

Improving Positivity Towards Nature Conservation: Cases of Local Communities Bordering Protected Areas in South Africa.

*Dorothy Ruth Queiros

*University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

Benefit sharing refers to benefits emanating from natural protected areas to neighbouring communities. These benefits are often derived from the tourism ventures within these areas and should improve the socio-economic environment of communities. In the South African context, beneficiation appears to be a key influence in encouraging communities to support conservation efforts, rather than desiring the land for alternative uses. While numerous studies have been done on the necessity of benefits, less research has focused on which benefits improve positivity towards nature conservation. This is surprising considering how important this knowledge is to community wellbeing and a thriving wildlife tourism industry. This paper therefore aims to determine which benefits, in addition to those already present, would make local communities more positive towards neighbouring protected areas. Data was collected at three local communities, each bordering a protected area containing a tourism venture – Kekana Gardens community (Dinokeng Game Reserve); Khanyayo community (Mkhambathi Nature Reserve) and Mngobokazi community (Phinda Private Game Reserve). Participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. Qualitative data was gathered using focus group interviews with 56 community members. The paper first discusses the main findings from each case, followed by cross-case analysis. Employment was common across all three. At Dinokeng, locals clearly requested information, education, involvement and the meeting of basic needs. For Mkhambathi, much was said about development and infrastructure being vital for locals and tourists. The desire to be informed of and involved in the reserve also emerged. For Phinda, which has the most developed community beneficiation programmes, locals had less to say. They focused on education, particularly infrastructure (colleges and schools) and education (bursaries and nature conservation training). The paper ends by providing recommendations regarding what tourism and protected area managers can do differently in future to enhance community wellbeing and the continuance of Africa's wild spaces.

Keywords

Benefits, conservation, local communities, positivity, protected areas, wildlife tourism.

JEL Classification

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1. Introduction.

Benefit sharing or benefit-based approaches occur when the protected area, together with its tourism ventures share benefits with the local community to improve

their social and economic environment, and to foster a good relationship (Queiros & Mearns, 2019).

In the South African context, beneficiation appears to be one of the key influences in encouraging communities to support conservation efforts, rather than wanting to use the land for other uses. Benefit-based approaches have therefore been widely adopted to reduce opposition and attract local support, based on the idea that benefits motivate local people to change their attitudes and to adapt their behaviour to be pro-conservation (Gadd, 2005; Kideghesho, Røskaft & Kaltenborn, 2007).

While numerous studies have been done on the necessity of benefits (Dewu & Røskaft, 2018; Jamal & Camargo, 2014), two research gaps were identified within these studies. First, less research has focused on which benefits improve positivity towards nature conservation (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Second, in spite of stakeholders acknowledging the value of intangible benefits (Cetas & Yasué, 2017; Stem *et al.*, 2003), these are seldom researched as potential causal mechanisms for conservation (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). These research gaps are surprising considering the importance of this knowledge to community wellbeing and a successful wildlife tourism industry.

Data was collected at three local communities in South Africa, each bordering a protected area containing one or more tourism ventures. For each community, the neighbouring protected area already had certain benefits in place. This research aimed to determine, from the perspective of the local communities, what further benefits would improve positivity towards nature conservation at the three protected areas.

This information can help tourism and protected area managers know which benefits to focus on in order to enhance community wellbeing, which in turn enhances conservation in Africa.

The paper commences with a brief literature review, followed by the research design and methodology. The results and discussion section considers the findings from each community separately, followed by cross-case analysis. The paper ends with a conclusion, which contains recommendations for tourism and conservation stakeholders.

2. Literature Review: Beneficiation.

The accrual of benefits by local people due to the presence of tourism and conservation initiatives is important (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Jhala, Pokheral & Subedi, 2019). It is important for two reasons. Firstly, because the wellbeing of communities surrounding protected areas, who often live in poverty, is crucial. Secondly, some studies have linked benefits to improved positivity towards protected areas as well as pro-conservation behaviour (Kideghesho *et al.*, 2007; Kiss, 2004 and Shibia, 2010).

Benefit distribution should be equitable (Giampiccoli, Jugmohan & Mtapuri, 2015) and open and transparent, mitigating against unrealistic expectations which result in discontent when unmet (Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017:214). Furthermore, it is important that communities are aware of existing benefits. Gadd (2005) and Snyman (2012) highlight the importance of beneficiaries making the connection between the benefits and the tourism and wildlife resources from which those benefits stem.

