Developing KaNgwane: geographies of segregation and integration in the new South Africa

BRIAN H KING
Department of Geography and the Environment, The University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station – A3100, Austin, TX 78712-1098, USA
E-mail: brian.king@mail.utexas.edu
This paper was accepted for publication in November 2006

This paper examines social, political and economic processes within the former KaNgwane bantustan to understand the changing relationships between society and space in the post-apartheid era. Research on rural development and reconstruction in South Africa attest to the spatial legacy of apartheid while suggesting that dynamic transformations are occurring within the former bantustans. A central concern of this paper is the ways the apartheid government constructed and presented KaNgwane as a development project in order to justify racial segregation and control. While the bantustans have been effectively erased from the popular imagination, these spaces continue to be framed developmentally in ways that provide limited attention to local context and change. In order to consider the shifts in environment and development discourses within these territories, a case study is employed to evaluate livelihood production systems, environmental change, and governance institutions. It is argued that these patterns reveal the simultaneously static and dynamic nature of the bantustans while demonstrating that their reincorporation will remain an ongoing process in the post-apartheid era.

KEY WORDS: South Africa, KaNgwane, bantustan, homeland, development, environment, livelihood

Introduction

More than 12 years after its first democratic elections, South Africa serves as a fitting example of the complex and dialectical relationships between society and space. Colonial and apartheid governments undertook an ambitious experiment in racial segregation by the ordering of space and political economy to benefit the minority white population. This was most clearly evidenced with the construction of the bantustans, which were intended to become separate locations for the African population that were justified through paternalistic developmentalism. The bantustans were discursively presented as separate territories that would best represent the cultural and political needs of the supposedly unique ethnic groupings that inhabited them. The goal of the apartheid state was supposedly to facilitate this transformation while simultaneously meeting its own economic and political priorities. While the boundaries of the bantustans have been effectively erased through their political reincorporation, research suggests that the imprint of apartheid spatial planning remains upon the landscape and continues to shape many of the material realities experienced by rural residents (Levin and Weiner 1997; Weiner et al. 1997; Ramutsindela and Simon 1999; Ntsebeza 2000; Ramutsindela 2001; Ramutsindela and Donaldson 2001). This has contributed to a growth of research within the former bantustans to understand local processes and change, either through livelihood production systems (Francis 2002; McCusker 2002; Slater 2002; King 2005 2006), tribal authorities and the construction of local identities (Jones 1999), or gender dynamics (Bob 2001; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002). This paper builds upon this research by evaluating the impacts of the construction and reincorporation of the KaNgwane bantustan upon rural landscapes and peoples. Additionally, it considers the ways that apartheid geographies continue to structure the opportunities available to, and are subsequently being transformed by, local populations in the post-apartheid era.
In the first section of the paper, an environmental and developmental history of KaNgwane is presented to examine the ways in which this territory was constructed by colonial and apartheid governments. This paper particularly focuses upon the development discourses that were utilized by the apartheid state to rationalize racial segregation and the cultural representations of rural peoples. Although much attention has been directed to the political and economic construction of the bantustans and the benefits they provided to the apartheid state, these territories were also spatial constructions that reified particular understandings of race, class and development. Like the other bantustans, KaNgwane was presented by the national government as a development project in asserting that its separation would provide for the ‘betterment’ of local populations by locating them within tribal institutions that would enable independent development. Although betterment planning was a blatant justification of racial segregation, it contributed to framing the region and its population in specific ways that have lasting impacts in the post-apartheid era.

The second part of the paper discusses the ways in which KaNgwane is being reconceptualized through emerging development discourses. As others have noted, development remains a powerful discursive tool for describing rural peoples and environments in the contemporary era (Crush 1995; Tapscott 1995; Levin and Weiner 1997; Hart 2002). Shortly after the first democratic elections for example, Tapscott stated:

The irony in the 1990s is the way in which traditional opposition forces in South Africa are themselves appropriating the language and idioms of ‘development’ for their own ends. Far from shunning issues of ‘development’ as the province of apartheid apologists, the notion is assuming increasing importance in the rhetoric of the ANC and other organizations. Paradoxically, given the origins of the concept in South Africa, ‘development’ is becoming a central theme in the discourse of traditional anti-apartheid forces. In a post-apartheid South Africa a ‘new’ version of ‘development’ is emerging.

Tapscott (1995, 191)

The emergence of potentially new development discourses directly impacts, and is consequently shaped by, the geographies of the apartheid system. As evidence of this, the former bantustans are often presented as underdeveloped territories that require specific interventions by a range of national, provincial and non-governmental agencies. The specific trajectories of these interventions are contested, however, as development has increasingly been conceptualized by a neoliberal discourse that privileges the market for economic growth and empowerment (Levin and Weiner 1997; Marais 1998; Bond 2000; Hart 2002; Tsheola 2002). KaNgwane, for example, is newly re-envisioned as one of the country’s Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) that involve the development of infrastructure and fiscal incentives for promoting economic growth through ecotourism, export-oriented agriculture, manufacturing, and producer services. This neoliberal repackaging of the region is subsequently transforming its cultural and ecological landscapes while producing and reproducing particular ideas of local populations that shape rural development in the contemporary era.

