

COMMUNITY LTD. AND THE SPIRIT OF ETHNO-ENTERPRISE

Exploring Cultural Incorporation and Branding Among the Makuleke

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Anthropology at the University of Stellenbosch.



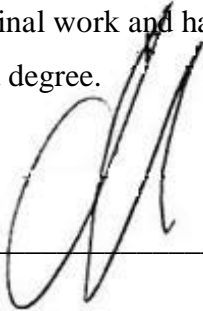
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March 2010

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment/thesis/dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature: _____

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Date: 12 February 2010

Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the case study of the Makuleke in Limpopo province. This community entered the public spotlight when it regained its former homeland in the Kruger National Park. It currently partakes in an extensive programme on 'responsible tourism' via commercial expansion. This concession allows (or is supposed to allow) for increased community development and economic growth in the Makuleke region. The community has become more business-like in their approach to this concession. This process is encapsulated by the formalisation of the land management structures in what I refer to as Makuleke Inc. Makuleke Inc. has at its heart a 'cultural business' of which an 'authentic Makuleke' is presented and traded. I detail the production of unique, bona fide culture through branding (that is, commercial representation). This practice contributes to new or different configurations of identity and collective belonging. ð

Key terms: responsible tourism, development, concession, cultural incorporation, branding, commercial representation, identity, collective belonging.

In hierdie navorsingstuk behartig ek die gevallestudie van die Makuleke in Limpopo. Hierdie gemeenskap het die publieke oog betree nadat sy tuisland in die Kruger Nasionale Wildtuin teruggewen is. Tans is dit betrokke by 'n omvattende program in 'verantwoordelike toerisme' deur middel van kommersiële ontwikkeling. Hierdie konsessie dra by (of is veronderstel om by te dra) tot verhoogde gemeenskaps- en ekonomiese groei in die Makuleke omgewing. Die gemeenskap se benadering tot genoemde toegewing is besigheids-georiënteerd. Hierdie proses word gekenmerk deur die formalisering van die grond-beheerstrukture deur wat ek noem Makuleke Inc. (ingelyf). Makuleke Inc. is asø ware 'n 'kulturele onderneming' waar 'n 'egte Makuleke' voorgestel en verhandel word. Ek beskryf die produksie van 'n unieke, egte kultuur deur die gebruik van handelsmerke (dit is, kommersiële voorstelling). Hierdie proses dra by tot nuwe of ander gestaltes van identiteit en gemeenskaplikheid.

Sleutelterm: verantwoordelike toerisme, ontwikkeling, konsessie, kulturele inkorporasie, handelsmerke, kommersiëlevoorstelling, identiteit, gemeenskaplikheid.

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Acronyms

CBRNM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CPA	Communal Property Association
Exco	Executive Committee (CPA)
GLTP	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park
Inc.	Incorporated
JMB	Joint Management Board
KNP	Kruger National Park
LCC	Land Claims Commission
Ltd.	Limited
MCC&H	Makuleke Cultural Centre and Homestay
MDT	Makuleke Development Trust
PDI	Previously disadvantaged individual
RBN	Royal Bafokeng Nation
SANParks	South African National Parks
WS	Wilderness Safaris

Cultural identity, in the here-and-now, represents itself ever more as two things at once: the object of choice and self-construction, typically through the act of consumption, and the manifest product of biology, genetics, human essence.

Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:1)

Introduction

The Makuleke community is perhaps most renowned for its recent involvement in a high-profile land restitution case (see Steenkamp & Uhr, 2000; Robins & Van der Waal, 2008). After being forcibly removed in 1969 from the Pafuri region in the northern Kruger National Park (KNP), they successfully won back their land nearly three decades later. This extraordinary occasion coincided with an official agreement to not only co-own, but also co-manage their newfound property.

Realising the many advantages to be gained from ecotourism, the Makuleke chose to preserve their restored land whilst exploiting the region for its tourist potential. This ambition evolved into a unique community-based natural resource management programme (CBNRM). This process is also linked to the establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), comprising the KNP, Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, Gonarezhou National Park, Manjinji Pan Sanctuary and Malipati Safari Area in Zimbabwe, including two districts between Kruger and Gonarezhou, namely the Sengwe land in Zimbabwe and the Makuleke region in South Africa (GLTP, 2008) (see Annexure 1).

The Makuleke (among others) were lauded for their progressive approach to reform. They have won back their heritage seemingly unscathed by their experience of racial segregation and land dispossession that was to be their fate. And what is more, they transformed their newly acquired land into tourist destinations, leading to the development of two plush lodges and a cultural village. These visitor centres have become hallmarks of post-apartheid restitution, underscoring the fruits of government-citizenry collaborations.

Of course, the road to restitution is not without potholes. Many have raised concerns over the feasibility of this so-called participative endeavour. It would seem though that there is abundant research on the issue of the workability, or rather *sustainability*, of the Makuleke CBNRM programme (see Reid, 2001; Steenkamp & Uhr, 2000; Ramutsindela, 2002, 2004). Yet what interests me is not so much the ongoing developments within the CBNRM management, or its ability to enhance grassroots participation. What interests me is something else entirely: branding.

Arguably, the Makuleke community has become associated with the idea of ‘profitable conservation’, selling ‘nature’ as a commodity aimed at boosting the community’s social and economic presence. This involves the creation of tourist opportunities, and creating individual and collective livelihoods. In this context of eco-tourism and ‘economy’, an emerging phenomenon is that of *cultural trademarking*. Until recently this notion has been less scrutinised within a framework of rural conservation and development. Indeed, Comaroff & Comaroff have written extensively on cultural economies and ethnic (in)corporations (2009). It is salient from this reading and accompanying analyses (see Oomen, 2005; Cattelino, 2008) that ‘venture culturalists’ increasingly look to the market as a means of survival.