Tangible benefits tend to be economic benefits, motivating individuals to see conservation and tourism as sources of income (Imran, Alam & Beaumont, 2014). The downsides of this is that the level of income is seldom enough for the community (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008) and that if the income drops, local people may see the

prime reason for conserving as no longer existing (Gadd, 2005), which could threaten the protected area. Tangible benefits include formal and informal employment; harvesting of natural resources (such as thatch grass for roofing); revenue from tourist levies and gate fees; community development projects such as clinics and creches; etc.

Intangible benefits have received less focus, but are vital because they influence the stability of local institutions as well as the success of long-term collective action towards biodiversity conservation (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Berkes (2004) argues that rural communities in the developing world seldom equate benefits with simple monetary rewards, and that various types of social and political benefits are also important. A further reason to focus on intangible benefits is that if pro-conservation behaviour is only practised because economic benefits are received, there can be dire consequences should tourism decline or donors withdraw (Gadd, 2005). Ideally, protected areas and tourism should offer a combination of tangible and intangible benefits (Burgoyne & Mearns, 2017). Examples of intangibles include training, such as learning a new skill; participating in decision-making; cultural exchange with tourists; environmental education and enhanced pride and self-esteem.

3. Research Design and Methodology.

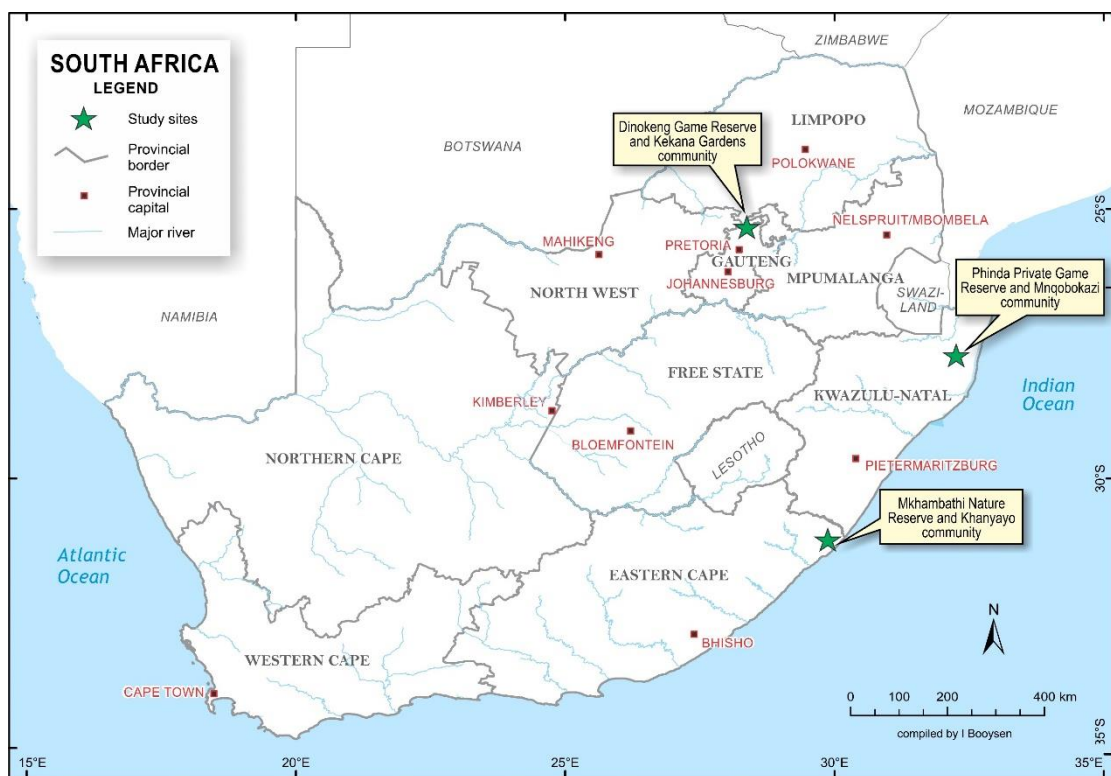
This research is situated in the paradigm of constructivism, which acknowledges that individuals will have multiple subjective interpretations of their world (Creswell, 2014) and that findings are discovered through the interaction between individuals as well as through interaction with the researcher and interpreter (Bann, 2001).