The final section of the paper examines processes of change within the former KaNgwane bantustan with particular attention to local livelihood and governance systems. Research on livelihoods continues to be informed by various studies (Chambers 1987; Chambers and Conway 1992; Carney 1998; Bebbington 1999; Ellis 2000) with one definition of a livelihood being ‘the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living’ (Scoones 1998, 5). Livelihoods research within rural South Africa demonstrates that households utilize a diversity of strategies to generate income, including dependence upon environmental resources, formal and informal employment, remittances, pensions and other arrangements (Carter and May 1999 2001; Cousins 1999; Shackleton and Shackleton 2000; Shackleton et al. 2000; Slater 2002; Twine et al. 2003). The ability of local residents to construct livelihoods remains heavily mediated by historical and contemporary governance systems that shape access to various resources (Ntsebeza 2000; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002; King 2004 2005). In order to address livelihood and governance systems within the former KaNgwane bantustan, this paper employs a case study that considers the ways that local residents are engaging with the political, economic and environmental transformations that accompanied the democratic transition. The case study demonstrates that livelihood and governance systems intersect to reveal the ongoing static, yet dynamic, relationships between society and space in the former South African bantustans.

### Constructing KaNgwane: segregated developments in apartheid South Africa

The creation of the KaNgwane bantustan accompanied a larger initiative by the South African state to enforce a rigid system of racial classification and segregation. The construction of the bantustans was justified by the apartheid government on a number of fronts; however, a central element was the representation of the African population and rural areas as underdeveloped (Tomlinson Commission

© 2007 The Author. Journal compilation © 2007 The Royal Geographical Society
systems. The state worked to move the bantustans they possessed stronger cultural attachment to tribal having failed to absorb Western values because (Jones 1999). Black South Africans were viewed as for socio-economic development and ethnic renewal government repositioned the bantustans as the site traditional peasant life. manufacturing or mining, was viewed as integral to subsistence agriculture, as opposed to industrial tion. As Seekings and Nattrass (2005) argue, the apartheid policies to segments of the white popula-
racial and cultural characteristics helped to justify particular development trajectories with prescribed upon their distinctive tribal customs. The linking of free to pursue their own development path based upon claims about Africans' inherent right to independent and self-directed development. As Malan and Hattingh (1976, 6) stated, 'South Africa is recognizing the legitimate Black demand for self-determination, and is moving away from the essentially negative aspects of earlier policies towards a solution which accords each group its inalienable right to determine its own destiny and formulate its own scale of values'.

Immediately following the 1948 elections, the National Party government worked to extend the native reserves established during colonialism by working to institute more fully the provisions of the 1936 Land Act. Mabin (1991) commented that rural areas were replanned to concentrate people in closer settlements. This system of reallocation was termed betterment planning and it resulted in the establishment of particular and often historically unprecedented interventions within the rural areas. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 established tribal, regional and territorial authorities within black areas that were ‘particularly concerned with matters of socio-economic development’ (Malan and Hattingh 1976, 8). The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 identified eight ‘black national units’ and articulated the national desire to move these units towards self-governing status (Malan and Hattingh 1976). Separate develop-
ment became part of apartheid ideology, whereby supposedly separate racial groups were free to pursue their own development path based upon their distinctive tribal customs. The linking of particular development trajectories with prescribed racial and cultural characteristics helped to justify apartheid policies to segments of the white popula-
tion. As Seeking and Nattrass (2005) argue, the white elite was mollified by the argument that subsistence agriculture, as opposed to industrial manufacturing or mining, was viewed as integral to traditional peasant life.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the apartheid government repositioned the bantustans as the site for socio-economic development and ethnic renewal (Jones 1999). Black South Africans were viewed as having failed to absorb Western values because they possessed stronger cultural attachment to tribal systems. The state worked to move the bantustans to independent statehood, but this required a focus upon development to justify their construction. Tapscott (1995) suggests that this presented a fine distinction, whereby Africans were not portrayed as racially inferior but underdeveloped. This suppos-
edly justified racial segregation because it allowed Africans to pursue development within the bantus-
tans on their own terms. While the bantustans were presented as fairly uniform and homogenous by apartheid era documents, there was significant resistance and varied degrees of engagement with the national government. Local communities, homeland politicians and officials who worked for the homeland government often pursued their own agendas (Wotshela 2004). The reaction of local leaders within the bantustans was hardly uniform, and in some cases reflected at least a marginal endorsement of apartheid priorities. Jones (1999) documents how the former President of Bophuthatswana, Lucas Mangope, advocated a Batswana identity and pushed for independence. Other bantus-
tan leaders, however, openly resisted the apartheid system. KaNgwane Chief Minister E J Mabuza maintained a hesitant alliance with the state and was one of the initial contacts to African National Congress (ANC) leaders living in exile.

The Swazi Territorial Authority was established in 1975, making KaNgwane the second smallest homeland in the country. Prior to the 1975 consolid-
dation proposal, KaNgwane resembled the other bantustans by encompassing multiple disparate territories whose boundaries were demarcated around previously existing settlements. KaNgwane, which at the time was often identified as the Swazi homeland, consisted of three territories: the Nkomazi area north of Swaziland; the Msxati area to the west; and the Nsikazi district northeast of the provincial capital of Nelspruit. As shown in Figure 1, the bantustan was consolidated in 1976 by extending the territory north of Swaziland to connect with the Msxati area along the Swaziland border.1

The expansion of KaNgwane fulfilled the 1975 homelands consolidation proposal; however, the Nsikazi area remained detached (Malan and Hattingh 1976). Griffiths and Funnell (1991) report that the inclusion of Msxati enlarged KaNgwane to 385 000 ha.2 Regional authorities were established in Nsikazi, Nkomazi, Mlondozi and Msxati, and townsships were created within the homeland for black resettlement. Swazis living in White River were forcibly resettled in Kabokweni, Lekazi for Nelspruit, Matsulu for Kaapmuiden, and KaMaqhekeza for Malelane (Malan and Hattingh 1976). The KaNgwane Legislative Assembly was created in 1977, and KaNgwane was granted self-governing status in August 1984 (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1985). It is worth noting that there are significant
discrepancies in reported population figures for KaNgwane. Official government documents reported the population of KaNgwane to be 385 000 in 1980; however, Griffiths and Funnell (1991) argue that by including the de jure Swazi population, as well as the non-Swazi population, the total figure in KaNgwane was closer to one million.