The chief arguments in my examination of the Makuleke case study are:

- That the Makuleke group, particularly the elite members of the CPA and royal family, have been involved in promoting what is authentically Makuleke by means of ‘cultural incorporation’
- At the essence of incorporation is *branding*: objectifying culture for the market;
- That this process of *commercial representation* (re)shapes Makuleke cultural identity as well as notions of belonging and cultural citizenship in public life (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:16).

Essentially these arguments are rooted in three central fields of scholarly discourse:

1. Culture and its commodification: the branding and abstraction of difference (see Mazarella, 2003).
2. Ethnicity and the social sciences: ethnicity seen as both innate and constructed, ‘blood’ and choice (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:46).
3. Identity, subjectivity and selfhood: exoticising the *self* in the identity economy.¹

¹ See Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:32).

From the abovementioned discourses, there are two strands of theoretical assertions. Firstly, cultural incorporation and branding is a process of homogenisation and abstraction. This means that 'culture' fragments in the face of commercialism and members are often alienated by the process of reducing them to a homogeneous *product* (see Hillman, 2003). Fragmentation is not necessarily decay, nor is it total alienation. But it does serve to undermine collective value by condensing 'culture' into an abstract representation, void of flow, heterogeneity and diversity.

Secondly, underlying cultural incorporation and branding is a notion of interchangeable sameness (Adorno, 2006). Cultural incorporation is here empowerment through business or 'survival through culture'. This aligns members to a collective consciousness of *valuable* homogeneity. There is much to be said for this line of argument, especially in the framework of *new social enterprise* – a fresh approach to grassroots empowerment. New social enterprise is championed by a handful of nonprofits² around the globe, all promoting 'business solutions to social problems'. For the Makuleke, this is exactly the case. And essentially, at the base of this social venture is branding – the significant activity of marketing a product to an audience.

My argument will transcend the aforementioned dichotomy, noting that Makuleke Incorporation is a simultaneous process of self-distancing *and* self-recognition (McLuhan, 1994:57). I will conclude that by 'enterprising' tradition and custom – especially the narrative of their removal – the Makuleke build an essentialised but *shared* brand, and that this refigures collective self-awareness and cultural subjectivity. But, this practice has limits. If the 'Makuleke' brand is not directed effectively, then its trade will hinge on cultural exoticism. This may well satisfy tourists' own lack of authenticity. Yet it could also diminish cultural value and parody a respected community.

I refer to the Makuleke at this point as a rural constituency, not as a homogeneous tribesfolk. This grouping is characterised by varieties of kinship, ethnicity, social networks, cultural paradigms, historical contexts and extra-local networks. Despite being a heterogeneous grouping though, the Makuleke trademark is for the most part carried forward by an elite squad of brand ambassadors: The Communal Property Association (CPA) and its Executive committee (Exco), the Royal Family, the Joint Management Board (JMB) and the tour operator, Wilderness Safaris.

² HEART Social Investments; Ashoka; Tshikululu, and the Acumen Fund (to name but a few). See Heart (2009).

These role-players are key to my examination and I will evaluate their relationships with the Makuleke community accordingly. Before attempting the task of dissecting the Makuleke experience, let us turn to the objectives of, and motivation for, this undertaking. Finally, we shall examine the methodology employed.

Objectives

It is not my intention to reveal the Makuleke and its traditional authorities to be classic venture capitalists. I will instead argue that they have entered the sphere of ‘social enterprise’. A social enterprise is essentially a market-based solution to a social problem, not limited to poverty, hunger, crime, environmental degradation, illiteracy, and the like (see Heart, 2009). I shall maintain that such a venture is to the benefit of the Makuleke community, both in terms of social health and economic wealth. For this region is plagued with a number of socio-economic constraints.

To varying degrees of influence, these constraints range from unemployment, a general prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and a lack of economic opportunity (jobs, household income, business dealings). As we shall come to understand, social enterprise may be seen as an important counter measure to these challenges. When I speak of cultural incorporation, then, my intention is to show that this once-peripheral group has become influential. In this regard, I move to define incorporation and argue for its significance in the Makuleke context.

By asserting that the Makuleke, specifically the elite groupings, have become venture capitalists, I will point to the next logical step: branding. I place clear emphasis on ‘objectifying culture for the market’ and my aim is to show how this is both relevant to the Makuleke and underpins a greater concept of cultural objecthood. The principles of branding are important here, and so too their application when commodifying ‘culture’ or identity.

Ultimately, with this focus in mind, it is my objective to showcase the Makuleke community in a different academic light. Much scholarly interest focuses on their CBNRM programme (Mello & Thornhill, 2007), their role in ecotourism (Mahony & Van Zyl, 2001), or even their position in land reform discourse (see Robins & Van der Waal, 2008). Yet I believe the phenomena of incorporation and branding to be both salient and subtle. For that reason, I endeavour to make

apparent the flow of the identity-cultural economy as well as the Makuleke's active interpretation thereof.

Rationale

“How might indigenous communities and persons survive in the rapidly changing circumstances of life...and how might their environments, both “natural” and patently human, most effectively be sustained?” (Brenneis, 2003:219).

This excerpt stresses a valid thought; how do we sustain both our environmental and social interests? Given the global economic downturn and inflated regional poverty, social (and ecological!) contexts are becoming increasingly volatile. This research endeavour is largely motivated by an interest in innovative ways of tackling these issues through social and cultural enterprise. Globally, nonprofit agents increasingly realise that charitable giving is not sustainable for addressing social needs.³ Mega-corporates dish out large wads of cash each year as part of their Corporate Social Investment spending (see SASIX, 2009), but ironically, the investment part lacks. A “traditional” social (or nonprofit) organisation is hampered by a capital barrier. This means that it is reliant primarily on handouts in the form of grants and donations:

Handouts, however well-meaning, are most often a temporary reprieve for cash-strapped charities struggling for survival. We acknowledge that there are many trusted and deserving organisations to support and that charitable contributions are an important driver of the social sector. At the bottom of the pyramid however, handouts create dependency and distortion. Of greater concern is that the capital available for grants and donations is only a drop in a rising ocean of need facing the African continent (Heart, 2009).