Data was collected at three local communities, each bordering a protected area containing a tourism venture. The three protected areas each had differing management models and ownership structures; and were at different stages in the level of improvement in human wellbeing offered to the adjacent community. The communities are lower-income communities and are either rural or peri-urban. Each case study is described below and indicated on the map in Figure 1:

- **Kekana Gardens community** is a peri-urban community adjacent to Dinokeng Game Reserve in the Gauteng province. This reserve is a public-private partnership between provincial government and private landowners. Tourism establishments are operated by different landowners and range from budget to luxury. Due to it being a fairly new reserve, opened in 2011, the relationship with the community is still in its infancy, and reserve management and landowners are still developing various economic and social upliftment programmes.
- **Khanyayo community** is a rural community, and is the closest community to Mkhambathi Nature Reserve in the Eastern Cape province. Mkhambathi is a provincial reserve on land owned by several surrounding local communities who won their land claim. It is a joint management venture between Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and the Mkhambathi Land Trust, which consists of community members. There are currently only a few mid-range accommodation options available, but a private company (Mkambati Matters) is developing luxury accommodation in a section of the reserve. Reserve staff have been interacting with the community for a number of years and run various economic and social upliftment programmes.

- Mnqobokazi community**, bordering Phinda Private Game Reserve, in KwaZulu Natal province is also a rural community. Phinda is a private game reserve, managed by &Beyond, offering luxury tourism. Some of the land within the reserve is owned by local communities who won land claims. This land is rented from these communities by &Beyond. Unlike the other two case studies, it has a dedicated organisation, Africa Foundation, which focuses on community involvement and beneficiation. The relationship between the reserve and the community can be considered as well established, with various successful economic and social upliftment programmes in place.

Figure 1.
Location of case study sites within South Africa.



Participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. In qualitative research, purposive sampling is often the norm, selecting participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the phenomena (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Rapley, 2014). In addition, qualitative research focuses on smaller numbers of people but the data is detailed and rich (Cohen, Manion & Morrison., 2011). Qualitative data was gathered using focus group interviews with 56 community members. In each community, two focus groups were conducted, each with a different group of people. The size of the focus groups ranged from five to 15 participants, and it was important that the group comprised a balanced representation of ages, gender and positions in society.

This paper focuses on one question posed to participants, namely **“Some people like this nature reserve and the animals. Some people think there are better ways to use this land. What would make you more positive towards the reserve being here over the next 100 years, that is, down to the time of your great grand-**

children?” In each group, the researcher played the role of a facilitator, and made use of a local translator, who translated the question into the local dialect. Some participants answered in English, while others answered in their mother tongue. The focus group interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Data analysis was inductive, with codes emerging from the data itself (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The coding was descriptive, i.e. the code label describes the basic topic of the quote (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). The researcher coded the data for all three case studies and the codes developed and were adapted throughout this process. With quotes being the data in qualitative studies, the findings are illustrated using direct quotes from participants. These quotes are referenced using the focus group number (abbreviated as “FG”), followed by the line on which the quote is found within that transcript, for example for example “FG1:605”.

4. Results and Discussion: Improving Positive Attitudes Towards Dinokeng, Mkhambathi and Phinda.

This section first discusses the **main findings from each case**. For each community, a table with the basic data is supplied first. Based on this table, the most pertinent findings are discussed. All three case studies had the same coding frame. Even if a code had zero quotes, it is still included in the table, as that itself tells a story and aids the cross-case analysis later. For each case, a table is also provided which compares existing benefits with the benefits desired by each community.

The section then secondly considers the key findings from the **cross-case analysis**, where the data for each case study are compared against each other.

Main findings from each case

Kekana Gardens Community Bordering Dinokeng Game Reserve (DGR)

Table 1.

Code frequencies for Kekana Gardens community.

CODE LABEL	FOCUS GROUP 1 & 2
Basic needs	3
Community projects	1
Development/infrastructure	0
Employment	4
Enjoyment of reserve	0
Information/education	7
Involvement/interaction	4
Other	3
Training	1
TOTALS	23

The residents of Kekana Gardens clearly requested **information/education** as well as **involvement/interaction**, as illustrated in the selected quotes that follow. They desire this, because by knowing more, and interacting more they will understand the importance of the reserve and its animals; and they really want to understand. There

appears to be a genuine desire to be part of it. C1 want to respect the reserve, but need knowledge and interaction first. By interacting more, they will feel more involved. They want to get to know the landowners within Dinokeng.