National government documents produced at this time reified the notion that KaNgwane was a separate country by listing gross domestic product (GDP) and national income statistics (Malan and Hattingh 1976; Development Bank of Southern Africa 1987). Although the apartheid government asserted that the homelands could become independent states, the rate of economic dependency of these territories undermined this position. As evidence of this, in 1985 KaNgwane’s gross national product was R1260 per capita, but its GDP was R281 per capita showing the dependence upon work in neighbouring white areas (Griffiths and Funnell 1991). Multiple development institutions were active in the territory at this time, including the KaNgwane Economic Development Corporation, the KaNgwane Agricultural Corporation, and the Board of Nature Conservation (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1987). As the next section details, these institutions promoted specific ideas about rural populations and environments in KaNgwane that framed the development interventions undertaken in the region during the apartheid era.
Representations of livelihoods and environments in KaNgwane

Cattle-farming is the prime activity in Swazi. Malan and Hattingh (1976, 206)

The construction of the KaNgwane bantustan resulted in particular representations of rural landscapes and peoples that were designed to justify apartheid spatial planning. Rural livelihoods were presented as traditional, gendered and non-industrialized, while reinforcing ideas of Swazi culture. KaNgwane encompassed a population believed to be rooted in agriculture and pastoralism, and many of the economic interventions of the national government were designed to enhance these pursuits (South Africa Department of Information 1967; Malan and Hattingh 1976; Development Bank of Southern Africa 1985–1987). Livestock were viewed as a key asset to local residents, being valued ‘to only a limited extent commercially, but infinitely so on account of their religious and social significance’ (South Africa Department of Information 1967, 88). Cattle were understood as a sign of wealth to be traded through bride price and other cultural practices. Because of their cultural value, livestock owners were believed to engage in irrational decision-making by overstocking communal areas and keeping cattle past their ideal market value. Interventions by national and provincial agencies were justified, therefore, to ensure that land use and livelihood patterns were rational and scientifically based. As one government report stated: ‘The Bantu peoples therefore own some of the best agricultural land in South Africa although they must learn to work it properly if it is to reach its maximum productivity’ (South Africa Department of Information 1967, 86). This produced a social and technical architecture within the KaNgwane bantustan that privileged Western perspectives on natural resource management.

Agriculture within the region was characterized as ‘dry-land cultivation and cattle farming’ and the entire bantustan was believed to be agriculturally planned (Malan and Hattingh 1976, 206). Regardless of the region’s distance from major markets within South Africa, KaNgwane was deemed viable for ‘virtually any agricultural product’ (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1987, 40). Market production would eventually result within KaNgwane, which would be ‘characteristic of developing countries moving towards the transition phase from subsistence farming to the production of a surplus for the market’ (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1987, 41). A prevailing claim during apartheid was that agricultural land within the bantustans was more productive than white-held areas, with the government arguing that 100 acres of Bantu land had, on average, the same potential as 147 acres in white areas (South Africa Department of Information 1967). Promoters of the bantustan system argued that what was needed was the provision of the necessary technical expertise to maximize production by reducing risk-aversion, improving crop information and allowing for better access to markets (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1987). The government decreed local ‘superstitions’ and ‘witchcraft’ as impediments to the adoption of Western agricultural techniques and insisted that cultural norms would need to change to facilitate agricultural development. Tourism was also premised as a viable growth feature for the region since the ‘flora and scenic landscape are assets for the development of a tourist industry’ (Malan and Hattingh 1976, 207).

There were multiple problems with the representations of rural livelihoods promoted by the apartheid government. As others have noted, agricultural land within white areas was always more productive and arguments disputing this were designed to justify bantustan spatial planning (Pickles and Weiner 1991; Weiner and Levin 1991). Rangan and Gilmartin (2002) note that in the 1940s and 1950s, lands within the fertile catchments of the Komati and Krokodil rivers were removed from African communities and given to white commercial farmers. Apartheid era documents provided limited analysis of livelihood systems by focusing exclusively on agriculture, pastoralism and horticulture, while directing attention away from understanding livelihood differentiation within the bantustans. As one example of this, a survey of KaNgwane households by the Development Bank of Southern Africa failed to assess agricultural viability within the entire territory and neglected to address other environmental resources that were critical for income generation. Although agriculture was perceived by apartheid planners as a primary livelihood practice within the territory, the report concludes that ‘very little data could readily be obtained on the production by private and subsistence farmers’ (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1985, 7–4). Other activities were completely disregarded, including the consumption of environmental resources for income or other purposes. Other documents discuss employment within non-agricultural industries such as manufacturing and mining; however, total employment within KaNgwane was estimated at one point to be a mere 81 000 (Development Bank of Southern Africa 1987). Informal activities and remittance activities were not included in many analyses, and out-migration for employment was presented as a problem that would be remedied as KaNgwane industrialized.
This representation disregarded one of the primary critiques of the apartheid system; namely, that the intention of the bantustans was to provide a steady surplus of labour for the South African economy, and hence they were never designed to become economically independent (Legassick and Wolpe 1976; Pickles 1991; Pickles and Weiner 1991).