For the Makuleke community in Limpopo, a province characterised by a dismal literacy rate, seasonal malaria and cholera influx, and an increasingly impoverished citizenry, social enterprise becomes an interesting possibility. Despite harsh circumstances, the group has succeeded in restoring their lost land and with it perhaps their dignity. And to make this “restitution” even more extraordinary, they have grown a viable business; one that has both a financial *and* social return. In a local context that is, at best, disjointed, a move toward social enterprise is relatively unexpected.

³ P. Shrimpton, pers. comm., 2009.

Social entrepreneurship, though not a new concept, impacts on culture and reconditions communal values into a new frame of social reference. Social enterprise offers a workable solution, perhaps. And underlying this concept of social venture is *marketing* or *branding*. Indeed, the culture of competition is vicious in both the venture and social capital space. Because venture culturalists suddenly have to challenge one another for a piece of the tourist pie, they too employ strategic and innovative marketing techniques in outwitting their opponents. And this offers tremendous excitement for the keen anthropologist, who now drools at the sight of a fresh, startling cultural exchange.

Methodology

I resided in the Makuleke community, at the Cultural Centre, for a total of five weeks during 2008 and 2009. Fieldwork was conducted using in-depth interviews and participant observation. These are the primary constituents of anthropological investigation and are the key methods that inform the study (see Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Bernard, 1998). Research was also archival: official minutes, anthropological journals, the World Wide Web, and general publications were examined.

Research participants were selected both on the basis of their involvement in various communal structures ó the CPA, the JMB, the Royal Family ó as well as on the basis of their general residency of the community itself. In the case of the former, participants were often engaged through local contact points at the Bed and Breakfast where I resided. I was fortunate to have met these contact persons early on in the fieldwork process. They were well-connected and could suggest a number of (worthwhile) individuals for me to interview: those that were mainly authority figures, and knowledgeable around community activities.

General residents were selected following a similar strategy ó initial contact points at the local Bed and Breakfast, leading again to other contact points, ad infinitum. This created a neat snowball effect of interviewee selection: study participants were met, continually, through daily encounters, spawning even more encounters. This process was somewhat haphazard, yet considerably valuable in meeting interesting characters, with differing backgrounds, experiences, stories, and viewpoints.

The process, then, of selecting interviewees, coincides with the criteria presented by Spradley (1979) (cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:288) for selecting respondents: enculturation (those individuals that are familiar with the local context); current involvement (respondents that are active in issues concerning the study); and adequate time (ample time allowance for conducting the interview). Indeed, the majority of respondents were at least active members of the Makuleke community, and knowledgeable in many of the issues that I aimed to explore. Albeit to varying degrees, and despite being selected somewhat indiscriminately at times.

Interviews were unstructured for the most part. Questions relied on both the flow of conversation and the (subtle) interpersonal dynamics existing between the researcher and respondent. In this manner I followed the approach of basic individual interviewing (open, flexible, iterative) as well as depth individual interviews (focusing more on the *context* of the interview) (see Babbie & Mouton, 2001:291). Ultimately then, the interview process was very much dependent on local dynamics, contexts, and interactions. In this sense, the research methodology was dictated through the research field.

Generally, respondents included:

- Members of the Communal Property Association (CPA) and its Executive Committee (Exco);
- Representatives of the Joint Management Board (JMB);
- Members and representatives of the Makuleke Royal Family;
- Employees at the tourist lodges⁴ and cultural centre⁵;
- Visiting researchers/academics;
- Brand(ing) experts;
- Pioneers of social enterprise in the South African -fourth sectorø (see Heart, 2009; Fourth Sector (2009);

⁴ Outpost and Pafuri.

⁵ Makuleke Cultural Centre & Homestay (MCC&H).

- Delegates from the Namibian government (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and the SPAN project); and
- General community members.

Ethical concerns⁶

Throughout the research undertaking, there were no serious ethical concerns. I followed the standard practice of informed consent and anonymity, and allowed at all times for freedom of expression. The only notable moral anxiety was that of unearthing potentially destructive information. The CPA, JMB and Royal Family groupings had been plagued by allegations of corruption and nepotism. On more than one occasion, I was informed of infighting and adverse political undercurrents. A murder of a prominent Makuleke member and community advocate did not help my cause, and it set the tone for a wildfire of conspiracy theories. Nonetheless, I have assured my participants of confidentiality and will not divulge information that may potentially discredit or harm them.



Village thoroughfare

⁶ As an ethical note, consent was obtained for all the pictures listed throughout this document. Moreover, all pictures in this document were taken by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

Chapter I – From past to present

As a preamble, I think it necessary to contextualise my argument. This will be done by historically situating the Makuleke in a discourse of removal, and then to interpret that in relation to current developments, particularly restitution and ecotourism. Here the flow of cultural branding cannot be understated, and I will argue for its significance accordingly.

Removal and Restitution: reconciling differences

The Makuleke's former homeland, the Pafuri Triangle, lies in the northernmost corner of South Africa's largest conservation area, the Kruger National Park (KNP), bordering Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Bounded by the Limpopo River in the north, and the Levhuvu River in the south, it contains the majority of the Park's biodiversity (approximately 75%) (Steenkamp & Uhr, 2000:2). Given its rich wildlife, the Pafuri region has become an important area for the many stakeholders in southern African conservation.