“If you give me information, it will help. I understand that you protect animals and me – not only animals. I know you value me” (FG1:482).

“I think it’s very hard to protect what you don’t know. If we know those people who are owning those things, if we know the animals, then it will be easy for us to protect it. You can’t just tell someone they must protect it, but they don’t know about the game reserve. We need knowledge ...” (FG2:334”.

“Don’t be afraid to come and talk to us ... we want to be more active and involved. These animals belong to us” (FG1:481).

Participants also indicated that **employment** would improve positivity. There was dissatisfaction that non-locals are employed, and this creates negativity towards DGR, for example: *“Coming back to unemployment. If they can employ people from the area, there will be less crime” (FG2:605).*

Meeting **basic needs** for all is an impossible challenge, which park and tourism stakeholders can only partially alleviate. Participants mentioned donations for the elderly and orphans, for example: *“Donations for orphans and granny’s” (FG1:487).* The problem of hunger also emerged, in the context of food/meat being a benefit that would improve positivity: *“It’s like working in a restaurant, but you stay hungry all the time” (FG1:483).*

The issue of how secure the wall/fence is, and that electrifying it would increase the community’s sense of security also emerged under **“Other”**: *“Initially they expected the game reserve to be secure. But the electric fence is not working. People are scared. What if a lion comes? Hence they don’t like it. If the reserve electrifies the fence, it may change the local people’s minds” (FG2:431).*

To end the discussion on the Kekana Gardens community, Table 2 compares the existing benefits emanating from the reserve to the benefits that participants feel would improve positivity in future. The existing benefits were obtained from research by Queiros (2020) and fall beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is included because what participants “want” will be influenced by what they already “have”, and hence it is important to set this context. Where “benefits that improve positivity” are an extension of an existing benefit, these are shaded in grey and come first in the table. The benefits are listed in no particular order. This table is provided in the same way for the other two case studies further on in this section.

Table 2.

Comparing existing benefits with benefits that would improve positivity: Kekana Gardens/Dinokeng Game Reserve.

KEKANA GARDENS COMMUNITY/DINOKENG GAME RESERVE	
Existing benefits	Benefits that would improve positivity
Employment	Employment
Learning/training on the environment	Information/education
Soup kitchen/feeding schemes	Meeting basic needs
Spin-offs from tourism	Involvement/interaction
Less transport costs due to working in DGR	Electrifying the fence
Recipient of land claim	
Being able to visit DGR	

Note: The list of existing benefits does not claim to be an exhaustive list of all benefits received.

For the Kekana Gardens community, three benefits mentioned are an extension of existing benefits, namely employment, information/education and meeting basic needs. As discussed above, this community had a keen desire for the intangible benefits of information, involvement, interaction and education, even if the latter is on an informal basis. Tourism and conservation stakeholders would do well to provide more of this to improve positivity – focusing strongly on telling the community what is going on inside the reserve and providing opportunities for interaction and involvement where possible. Employment is also key, but in this fairly new reserve, the number of jobs that can be offered are limited. DGR landowners do come together to offer soup kitchens and food parcels, for example for Mandela Day, which is celebrated each year in South Africa on Nelson Mandela’s birthday (18 July). On that day, citizens are encouraged to donate time, money or items to improve the lives of others. While it would not be possible for this reserve to meet all the basic needs of a large community, these schemes could be increased where possible to positively impact pro-conservation attitudes and behaviour. Finally, in terms of electrifying the fence, participants expressed fear that dangerous animals and snakes could cross over to their community. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the boundary fence is negatively affected by vandalism (cuts in the fence). Landowners are serious about the security of the boundary and should reassure the community of this, conduct regular checks, and provide information on who to call and what to do if an animal escapes. These actions could improve positivity further.

Khanyayo Community Neighbouring Mkhambathi Nature Reserve (MNR)

Table 3.

Code frequencies for Khanyayo community.