The contrasts between national representations and local realities undermined the bantustans and prompted debates about the future of the apartheid system. The failings of apartheid policy to stimulate economic development and political independence within the bantustans resulted in shifting strategies by the national government in the 1980s. The bantustans continued to involve economic development; however, gradual shifts from the idea of separate development reduced the emphasis upon these territories as political and cultural constructions. As Tapscott (1995) explains, the separate development of the bantustans during grand apartheid was replaced with a focus upon technical and economic development policy. This resulted in a ‘new economic development paradigm’ that uncoupled the concept of development from the ‘economically questionable and politically problematic notion of “separate development”’ (Tapscott 1995, 182). The impetus for much of this shift was the growing realization amongst the intelligentsia of the failure of separate development, and unease within the military that this would cause disruptions for the white population. The consequence was that development was increasingly presented as an economic, rather than a political, activity. This produced a development discourse that ‘formed part of a broader initiative to restructure the form of apartheid and to redirect the ideological discourse of the ruling white population’ (Tapscott 1995, 177).

The national government announced a new development strategy in 1981 that established eight development regions with a ninth being added in 1985. These regions incorporated the bantustans and were based upon the need for employment, average income, and the future economic potential of each region (Pickles and Weiner 1991). The new development regions supposedly superseded the bantustans by identifying functional regions where labour operated (Pickles 1988; Pickles and Weiner 1991). As Pickles and Weiner (1991, 15) explain, ‘Of particular interest was the way in which the new development regions incorporated the bantustans: both provincial administration and bantustan borders were downplayed in favour of the development regions, whose boundaries map out the functional regions within which labour markets operate’. The Joint Management Centres (JMCs) of the National Security Management System, as well as military districts and electoral regions for black councillors to the National Council, were aligned with the nine development regions (Pickles and Weiner 1991). The inherent contradictions of separate development remained. The state presented the development regions as the new administrative structures, while maintaining political and fiscal support for the bantustans (Pickles and Weiner 1991). This development architecture would remain in place until the 1994 democratic elections, at which point the bantustans were officially incorporated into the new provincial geography. KaNgwane was merged with the Transvaal Province to form Mpumalanga Province and the tribal authorities were integrated within the municipalities. This political transformation did not completely erase the social and spatial legacy of apartheid for rural landscapes and peoples. As the next section details, territory that comprised the KaNgwane bantustan would continue to be framed in developmental terms that would shape the trajectories of its economic integration in the contemporary era.

Post-apartheid geographies: developing the former bantustans

Although there has been a concerted effort in some sectors to present the bantustans as the geographic relics of apartheid long banished through their political reincorporation, academic scholarship has been effective in demonstrating that this geography remains persistent in the contemporary era (Levin and Weiner 1997; Weiner et al. 1997; Ntsebeza 2000; Ramutsindela and Donaldson 2001; Ramutsindela 2001; McCusker and Weiner 2003). Ramutsindela (2001) suggests that a rejection of the bantustans by apartheid era scholars as a legitimate object of inquiry restricted attention to the processes emerging within them. As he states: ‘What was being neglected was an understanding of the political dynamics within the bantustans – the invention of identities, the forging of alliances, the development of power structures, the socialization of people into space; developments that were all to impact upon a future South Africa’ (2001, 176). Recent work shows that the former bantustans contain highly differentiated socio-cultural-gendered systems that structure the economic and political transformations occurring within them (Bob 2001; Hart 2002; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002; Slater 2002; King 2005). These studies reveal that the erasure of the bantustan geography does little to eliminate the systems established during colonialism and apartheid, and help to explain the intransigence of land reform and rural development in certain areas.

Development remains a powerful discursive tool in the contemporary era for defining rural regions and the specific initiatives being pursued within
them. As Tapscott (1995, 177) argues: ‘By shaping the pattern of regional development, and by determining the type of economic programmes which have been funded in the bantustans, for instance, “development discourse” has had (and continues to have) a material impact on the lives of millions of South Africans’. One of the concrete ways in which the former bantustans are being reframed is through their presentation as underdeveloped terrirories desperately in need of economic intervention. As evidence of this, the region that encompasses the former KaNgwane bantustan is undergoing rapid political and institutional transformation through its classification as a growth corridor as part of the national government’s Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs). The SDI programme has become a pillar of national development policy through the identification of specific regions for private sector investment and tourism, with the goal of stimulating economic growth (Mitchell 1998; Kepe 2001; Kepe et al. 2001; Söderbaum and Taylor 2001; Rogerson 2001; Bek et al. 2004). The programme targets particular regions in different provinces for the development of infrastructure and provides fiscal incentives with the aim of attracting foreign direct investment and promoting economic growth through ecotourism, export-oriented agriculture, manufacturing, and producer services (Mitchell 1998). The national government asserts that the SDIs are high-potential regions that, upon achieving economic sustainability, would enable it to shift development policy to more underdeveloped areas.

As others have noted, SDIs fit squarely within the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme by advocating neoliberal economic investment and growth with redistribution (Rogerson 2001; Bek et al. 2004). GEAR was launched in 1996 and represented a shift from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which was the guiding policy document of the ANC during the early transition. The RDP emphasized poverty alleviation, job creation and civic participation to redress the social and economic inequalities generated by apartheid. Unlike the RDP, GEAR is more neoliberal in its orientation and recommends export production and a marshalling of the private sector to generate economic growth. Bek et al. (2004) argue that the result is a national development policy involving macro-economic neoliberalism being promoted in conjunction with a decentralization of responsibility. As Bek et al. (2004, 26) state, the SDI programme ‘represents a subtle blending of a dominant top-down and outward-focused neoliberal strategy, with significant counter currents reflecting a bottom-up development pathway’.

