure on local grazing resources, which is heavily influenced by factors such as the size of the grazing resource, its natural ecology, the number of livestock owners and size of the local population. The other, of critical importance, is the degree of development of local institutions for natural resource management, which is determined by such factors as local politics and ethnicity and social stratification. These two sets of factors interact. However, only with a (rare) combination of both low grazing pressure *and* strong institutional structures does it seem possible for a genuine common property regime for rangeland management to exist in the region. The other (more widespread) combinations, involving weak institutions and/or high grazing pressure result in grazing being undertaken on an effectively open access basis.

In addition to the empirical fieldwork component of the fellowship, a visit to the University of Zululand was undertaken between 20th and 26th July 2007. This involved the delivery of a seminar in the Faculty of Agriculture and several meetings with the HOD, Professor Peter Scogings, to flesh avenues of collaborative research and potential funding (see below).

Experience gained and plans for follow-up work

Since the completion of the fellowship, I have written up the research findings as a paper and submitted this to Land Use Policy. I am also engaged in a funding application to the Nuffield Foundation, under the auspices of the ARC, to expand the research to additional sites in the region, during 2008. Furthermore, an opportunity to address similar research issues in communal areas of KwaZulu-Natal was identified during my visit to the University of Zululand at the end of July. To this end, a collaborative bid with Professor Peter Scogings is planned for submission to the DELPHE scheme of British Council and DFID. If successful

this will become active in 2009 and involve several complementary research projects, which we will co-supervise.

References

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