CODE LABEL	FOCUS GROUP 1 & 2
Community projects	0
Development/infrastructure	10
Employment	5
Enjoyment of reserve	0
Other	1
Information/education	1
Involvement/interaction	2
Pride in reserve	0
Training	0
TOTALS	19

The Khanyayo participants strongly acknowledge that **development and infrastructure** is vital for both the local community and tourists and will result in **employment**. Specific mention was made of shops, more accommodation options, road access, better walking paths within the reserve, more facilities for community benefit such as a clinic, and a mobile phone network. Two examples of these quotes follow, followed by a quote illustrating the desperate desire for **employment**:

“We like to have that nature reserve. The only thing that must be improved is infrastructure [which] is very poor here ... If there are more tourists, then us as young people will get more jobs ...” (FG1:451).

“I think if the reserve or Eastern Cape Parks can try to get the investor who’s going to make more repairs so that there can be more visitors, that would also create the opportunities of jobs to the communities surrounding the reserve ...” (FG1:446).

“We want – because we are poor. We want to work in there. They must create work. So, there’s very big difference between us and Mkhambathi. That’s the main problem” (FG2:447).

Involvement/interaction also emerged as an intangible benefit to improve positivity, in the context of the community desiring better feedback and reporting from the Mkhambathi Land Trust (which comprises community members from different villages). An example follows:

“I think that ... the community should be more involved in everything that is happening in the nature reserve. ... I don’t think the board that is employed or that is dealing with the Mkhambathi thing, is transparent to the community. So, I think if the board can be transparent with everything to the community it could be much better” (FG2:88).

Under the code of **Information and education**, the one quote stated a desire for training on the importance of MNR: *“... I think community awareness about how important it is to have the nature reserve. So that the community will understand the impact that the nature reserve could have in our community. ... I think the youngsters could be also trained on something ... to do with the nature reserve so that they could understand more” (FG2:81).*

To end the discussion on the main findings from the Khanyayo community, Table 4 compares the existing benefits emanating from MNR to the benefits that Khanyayo participants feel would improve positivity in future.

Table 4.

Comparing existing benefits with benefits that would improve positivity: Khanyayo community/Mkhambathi Nature Reserve.

KHANYAYO COMMUNITY/MKHAMBATI NATURE RESERVE	
Existing benefits	Benefits that would improve positivity
Employment	Employment
Learning/training on the environment	Information/education
Facilities and infrastructure	Development and infrastructure
Access to natural resources and places of spiritual importance	Involvement/interaction
Recipient of land claim	
Being able to visit MNR	
Revenue sharing	
Learning new skills	
Support for schools and higher education	

Note: The list of existing benefits does not claim to be an exhaustive list of all benefits received.

The Khanyayo participants desire more employment, information/education and development/infrastructure than is currently received. MNR has suffered from lack of funding and support over the years, making these benefits complex to provide. Reserve management do strive where possible to provide permanent employment and contract jobs under various programmes, such as clearing invasive species, and clean-

up campaigns along the coast. The training received in the past did much to improve positivity, and the educational opportunities should continue to be pursued by reserve management and tourism stakeholders. Infrastructure remains a challenge. With a section of MNR currently being developed for high-end tourism, this may provide funding to improve infrastructure such as the road to MNR, which would also benefit the community.

The request for information/interaction is important and should be noted. Conservationists do attend community meetings and via the Mkhambathi Land Trust, community representatives are supposed to keep the community informed. Within the constraints of a small reserve with a small staff, outreach programmes aimed at informing the community of activities within the reserve and interacting with them will go far towards improving positivity towards conservation.

Mnqobokazi Community Bordering Phinda Private Game Reserve (PPGR)

Table 5 presents the data for the Mnqobokazi community.

Table 5.

Code frequencies for Mnqobokazi community.

CODE LABEL	FOCUS GROUP 1 & 2
Community projects	0
Development/infrastructure	3
Employment	2
Enjoyment of reserve	0
Information/education	2
Involvement/interaction	0
Other	2
TOTALS	9

The Mnqobokazi community had the least quotes on what would make them more positive, and this is probably due to the well-established beneficiation programmes currently run. PPGR offers high-end luxury tourism, and several benefits are possible due to donations from tourists. In addition, &Beyond, which is the group that PPGR belong to, has its own organisation, Africa Foundation, which is dedicated to community involvement and beneficiation.

Under **development/infrastructure**, three quotes occur, with two participants mentioning education-related infrastructure as a positivity builder – requesting a high school and college respectively, for example:

“Considering the good relationship that the community and the game reserve have, we would like ... the game reserve [to] look in our direction in terms of developing another high school, because we only have one high school in this area ...” (FG2:144).