By 2000, 12 industrial, agricultural or tourism-led SDIs had been established, with the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC) being among the most recognized. The MDC is a mixed-industrial and agro-tourism initiative designed to open up previously underdeveloped areas of significant potential. The official launch of the MDC in 1996 stated that one of its goals was: ‘To ensure that the social development impact of investment is maximised in terms of providing jobs, economic growth and increasing the participation of historically disadvantaged communities’ (Mitchell 1998, 758). A major feature of the MDC has been the completion of the N4 highway, which is a paved toll road that connects Johannesburg with Maputo, Mozambique. Additionally, the N4 connects with the R570, which serves as a primary road from the southern part of the Kruger National Park to Swaziland. National and provincial agencies have been active in encouraging travel along the N4 as a means of stimulating economic development throughout the region (Lowvelder 2001), and the recent completion of a new airport near the provincial capital of Nelspruit is designed to attract domestic and international visitors to the area.

The construction of new infrastructure within the region has facilitated a push for tourism, which is consistently referenced by national and provincial government as a growth industry for the country (Rogerson 2002). Tourism has become a feature of several of the SDIs and typically involves an emphasis upon cultural tourism or ecotourism, while advocating the need for community control and empowerment (Rogerson 2001). Within the MDC, several white-owned farms and estates adjacent to the Kruger National Park have been converted into private game reserves and lodges that primarily serve wealthy international tourists. Additionally, the provincial government has pursued cultural tourism within the region and attempted to use wildlife conservation and other initiatives to stimulate tourist traffic into the area. Several community conservation projects exist, including the Mahushe Shongwe Game Reserve, Mawewe Cattle-Game Project, and Mthethomusha Game Reserve. It is worth noting that in an effort to promote tourism, the Mpumalanga Tourism Agency has labelled the region the ‘Wild Frontier’, and several cultural tourism projects are being promoted. As the next section details, the continued framing of the former KaNgwane bantustan through development language has material impacts for rural residents, many of whom are working at creating new opportunities through provincial governmental structures. These opportunities, however, are mediated by the social and spatial systems established during apartheid that reveal the legacy of the bantustan geography in the contemporary era.
Livelihoods and environments in the former KaNgwane bantustan

The remainder of this paper focuses on the impacts of the reintegration of KaNgwane upon rural populations with particular attention to livelihood systems and governance institutions. A case study of the Mzinti community is employed to demonstrate that the interplay between livelihood and governance systems reveals the transformations occurring within the former bantustans, while also demonstrating the persistence of apartheid spatial planning for rural areas. Additionally, the case study shows how development discourses continue to frame the region, while structuring the economic and political opportunities emerging in the post-apartheid era. Research completed from August 2001 to August 2002 and May 2004 to June 2004 utilized quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate household livelihood production systems, the impacts of conservation and development projects upon environmental resource access, and shifting governance patterns. This paper primarily relies on a series of 50 semi-structured interviews conducted with randomly selected individuals in the community, supplemented by participant observation of community meetings, environmental resource collection practices, and informal and formal economic activities. A structured survey was also completed from May to July 2002 that provided detail on household histories, demographics, livelihood systems and perceptions of development initiatives within the region.

The Mzinti community is located in eastern Mpumalanga Province north of Swaziland and west of Mozambique. The Kruger National Park is situated to the north and extends to the border with Zimbabwe. The primary urban centres within the region include Nelspruit, the provincial capital, KaNyamazane, Malelane and Komatipoort. KaNyamazane is a township near Nelspruit, Malelane is the southern entrance to the Kruger National Park, and Komatipoort acts as the border post to southern Mozambique (Figure 2).

Many of the urban centres are experiencing population and commercial growth due to tourism and other investments into the area. The growth of tourism from the Kruger Park has contributed to an expansion of service-related activities and conversion of some farms and estates into private game reserves and lodges (Rangan and Gilmartin 2002). Land use practices range from subsistence agriculture

Figure 2 Map of the study area
to intensive cultivation of sugar cane and citrus fruits in commercial farms bordering the former bantustan. There has been a concerted effort to expand sugar cane cultivation within the region, as evidenced by irrigation developments on the Lomati and Komati Rivers.

The strategies employed by Mzinti residents to produce livelihoods in the contemporary era continue to be shaped by apartheid spatial planning, which restricted access to environmental resources and economic markets. The agricultural opportunities presented to these displaced populations were not merely reduced by the high population density within KaNgwane, but also by the poor soil quality, scarcity of water for irrigation, and limited access to markets for the sale of a variety of goods. Rural households were forced to diversify into a host of formal and informal activities, including the selling of fruits and vegetables from neighbouring farms, selling of chickens, car repair, shoe repair, security work, domestic work, and manufacturing. At the present time, seasonal and permanent migration to urban areas, such as Nelspruit and Malelane, is common for community residents who seek out economic employment within various industries.

As in other rural communities, there is continuing negotiation occurring between governance institutions, including traditional authorities and the municipalities. Within Mzinti, the Matsamo Tribal Authority continues to play a role in negotiating access to a variety of assets, including land title and certain environmental resources. The relationships between individuals and tribal authorities and municipalities are important in providing access to formal employment and land for farming and grazing (King 2005). The consequence of these processes is a dynamic relationship between livelihoods and historical and contemporary governance systems, which necessitates a detailed examination to understand the impacts of the reincorporation of KaNgwane and trajectories of rural development in the contemporary era.