Indeed, the area has long been the object of formal conservation status for the National Parks Board. In 1933, it was declared a provincial nature reserve. Subsequent attempts were made to remove the Makuleke from the region so as to incorporate it within the KNP. These unsuccessful efforts did nothing more but to increase tensions between conservation authorities and the Makuleke community. Robins & Van der Waal (2008:57) (citing Bunn, 2000) state that in 1947 'the Parks Board argued that the Makuleke were neither citizens with property rights, and nor did they constitute a 'proper' chieftaincy. Instead, the Board claimed that historically they were vassals of neighbouring Chief Mhinga who lived to the west of the KNP.'

The then KNP warden 'Col. JAB Sandenbergh' regarded the Makuleke as a 'law unto themselves', due to their unstable identity, associated with their historical experiences and cross-border relationships (ibid.). The warden cited instances of Makuleke marrying women from Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique, the latter travelling to and settling in South Africa, illegally. This resulted, according to the warden, in the Pafuri region being a refuge for illegal immigrants. Ultimately, the Makuleke were deemed ungovernable: 'In the run up to the removal, therefore, it was finally decided that continued Makuleke occupation of the land was incompatible with the conservation management objectives' (Steenkamp & Uhr, 2000:2).

In 1969, the Makuleke community was forcibly removed from the Pafuri area (Harries, 1987). Most of their land was incorporated under the jurisdiction of the KNP as well as the Madimbo Corridor, a military cordon along the Zimbabwean border. The community then numbered between 2000 and 3000 people, and was resettled to the south-western outskirts of the KNP ó an area today known as Ntlhaveni. As detailed by Harries (1987) and Steenkamp & Uhr (2000:2) the removal coincided with a land swap between the then National Parks Board and the Department of Bantu Affairs.

About 24 thousand hectares of land were excised from the KNP and added to the emerging homeland of Gazankulu (ibid.). The Makuleke were given about 6 thousand hectares, and the rest of the land was for the resettlement of other Tsonga (Shangaan) speakers from the predominantly Venda-speaking region in the north (ibid.). All of this land was placed under the new jurisdiction of the Mhinga Tribal Authority (see Harries, 1987). This has since led to conflict between the Makuleke authority and that of Mhinga ó the latter claiming chieftaincy and control over the Makuleke group (see Robins & Van der Waal, 2008). It was also reported that during and after this time, many of the Makuleke group fell prey to famine, malnutrition and lack of basic resources (like water), directly or indirectly related to the poor state of the land (Mahony & Van Zyl, 2001:28; Robins & Van der Waal, 2008:59).

With the rise of democratic national government almost thirty years later, there was suddenly a glimmer of hope for peoples historically marginalised. The new ANC leadership committed itself to reversing the social inequalities that had so long cursed non-white South Africans. An array of legal acts aimed at compensating for past losses was spawned. And as such, displacement was an important focus. This was tightly encapsulated in the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994, also promulgated as part of the 1996 constitution.

The Act stated that property (though not limited to land) could be expropriated in matters of public purpose or interest. Expropriation would then be subject to compensation, reflecting an *equitable* balance between public interest and the interests of those affected. The so-called public interest pertains to the nation's commitment to land reform that will facilitate fair access to all South Africa's natural resources. A testament, then, to government's pledge to securing land restitution.

Official restitution discourses were those that emphasised reconciliation, nation building and economic development rather than retributive justice (Robins & Van der Waal, 2008:54). And the Makuleke seemed to take these very seriously. In 1995, they lodged a land claim on the Kruger Park Pafuri area, based on the Restitution of Land Rights Act. The claim was settled in 1997/8. Rather than opting for compensation, the Makuleke leadership formed a joint-venture partnership between its Communal Property Association and South African National Parks (SANParks)⁷ to co-manage the now Makuleke property. A Joint Management Board, consisting of members of both the CPA and SANParks, would preside over the management of the region. These role players and the impacts of their leadership activities within the Makuleke community will be discussed in more detail at a later stage.



A primary school near the offices of the CPA

⁷ SANParks is the leading conservation authority in all national parks around the country, responsible for 3,751,113 hectares of protected land in 20 national parks (SANParks, 2009).

Restitution and beyond: new beginnings and new challenges

The settlement agreement between Makuleke and SANparks constituted a co-management agreement, stipulating that:

- the land be used for conservation purposes, deeming KNP responsible for conservation management;
- the land forms part of KNP as a Contractual Park with reference to the Protected Areas Act; and
- the Makuleke must establish a legal body ó in this case the Communal Property Association ó to manage commercial activities on the land.

The table below lists the distribution of property rights to the Makuleke region, as defined by the co-management treaty (adapted from Turner, 2006:10):

Right	Ownership	Restrictions
Alienation	Makuleke CPA can sell, alienate or encumber the land	SANParks has pre-emptive rights; must be notified of intent to sell & has first right of refusal
Access	Makuleke CPA and community members are entitled to access	Subject to JMB policy
Permanent residence	n/a	Not allowed, unless consistent with conservation
Agriculture	n/a	Not allowed
Land use	Makuleke CPA	Solely for conservation and associated commercial activities

Use of natural resources	Makuleke CPA may use sand, stone, etc. for building and other approved activities	JMB to define policy
Building rights	Makuleke CPA can create commercial facilities (e.g. lodges); research facility; museum; royal kraal	Must be consistent with conservation
Infrastructure	Makuleke CPA	SANParks can use as necessary to continue conservation management
Subsurface rights	State retains mineral resources; mining and prospecting is forbidden	If state policy changes, state must offer rights to the CPA at a fair and reasonable price

In terms of commercialisation then, the Makuleke community has 100% utilisation rights. They are thus able to exploit the area fully for its tourist potential, provided it is within the interest of conservation. On the other hand, to generate any income from tourist activities would require an initial monetary investment. The CPA did not have access to hefty funds, nor did it have the capacity to generate sustainable tourist revenue. For this reason they opted for a joint venture with several tour operators.