“I think if Phinda can try to build a college for ... learners from these schools, so that they can go and be educated about nature conservation ... and go far” (FG2:165).

The third quote related to the desire for a shopping mall – *“she’s saying she would like to see the shopping mall being built ... which might boost the love of the game*

reserve, if the game reserve is the one that has proposed that, and then more job opportunities will be created out of that” (FG2:147).

Participants emphasised **information/education**, stating that more bursaries, and training and education on nature conservation that can lead to employment would make them more positive:

“... the CLEF bursary scheme that is offered by Phinda should be increased ... so that it provides opportunities for more people to ... benefit from this” (FG2:141).

“... he would like to see the game reserve providing opportunities or training for people who can be taken to universities or colleges to learn more about nature conservation ... and then be provided job opportunities after that within the game reserve – that will also have a ... positive impact to the community” (FG2:141).

Finally, Mngobokazi residents mentioned more **employment** opportunities as something that would positively influence communities (FG2:138); and training and education that could lead to employment within the reserve (FG2:141). Under ‘**other**’, the first quote was “it’s good to keep it as a game reserve but I think [for] people who are in the community – maybe they must give us a chance to buy shares” (FG1:151), and the second was a discussion on reserve expansion. One community member would like to see the reserve expanded, which is positive: “If there were a large area of land that is not in use, I would have loved to see the game reserve being expanded so that it accommodates more animals” (FG1:154). However, another elderly participant interjects that she disagrees, and that PPGR already has enough land.

To end the discussion on the findings from the Mngobokazi community, Table 6 compares the benefits currently received with the benefits participants felt would improve their positivity towards PPGR in future.

Table 6.

Comparing existing benefits with benefits that would improve positivity: Mngobokazi community/Phinda Private Game Reserve.

MNQOBOKAZI COMMUNITY/PHINDA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE	
Existing benefits	Benefits that would improve positivity
Facilities and infrastructure	Education-related infrastructure Shopping mall
Employment	Employment
Learning new skills	Training on nature conservation
Support for schools and higher education	More bursaries
Learning/training on the environment	Expanding PPGR to include more land
Recipient of land claim	Being able to buy shares in PPGR
Spin-offs from tourism (donations and inter-cultural contact)	
Big 5 draws tourists	
Benefits for sport	
Sponsorship for community facilities	

Note: The list of existing benefits does not claim to be an exhaustive list of all benefits received.

Offering a high-end tourism product and having an organisation dedicated to community programmes, PPGR can and does offer more benefits than the other two case studies. Existing benefits that the community would like to see more of include education-related infrastructure and more bursaries. Africa Foundation has focused strongly on education over the years and this is noted and appreciated by the

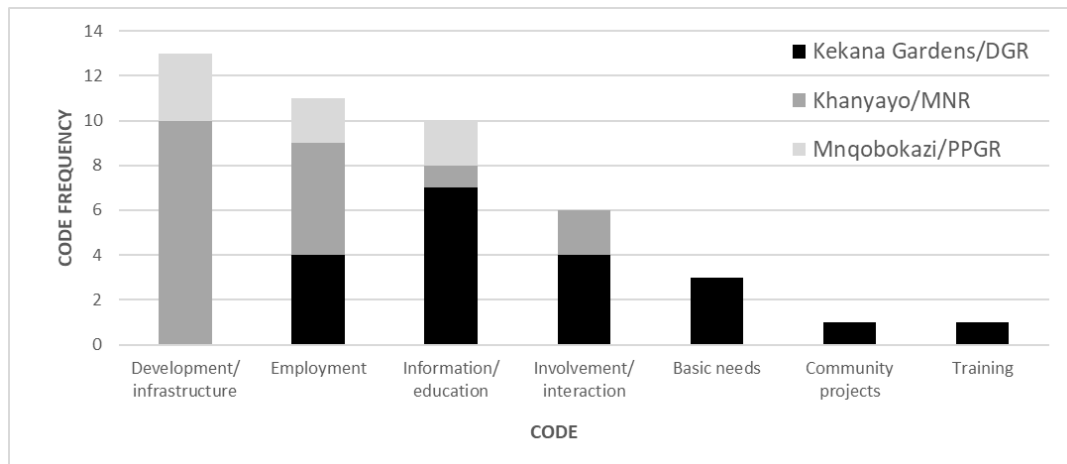
community. Again, the complexities of a large community emerge, where more of this is needed. PPGR employs more of the community than the other two case studies, but in a South Africa filled with need, these participants want to see more employment. While several training programmes exist, participants hone in on the desire for more training on nature conservation, in order for young people to be employed in future within the reserve. The last two benefits that participants would like to see in future are interesting. The desire for PPGR to have more land is most encouraging and reveals positivity and an appreciation for conservation.