Research within the former bantustans since the democratic transition has asserted that greater attention to local diversification is needed to understand the lingering impacts of apartheid spatial planning (Jones 1999; Bob 2001; Ramatsindela 2001; Francis 2002; Slater 2002; King 2006). This has been accompanied by an expansion of research that addresses rural livelihood systems, with one significant result being a more systematic assessment of the contribution of non-agricultural labour to household income (Cousins 1999; Shackleton and Shackleton 2000; Shackleton et al. 2000; Twine et al. 2003). Regardless of apartheid era documents attesting that rural populations were almost entirely agriculturally based, these studies demonstrate the importance of environmental resource collection and other activities for livelihood production throughout rural South Africa. In an extensive study conducted in the former Gazankulu and Lebowa bantustans, Shackleton and Shackleton (2000) conclude that the returns from the collection and selling of secondary resources, including fuelwood, construction wood, edible fruits and herbs, and medicinal plants, are higher than those paid for local agricultural wage labour. As Shackleton and Shackleton (2000, 45) state: 'Resource harvesting is probably the safety net that allows many households to survive in areas of poor agricultural potential, high human populations and low employment opportunities'.

There are similar livelihood patterns within the Mzinti community, with households maintaining a degree of flexibility necessary to survive by combining environmental resource collection with temporary or permanent engagement with formal and informal economies. Mzinti households utilize a variety of environmental resources to produce livelihoods; however, dependency is highest for sand that is purchased and used for construction purposes, land next to the household for farming, and wood for energy fuel. In addition to these dominant use patterns, a smaller number of households continue to collect wood and thatch grass for construction, to graze livestock and to collect medicinal plants. These resources are collected at various points surrounding the community, by specific household members and in a number of ways. Although there is a diversity of resource strategies, the collection of wood for energy fuel is one of the highest rates of environmental resource collection, which parallels other regions of South Africa (Shackleton 1998; Eberhard 1999; Twine et al. 2003). As the following vignette suggests, households within the Mzinti community do not neatly coincide with apartheid livelihood representations. Far from supporting agricultural and economic development, apartheid spatial planning necessitated local diversification and engagement with external markets for livelihood production.

Household livelihood diversification: the Mandlabi family

Elinah Mandlabi and her family live in Mzinti next to the road that heads south from the centre of the town to the community of Ntunda. The household is in what is characterized by residents as the older section of the community located near the town centre and service areas, including one of the elementary schools and a health clinic. Elinah was born in Mzinti in 1928, and moved to her present location in 1949 after she was married. At that
time, there were three rondavels, which are circle or square houses with sloping thatch grass roofs. These rondavels were made of mud and were very vulnerable in times of heavy rains. Over time, the family replaced them with more permanent cement buildings. The blocks used for these houses were constructed by mixing cement with sand that is collected from local rivers. There are nine people living in the household; Elinah, her son and daughter-in-law, and six grandchildren. Elinah went to school later in life because schools were not introduced into the area when she was young. She left at Standard Three when she became pregnant with her first child and never returned to school. Her son, who is staying at the house, has occasional temporary work, while a second son works for a national mining company and sends infrequent remittances because he is married and lives elsewhere. Elinah receives a monthly pension of roughly $80.

The Mandlabi family cooks with wood twice a week to reduce their electricity bill from the stove. The three boys collect the wood in surrounding communal land that is at least 30 minutes away from the household. Elinah commented that the distance to collect wood has increased over time with the influx of residents from neighbouring communities. As she explained, ‘It is becoming very difficult because in the old days we were getting the wood from nearby and we were even able to put them on our head and walk. Now because too many of the trees are finished, we have to travel a long distance’. Because of the distance, the boys collect the wood in a pile and the family hires a tractor for $15 to bring the wood back to the house. They hire a tractor at least twice a year or more, depending upon their needs. The Mandlabi family does not own a farm, but plants a variety of crops around the house to supplement their diet. Depending upon the season, there are corn, carrots, squash, onions, mangoes, peaches, avocados, and guavas. Elinah owns 10 adult cattle and two calves, which graze unattended in the communal land near their household during the week. The cattle are stored capital for the family and Elinah sells them to the local butchery or relative if necessary. The family also maintains chickens, which are eaten or sold, depending upon need.

Changing institutions and development

As the Mandlabi family demonstrates, households within the former KaNgwane bantustan often pursue diversified livelihoods while remaining connected to external markets and employment opportunities. The availability of certain resources remains structured by historical governance institutions, including the tribal authorities, although new systems are reshaping access patterns within the rural areas. The Mzinti community continues to fall under the jurisdiction of the Matsamo Tribal Authority, which maintains its influence in the exercise of land titling and in shaping access to environmental resources within the region. While the Matsamo Tribal Authority continues to exert control over specific environmental resources, the institutional frameworks that shape household access are changing as a result of the democratic elections and the increased importance of newly created structures. The authority of the chieftaincy is questioned by some community members, and treated with disdain by others. In part, this is a consequence of the links between the tribal authorities and the apartheid government, which empowered, and sometimes created, these structures to enforce order upon rural areas. In some cases, the tribal authorities expanded in power because of apartheid, a point that is not forgotten by local residents. The emergence of new governmental systems and environmental legislation is further challenging the role and legitimacy of the tribal authorities in the rural areas. KaNgwane has been reincorporated into the Nkomazi Municipality, which is one of four that constitute the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. The ward system was finalized in 2000, and it attempts to interface the councillors with village and land trusts, and the tribal authorities.