At the outset the idea was to develop two lodges for tourist-visitors and one training camp for students. The contracts to these were acquired via a public tender procedure. The establishment of tourist lodges would see the community receiving a percentage of revenue and lead to job creation. The community would take lodge ownership once they were up and running for a general period of fifteen years (depending on contract specifics). All generated benefits would be deposited into the Makuleke Development Trust and distributed according to the fund allocation strategy posed by the CPA and its Executive Committee. The allocation strategy would apportion funds to relevant community projects, such as the improvement of the local primary school building, and the like.

Before the lodges became a reality, the Makuleke took part in hunting to boost their income. Their first hunt within the KNP area (in 2001) included two elephants and two buffalo. Even though the hunting offer doubled each year from 2001 to 2003, hunting made them less money than anticipated and only allowed for the creation of two jobs. Hunting was abandoned in 2004 and remains a non-income-activity to the present day. The reasons for this are twofold. For one, KNP management objected to hunting in a conservation area. This was despite a 'contractual park' agreement, where the sustainable use of natural resources was *allowed*. And secondly, the Makuleke came to realise the benefits of tourism, deeming it an effective monetary replacement for hunting. With a generous portion of lodge revenue, based on a solid occupancy rate, hunting was deemed to be superfluous. Certain CPA representatives are still dissatisfied by this, pointing to a dubious contractual relationship with SANParks.

The first lodge, or commercial development, was called *Outpost*. Commercial rights were signed over to a local tour operator & this decision was perhaps too hasty and bestowed little benefit upon the community itself. The CPA ascribes this to an effort to 'get the ball rolling' and that it was eager to see revenue and productivity. The commercial advantages for the Makuleke itself constituted 10% of gross lodge revenue and a 2% signing fee (which amounted to about R500 000).

In the period that followed, the tour operation was sold and taken over by new owners: Wilderness Safaris. They proposed to develop three lodges, totalling 88 beds. Each lodge was granted 15 years (depending on its commencement date) until ownership was transferred to the Makuleke. The change in tour operator led to a dramatic improvement in commercial gain: only Makuleke were employed⁸ at the Outpost and 22% ownership interest was given to the CPA in addition to the 12% revenue.

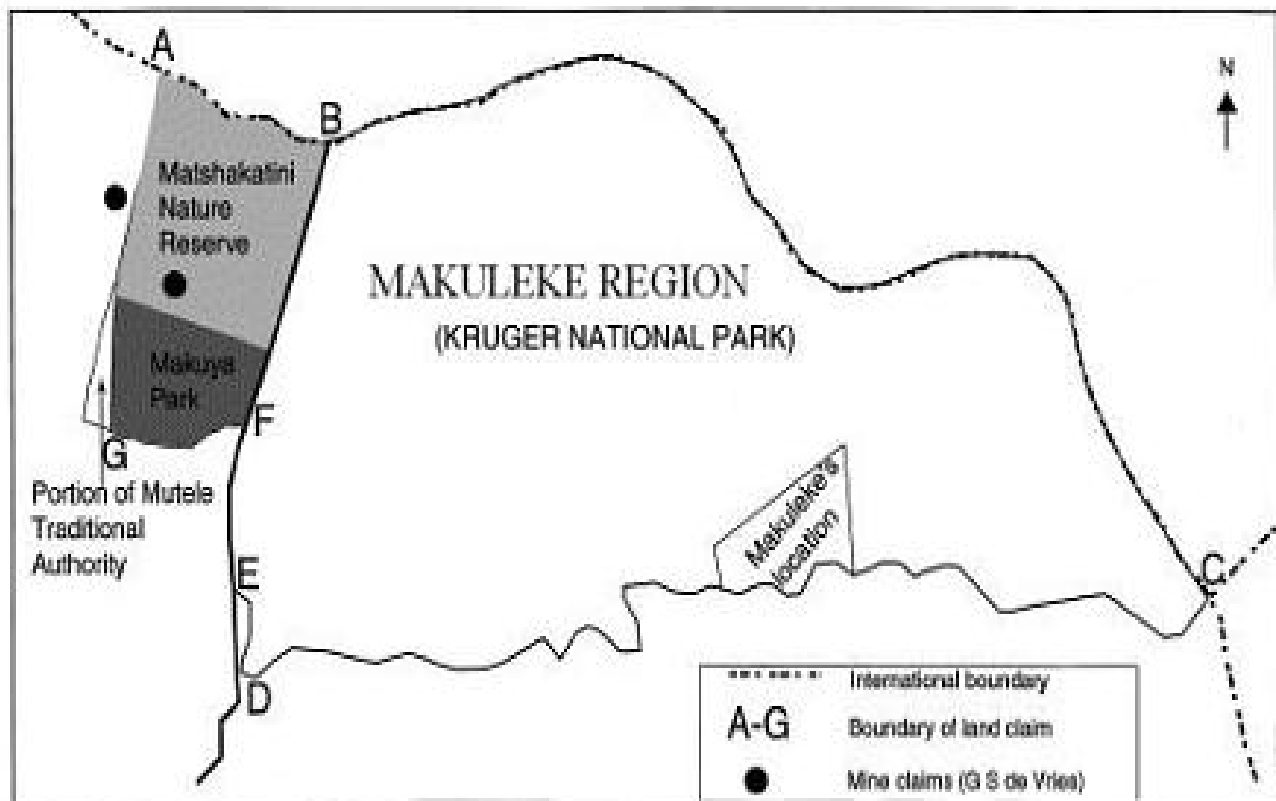
These positives notwithstanding, the contract between the Makuleke and its tour operators is complex. Community benefits are slow to trickle down from above, especially concerning the training programme. Proper commercialisation could also be detrimental to conservation management & full environmental audits are done every month to ensure that lodges comply with KNP standards. And what was salient from the many workshops I attended during my stay, there

⁸ Currently 19 (at the time of writing).

was a division between the vested interests of the community and those of Wilderness Safaris and SANparks. These interests pertained by and large to the formal utilisation of the land, and the benefits that would accrue from this.