Cross-case analysis

Having considered the main findings from each case, this section briefly conducts a cross-case analysis. Based on Figure 2, the top four benefits that participants identified as means to improve positivity towards their neighbouring protected area, are discussed.

Figure 2.

Increasing positivity in the communities bordering DGR, MNR and PPGR.



Development/infrastructure is strongly evident as a positivity builder, particularly for MNR, which is not very developed. Participants linked development and infrastructure with increased employment. **Employment** is also strong in its own right. With mentions at all three case studies, it can be concluded that this is certainly a benefit that improves positivity towards these protected areas. For **information/education**, ten quotes arose across the three case studies. For DGR, participants requested information as well as education in general. Considered cumulatively, it is clear that information and education are perceived as factors that improve positivity. **Involvement/interaction** is clearly important in encouraging community positivity towards the reserve. It arose fairly strongly for DGR, with participants seeking involvement and interaction because they want to know and understand the importance of the reserve, and this will increase their sense of involvement. They have a sense of ownership and want to feel ownership over the reserve. In other words, involvement and interaction were linked to locals knowing and understanding the importance of the reserve and its conservation. At MNR, it was about the need for interaction with and transparency of the board of the Mkhambathi Land Trust, that constitutes community members. For PGR, it did not emerge, most likely because the

community experiences a good degree of involvement and interaction with staff and management working for this reserve.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations.

For disadvantaged communities bordering protected areas in Africa, well-balanced and value-laden beneficiation programmes are essential. However, some key pieces in the puzzle seem to be missing. Little research has focused on which benefits improve positivity towards nature conservation. Furthermore, intangible benefits as potential causal mechanisms for conservation is insufficiently explored in research. With these research gaps in mind, this paper aimed to determine, from the perspective of the local communities, what further benefits would improve positivity towards nature conservation at three protected areas within South Africa. The findings from each case study were first discussed, followed by cross-case analysis, which aimed to draw common themes, from which recommendations could be gleaned.

Future research could be done in other communities to expand current knowledge on the benefits that improve positivity towards conservation – the benefits that motivate communities to want to have the land under conservation, rather than expropriated for other less-sustainable options.

This research highlighted that it is insufficient to only study beneficiation and what benefits are currently in place. To build a complete puzzle, stakeholders need to know which benefits communities would *like to have in place*. The paper also revealed that intangible benefits are very important to local communities, and, while job provision is something to strive for, the intangibles may be simpler to implement than tangible benefits.

The paper now concludes with several recommendations for tourism and protected area managers. They outline what can be done differently in future to enhance community wellbeing as well as the conservation of African wildlife and the natural environment that sustains it. These recommendations are applicable beyond the South African and African context, to conservationists and tourism stakeholders in any setting where a protected area borders a rural or peri-urban community which is economically disadvantaged.

- Offer general education, training and skills development. These are highly visible benefits, which can impact the positivity of local communities towards conservation.
- Provide information on the reserve and keep the neighbouring community informed on what is going on. Ensure that local people are aware of the benefits offered by the presence of tourism in the protected area. Openly discuss limitations on benefits and what can realistically be offered.
- Where possible, increase permanent and contract employment, as this is a dire need and improves positivity towards the protected area. As far as is possible, avoid the employment of non-locals.
- Where development/infrastructure is lacking for the community and tourists, work progressively towards improving this.
- Focus on ways to involve and interact with neighbouring communities. They want to be involved and it helps them to understand conservation better and their role in it. For example, attend community meetings; take school children into the reserve; and organise community clean-up campaigns.

- Positivity builders can be a combination of tangibles (such as employment and infrastructure) and intangibles (such as interaction, involvement, information and education). For cash strapped protected areas, offering intangibles may be more achievable than tangibles, and goes a long way towards improving attitudes concerning protected areas.

By asking the right questions, tourism and conservation stakeholders can find out which benefits, if present, would improve the positivity of local communities towards conservation. Having this knowledge, and acting on it, is essential for two key reasons – enhancing community wellbeing and safeguarding Africa’s wild spaces.

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