Although the tribal authorities serve at the ward level within the municipality, many community members view this as an erosion of traditional power and identify other structures as the main vehicles for rural development. Since the Matsamo Tribal Authority continues to exert control over the allocation of land and access to various environmental resources, it remains an important institution shaping rural livelihoods and development opportunities in the former KaNgwane bantustan. Community variation in dependence upon environmental resources, coupled with shifting demographic patterns and in-migration, result in differentiated views on the role of the Matsamo Tribal Authority (King 2006). Additionally, residents perceive its importance in relation to newly created governance systems in executing conservation and development projects. Views on the role of the tribal authority are linked to age, as older residents of Mzinti are more likely to view the tribal authority as an important structure in rural communities. Largely, this results from the historical connections between traditional authorities and local cultural systems in the rural areas. As Cousins (1998, 97) explains, ‘traditional leadership draws much of its legitimate authority from its embeddedness in the social and cultural life of rural communities, where
the discourses of “tradition” and associated cultural identity are still persuasive for many.

Unlike older residents, younger community members, particularly residents who moved to Mzinti from other areas, are often dismissive of the role of the tribal authority and are more likely to embrace the ANC and the newly created municipal structures, such as the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. To these residents, the new governance structures emerging in the contemporary era are better designed at managing political and economic change within the region. As one Mzinti respondent indicated:

[The tribal authority] is not as active as they were in the past. But their active role in the past, as we understood it, was to try to express the political views of their own people, to not go beyond tribal issues such as ‘why have you slaughtered my cow?, ‘why has your dog stolen my eggs?’ . . . something like that, minor issues, instead of what is happening to the country and the role of suppressing to make us not raise our heads and express our political opinions in open society. And now they would like to do it as they did in the past, but it is not possible.

In describing the role of the tribal authorities, the local ward councillor for Mzinti stated:

They don’t have a lot of power. They don’t invest in the roads or in electricity. That’s the government. You go to the tribal authority for traditional problems. For discussion of the lebola (bride price), you go to the induna. If you are not satisfied, you go to the chief. South Africa decided to keep the tribal authority even as it went to a Republic. They didn’t in Mozambique.

The tribal authority is not powerful, like in Swaziland.

The assertion that local government should be responsible for development has contributed to an empowerment of municipal structures at the expense of the tribal authority and other traditional institutions. This has subsequently impacted how Mzinti residents access resources through the creation of new rules and opportunities. The complex interplay between tribal authorities and rural livelihood systems demonstrates the lingering influence of the construction of the KaNgwane bantustan; however, the dynamic renegotiation that is occurring suggests that apartheid geographies are gradually transforming in the contemporary era.

Conclusion

The construction of the bantustans was part of grand apartheid’s attempt to institutionalize racial segregation through a massive re-ordering of society and space. The bantustans were framed in developmental terms, with the national government asserting that segregation was needed to meet the needs of the African population. Tribal authorities were empowered as the supposedly legitimate governance structure, and political boundaries were established to facilitate the needs of the apartheid state. KaNgwane was constructed along these lines, with the apartheid government rationalizing its creation through the reification of particular ideas about local livelihood and environmental systems. Rural livelihoods were presented as traditional, gendered and non-industrialized, while reinforcing ideas of Swazi culture that supposedly justified the construction of the KaNgwane bantustan. Although the democratic transition removed this particular geography, the former KaNgwane bantustan continues to be conceptualized developmentally through its reframing as a SDI. The promotion of neoliberal tourism and growth has implications for rural populations who are attempting to benefit from these changes, but are finding themselves simultaneously structured by them.

As the Mzinti case study suggests, rural livelihoods and environmental governance systems are undergoing transformations in the contemporary era through active engagements by local populations. The interviews suggest that rural communities are economically differentiated and are experiencing changing demographic and livelihood patterns in the contemporary era. Although there are households which are fully committed to formal and informal economic activities, and others completely dependent upon environmental resource collection, the majority are diversified in order to withstand fluctuations and to take advantage of new opportunities. Contraction in labour markets, seasonal fluctuations, and reduced demand for products can be triggers that disrupt and reshape the household economy over time. Additionally, the structures that mediate and constrain household access to environmental resources remain critical factors shaping livelihood production in the former KaNgwane bantustan. The case study suggests that focusing upon livelihood and governance systems reveals the lingering power of apartheid geographies in the contemporary era. At the same time, South Africa’s historical spatial economy structures the opportunities that are available to residents and will continue to influence the trajectories of change in the post-apartheid era.

Acknowledgements

The research completed for this paper was supported by the Institute for the Study of World Politics, the Association of American Geographers (AAG), the
Cultural Ecology specialty group of the AAG, the Graduate School at the University of Colorado, and the Program in Developing Areas, Research and Teaching (DART) at the University of Colorado. Fieldwork completed from August 2001 to August 2002 was facilitated through professional affiliations with the Mpumalanga Parks Board and the Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of Pretoria. Additional fieldwork in 2004 was supported by the Department of Geography and the Environment at the University of Texas. I am particularly appreciative of the insights and generosity shown by members of the Mzinti community who made this work possible. My thanks to Manuel Peralvo for creating the maps. Thanks also to Brent McCusker for his diligent efforts in producing this special edition and helpful comments to this paper. Finally, I am appreciative of the three anonymous reviewers, Erica King and John Briggs for their invaluable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

Notes
1 It is important to note that there are discrepancies in historical maps of KaNgwane and inconsistencies in terms of the results of the 1975 consolidation proposal. Griffiths and Funnell (1991) report that Mswati was incorporated in 1976, while the Development Bank of Southern Africa report (1987) asserted that the connecting land was still under negotiation for incorporation. Other maps of KaNgwane, whether in the academic or policy literatures, do not agree on the boundaries of the bantustan. As a result, Figure 1 is based upon the most reliable sources of information in depicting KaNgwane.
2 One of the more interesting points in KaNgwane’s history was a secret land deal negotiated between the apartheid government and the country of Swaziland to incorporate the bantustan into Swaziland. Griffiths and Funnell (1991) provide a history of this deal that was ultimately deemed illegal in 1982 by the South African Appeal Court.