Indeed, community leaders and members of the CPA feel that the bargaining and negotiation position of the CPA (and its Executive) is hindered because of the membership structure clause that is contained within the co-management contract. According to the contract, the CPA is obliged to change its membership and leadership every three years by means of a voting system. When new members are appointed, they are often inexperienced, have little knowledge about the contract or the stance of negotiations, and have to go through a lengthy learning period. Such a membership change inevitably weakens the CPA's bargaining capacity and prevents the organisation from building a strong secretarial unit.

Despite these complexities, the Makuleke suit is an intriguing land restitution case. It has the potential to deliver sustainable and ecologically-conscious results for the broader Makuleke community and the Kruger National Park. By examining the policy particulars of the contract between the Makuleke community and tour operators within the KNP, the numbers and deliverables seem positive. Even so, the co-management of the contract has become problematic and resulted in irregularities in the relationship between the Makuleke CPA, JMB, SANParks and Wilderness Safaris. This to the extent that the flow of tourist revenue to the Development Trust – including its database of beneficiaries – is undermined, consistently.



Extent of the Makuleke land claim (A – G). Adapted from Turner (2006:7).

The way forward: CBNRM or cultural incorporation?

Despite its inherent challenges, eco-sustainability with the benefit of revenue-generating tourism was preferred above local natural exploitation or subsistence agriculture. The Makuleke case came to represent the answer to the difficulties of managing relationships between communities and conservationists, people and parks (Robins & Van der Waal, 2008). It was this that contributed to their reputation as model conservationists.

Conservation has a history of displacing local peoples and undermining hunting and farming practices. Natural reserves were considered pristine environments: they conserved wildlife and vegetation; they could not be subject to human intrusion, not even resident communities (Reid, 2001; Pimbert & Pretty, 1995; Adams & Hulme, 1998). In the long run, this has resulted in land tenure disputes as illustrated by the Makuleke case. Conservation disputes also relate to changes in access to resources – i.e. land used for agriculture, foraging and hunting; water; firewood – and the anxieties related to dislocation. These concerns include the symbolic meanings attributed

to land as ðhomeö, the loss of social networks, the distress of physical relocation and the loss of income-generating activities. (Dovie, 2003; DeMotts, 2005; Fabricius and deWet, 1999)

During the last three decades, however, the idea of an isolated, pristine conservancy has been questioned. Ecological systems came to be seen as a complex interchange between human beings and the natural environment:

The concept of wilderness as the untouched or untamed land is mostly an urban perception, the view of people who are far removed from the natural environment they depend on for raw resourcesí The current composition of mature vegetation may well be the legacy of past civilizations, the heritage of cultivated fields and managed forestsí Until we understand and teach that the tropical forests are -both artefact and habitatø we will be advocating policies for a mythical pristine environment that exists only in our imagination. (Pimbert & Pretty; 1995:21)

Conservationists increasingly realise the important role of people in natural resource management. In some cases, the removal of communities from conservancies ironically contributed to natural degradation in that area. Pimbert and Pretty (1995) (cited in Friedman, 2005) for example write of the Maasai in Kenya who were banished from the rich Serengeti grasslands. Once this community was removed, the site soon turned into dire woodland and antelope herds had lost much grazing land. Cases like these strengthen the argument that indigenous communities are integral in maintaining conserved areas.

Over time, two leading strands of thought in the community-based natural resource management paradigm emerged:

- Conservation goals could only be attained by recognising and incorporating local inhabitants, especially in decision-making; and
- Conservation depended largely on a *vernacular* dynamic of local peoples, where site-specific economies and social traditions are direct expressions of the relationship between residents and their habitats (see Friedman, 2005).

The above notions were certainly fresh in the conservation arena, and were integrated in two early programmes that were groundbreaking in CBNRM development: the World Conservation Union's World Conservation Strategy (1980) and the World Wildlife Fund's Wildlife and Human Needs Programme (1985) (Adams & Hulme, 1998). Both programmes emphasised the

significant role of local communities, including their site-specific social and economic activities, in maintaining conserved land.

By the late 1990s, CBNRM became an important strategy in conservation management. It was balanced in approach, in that it stressed local participation by means of generating income from natural resources whilst sustaining and protecting those same resources. In the case of the Makuleke too, it certainly features prominently. The economic element is also evident here, especially considering the view that nature is used by the KNP as a *commodity*.

That said, CBNRM came to be recognised as a grassroots initiative, a bottom-up approach to understanding how best to achieve results by involving local peoples in addressing relevant problems (Mello & Thornhill, 2007:289). It has at its core a social concern; the empowerment of its stakeholders, for the benefit of the *collective*. Conservation here denotes the protection of natural communal assets, which implies the safeguarding of biodiversity. Mello and Thornhill (2007:289) list some of the key objectives of CBNRM⁹:

- Strengthen community relations and economic empowerment;
- Build constituencies for parks and promote biodiversity conservation;
- Improve access for communities to sustainable resources in parks, which can be used for cultural, spiritual and recreational purposes;
- Facilitate the establishment of park forums, providing a platform for effective collaboration, co-management initiatives and information-sharing between communities, stakeholders and parks.

Although CBNRM is the foundation of the Makuleke's post-restitution activity, the Makuleke are now negotiating entry into another territory, *cultural production*. They have championed tourism and used that to fund communal infrastructure (for example the upgrading of local school buildings, the upgrading of roads, and the installation of street lighting). They partnered with big players both in business and government and crafted a leadership structure to oversee these processes. There is clearly a lot more at play (and at stake!) here than mere CBNRM.

⁹ Also, see SANParks (2009).

The activities I mentioned earlier are aligned to a chain of production; one that must now be managed in order to make it workable in future. During my research I became aware of the skills shortage in the CPA and elsewhere; the allegations of corruption; the lack of widespread community participation; the disproportion in co-management; and the like. I was made aware too of the general aura of doubt among those who have yet to see any real change to their way of life. Though these factors may be unsettling, there are possibilities for success.

The Makuleke are now well-known in academic (and public) circles. They have established themselves as innovators in the field of community-based development *and* social enterprise. They overcame years of hardship and legal battles to reach the summit of post-apartheid reconciliation, both socially and economically. And throughout, they (in particular the leadership) have crafted a viable cultural product that can be exposed to a broad audience. This is the end-item to their long production chain.

I refer here to the advent of 'cultural incorporation'. Post-restitution, the Makuleke are unquestionably a community (or communal) enterprise, steered by an official committee and populated by an array of stakeholders. Though such an enterprise is grounded in the roots of the (social and economic) market, it is also geared towards cultural construction. That is, the output of cultural products and/or the embodiment of a cultural image. These outputs are manifest in a singular, but shared 'Makuleke'. Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:15) affirms this,

The entry of this population into the business world has heightened its awareness of being 'the' Makuleke. According to one prominent man, all the talk about tourism, even when it has been a cause of conflict, has 'served to bind us together [into] a community.' NGOs, land activists, investors, and development agencies have all reinforced this' and, by extension, the image of the Makuleke as a cohesive 'people.' So, too, has a swelling tribal treasury, the ethno- wealth of an economy inseparably moral and material.

The way forward for the Makuleke now transcends sheer CBNRM, and is marked by this sense of incorporation, as I will argue. As key premise, I take that such a process would necessitate a culture of branding and a branding of culture. Lastly it will serve to verify (and alter) notions of belonging (or cultural citizenship) and identity. Now that a backdrop is provided, let us move to an overview of some of the ideas on cultural economy and trademarking. I will then examine what the Makuleke (cultural) product/image/brand is and how it is designed, managed and *incorporated* in a context of tourist consumption and cultural venture.



Local residence



Chapter II – The cultural economy

By moving into the incorporation sphere, two key frameworks are interwoven¹⁰: culture and economy. These paradigms are ‘utilised’ if you will, to meet the basic needs of social business, whereby culture-as-difference carves out specific niches of value production (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:10). This brings about a cultural economy: two oft-separate domains inextricably linked through practice (Pratt, 2007:1). For the purposes of understanding this realm from a Makuleke perspective, we have to contextualise culture and its relation to industry.

Situating ‘culture’

“The focus of anthropology is upon the diversity of ways in which human beings establish and live their social lives in groups, and it is from this diversity that the anthropological notion of culture, at least in the twentieth century, is derived.” (Rapport & Overing, 2000:100)

The theoretical development of ‘culture’ remains central in anthropological and social science debates. What seems clear from these scholarly deliberations, especially concerning those of recent years, is that individuals conceptualise their environments through subjective cultural ‘lenses’. Indeed, ‘culture’ is to a certain degree what we make of it – our social surroundings, our everyday preferences, our intimate relationships. But acknowledging the innumerable, complex definitions of ‘culture’ it is essential to move toward a more comprehensive understanding of its conceptual intricacy (Fox & King, 2002).

Approached from a lay perspective initially, culture might be that which broadly constitutes values, motives, moral-ethical negotiations and social meanings. According to Wright (1998), culture was manipulated traditionally to accommodate the socio-political interests of certain groups in society. In the late 19th century for example, culture was defined as a complex, systematic whole, inclusive of customs, norms and social behaviour attained by individuals in society (see Wright, 1998). Such a definition would come to advance a rather romantic notion of social evolutionism – the idea that all nations with their ‘own distinct cultures’ were progressing

¹⁰ The elite management structures obviously have great stakes in this process, but so too do the community members. I will explore these roles at a later stage.

toward European rationality; the evolution of civilisation as it were. Yet this classification implied that *Europeanism* was superior and above all else.

During the earlier 20th century, culture had in anthropological arenas developed into a more essentialised notion. It was here seen to be an *organised*, harmonised whole, constituting a collective system of beliefs, knowledge, ideals and practices. This has given rise to a generalisation of culture, in which it was a singular characteristic of social groups: the world comprises myriad 'peoples' (or cultures), each with their own coherent way of life, each with a unique socio-cultural system.

The belief that culture was a fixed entity came to be a fundamental component of both colonialism and western imperialism. By categorising, describing, and thereby purportedly 'knowing' others, the objects of that knowledge were made subjects to new structures of power and control (Wright, 1998). Dominant beliefs about what constituted intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic progression were in many instances shaped through discourses from the north, in which the 'exoticised other' was created as an anthropological object. This process reified and homogenised the lives of peoples, obscuring their plural realities and rendering them as abstract objects within abstract structures (Rapport & Overing, 2000).

During the late 20th and early 21st century, the homogenised conceptions of culture came to be vigorously problematised. Gjerde (2004:138) aptly summarises this difficulty:

[Culture] seems to connote a certain coherence, uniformity and timelessness in the meaning systems of a given group, and to operate rather like the earlier concept of 'race' in identifying fundamentally different, essentialised, and homogeneous social units (as when we speak about 'a culture'). Because of these associations [it] falsely fixes the boundaries between groups in an absolute and artificial way.