References
Bebbington A 1999 Capitals and capabilities: a framework for analyzing peasant viability, rural livelihoods and poverty World Development 27 2021–44
Bek D, Binns T and Nel E 2004 ‘Catching the development train’: perspectives on ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ development in post-apartheid South Africa Progress in Development Studies 4 22–46
Boshoff J L 1970 The implications of homeland development for white South Africans Bantu December 28–32
Carter M R and May J 1999 Poverty, livelihood and class in rural South Africa World Development 27 1–20
Cousins B 1998 How do rights become real? Formal and informal institutions in South Africa’s tenure reform programme Proceedings of the international conference on land tenure in the developing world with a focus on Southern Africa University of Cape Town, Cape Town
Cousins B 1999 Invisible capital: the contribution of communal rangelands to rural livelihoods in South Africa Development Southern Africa 16 299–318
Ellis F 2000 Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries Oxford University Press, Oxford
Francis E 2002 Rural livelihoods, institutions and vulnerability in North West Province, South Africa Journal of Southern African Studies 28 531–50
Griffiths I L L and Funnell D C 1991 The abortive Swazi land deal African Affairs 90 51–64
Hart G 2002 Disabling globalization: places of power in post-apartheid South Africa University of California Press, Berkeley
Kepe T 2001 Clearing the ground in the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs): analysing ‘process’ on South Africa’s Wild Coast Development Southern Africa 18 279–293
Kepe T, Ntshebeza L and Pithers L 2001 Agri-tourism spatial development initiatives in South Africa: are they enhancing rural livelihoods? Overseas Development Institute Natural Resource Perspectives 65
King B H 2004 In the shadow of Kruger: community conservation and environmental resource access in the former KaNgwane homeland, South Africa PhD dissertation, University of Colorado
King B H 2005 Spaces of change: tribal authorities in the former KaNgwane homeland, South Africa Area 37 64–72
King B H 2006 Placing KaNgwane in the new South Africa The Geographical Review 96 79–96

© 2007 The Author. Journal compilation © 2007 The Royal Geographical Society
Levin R and Weiner D 1997 From apartheid to development in Levin R and Weiner D eds ‘No more tears . . .’: struggles for land in Mpumalanga, South Africa Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ 3–25
Lowvelder 2001 Economic development boosted by N4 toll-route 26 October
Mabin A 1991 The impact of apartheid on rural areas of South Africa Antipode 23 33–46
Malan T and Hattingh P S 1976 Black homelands in South Africa Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria
McCusker B 2002 The impact of membership in communal property associations on livelihoods in the Northern Province, South Africa Geojournal 56 113–22
Ntsebeza L 2000 Traditional authorities, local government and land rights in Cousins B ed At the crossroads: land and agrarian reform in South Africa into the 21st century Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, School of Government, University of the Western Cape and National Land Committee, Cape Town 280–305
Pickles J 1988 Recent changes in regional policy in South Africa Geography 73 233–9
Pickles J 1991 Industrial restructuring, peripheral industrialization, and rural development in South Africa Antipode 23 68–91
Pickles J and Weiner D 1991 Rural and regional restructuring of apartheid: ideology, development policy and the competition for space Antipode 23 2–32
Ramutsindela M F 2001 The bitter harvest of the bantustans South African Geographical Journal 83 175–82
Rogerson C M 2001 Spatial development initiatives in Southern Africa: the Maputo Development Corridor Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie 92 324–46
Seekings J and Natrass N 2005 Class, race, and inequality in South Africa Yale University Press, New Haven
Shackleton C M and Shackleton S E 2000 Direct use values of secondary resources harvested from communal savannas in the Bushbuckridge lowveld, South Africa Journal of Tropical Forest Products 6 28–47
Shackleton S, Shackleton C and Cousins B 2000 Re-valuing the communal lands of Southern Africa: new understandings of rural livelihoods Overseas Development Institute Natural Resource Perspectives 62 November
South Africa Department of Information 1967 The progress of the bantu peoples toward nationhood Department of Information, Pretoria
Tomlinson Commission Report 1955 Commission for the socio-economic development of the Bantu areas within the Union of South Africa Government Printer, Pretoria
Tsheola J 2002 South Africa in GEAR: ‘a better life for all’ or a zero-sum game of globalization? Geojournal 57 15–28
Twine W, Moshe D, Netshiluvhi T and Siphugu V 2003 Consumption and direct-use values of savanna bio-resources used by rural households in Mametja, a semi-arid area of Limpopo province, South Africa South African Journal of Science 99 467–73
Weiner D and Levin R 1991 Land and agrarian transition in South Africa Antipode 23 92–120
Weiner D, Levin R and Chimere-Dan O 1997 Understanding the bantustans through socio-economic surveys in Levin R and Weiner D eds ‘No more tears . . .’: struggles for land in Mpumalanga, South Africa Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ 43–71