The 'problem of culture' is also illustrated by Edward Said in his theory of Orientalism (1978). Said emphasised how colonial discourse constructs 'other cultures' to separate the coloniser from the colonised, eventually to debase and control 'Third World' peoples. Here, the cultural identity of the 'other' is guided and shaped by the beliefs of the Western 'us'; the flow and depth of such identities are subsequently disregarded. Such Orientalist notions of the 'cultural other' suggest unitary, cohesive conceptions that are characteristic of early Victorian anthropologists and

Volkekunde ó conceptions that inferred predetermined margins between *us* and *them*, *my culture* and *your culture*

To transcend these difficulties, anthropologists moved toward a more *flow* (or change) orientated paradigm in describing culture. For instance, in opposition to the silent and exoticised *other*, scholars such as Barth (2002) advocate that voice must be given to the range of human actions, lives, and representations. In this regard, culture came to be viewed as an unfixed, flowing process ó it would no longer be ahistorical, predetermined or unchanging, but dynamic and situational.

However, as in the past, culture is often defined and manipulated by those groups wishing to attain power, wealth and authority. To achieve this, culture is typified by means of *key terms* ó those terms that express behavioural standards, and supposedly reflect the true nature of reality. For instance, Western-European notions of culture, tied to notions of capitalism and liberalism, portray the idea of the free individual, thereby promoting agency and self-efficacy. But these ideas are linked to ideologies of consumerism and global capital flows. Here, the *free individual* is one that can freely consume, or generate wealth, or appropriate land.

Culture also functions as a hegemonic tool, employed by government and media establishments to institutionalise certain lifestyles above others. In anthropological circles however, the call for fluidity and tolerance is evident (see Barth, 2002). This is in line with a type of ethical-cultural relativism, respecting and tolerating the norms and subjectivities of society's diverse groupings. Culture then develops into a matter of perspective, manifesting in a variety of social settings.

The notion of culture remains problematic however. By moving from a social evolutionist perspective, to a homogenised conception, and finally toward variability, it seems as if our diverse subjectivities are accounted for. But it also is somewhat paradoxical that, because of its variation in different circumstances, culture can still be *exploited* to serve those in powerful positions. This will be seen in the Makuleke case, especially with emphasis on their move toward a cultural industry or economy.

The cultural economy

From the above, it is clear that the notion (and experience) of culture is constantly transforming. One of the important markers of change in the development of culture is its *marketisation*. In line with mass production and consumption brought on by globalisation, the demand for cultural goods and services has multiplied. This has taken place to such an extent that the *cultural economy* has become a huge global enterprise (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:22; Sigala & Leslie, 2005:xii; Boniface & Fowler, 1993; Pratt, 2007:6).

Halter (2000) justly reminds us of the massive ‘heritage industry’ in the United States. Ethnic trade here yielded about \$2 billion per annum less than a decade ago, mostly from the sale of crafts, music and fashion (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:17). Elsewhere in the world, the cultural economy is rife. ‘Scotland the Brand’ boasts a diversified but ‘proudly local’ product line, whilst Ethnic Britain sports a national directory of ethnic businesses. Closer to home, there is the Proudly South African campaign (see Proudly SA, 2009), focusing exclusively on local manufacturing and goods. Then there is the trusty ‘township experience’ and ‘cultural tour’ topped by ‘indigenous African cuisine’ (see Cape Town Information Centre, 2009) littering the traveller catalogue.

The abovementioned trend forms part of what Adorno (1991, 2006) has referred to as the ‘culture industry’. It appears to be exceptionally prolific across the globe, with examples spanning from the classic *Marco’s African Place* (see Marco’s African Place, 2009) in Cape Town, South Africa, to the unusual *Deer Tribe Medicine Society* (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:17) in California, USA. Complete with brochure-ware, t-shirts, consultants, and websites, these are the new but major players in an increasingly profitable business. It is here that we see communities capitalise on the seemingly ‘exotic’ qualities of their heritage, as illustrated by Marco’s lyrical marketing wax, “Join us for a taste of African Culture” (see Marco’s African Place, 2009).

For the purposes of broadening our understanding of ethnic enterprise, one can situate the cultural economy as a direct and indirect means of *survival*. Indeed, communal constituencies have seen the value their ‘customs’ and cultural artefacts can hold, especially from a financial point of view. Pratt (2007) and Comaroff & Comaroff (2009) have described this drift toward

ethnic business as empowerment through commerce, or survival through culture. It is a case where (so-called) indigenous or traditional groups join (so-called) contemporary society by utilising its economies. And perhaps surprisingly, this is not an entirely fresh undertaking.

In the mid-19th century, evidence of survivalist cultural economies surfaced among the Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton, Canada. Parnaby (2008)¹¹ tracks this group's reliance on their traditional skills in trading with local settlers. The Mi'kmaq were particularly adept at fishing and for them, this was a booming tourist industry. Moreover, they had established a healthy craft market-trade, popularised by woven baskets and ornamental trifles or specialised traditional designs. Below, Parnaby (2008:16) describes the trade of woven baskets:

In search of a high price and ready sale, Mi'kmaq women travelled far from their home communities to hawk their wares. The routes from Eskasoni to Sydney, where...the squaws find ready markets ... were particularly well travelled. When the railroad linked Cape Breton to the Nova Scotia mainland decades later, the radius of this movement widened further. Near to home or far away, the generosity of friends and family, who provided food, shelter, and company along the way, was critical to the success of a woman's basket-selling sojourn; so, too, were repeat customers, who were purposely sought out in a given locale. Payment in cash and kind was readily accepted, with flour, tea, sugar, molasses, and cloth fetching a basket or two.

The example referred to above illustrates that though essentially a barter economy, the Mi'kmaq were dependent on *cultural capital*. Predating modern business, this group managed to subsist on local expertise brought on by generations of knowledge-transference (expert cod fishing), and rare artisanal skill (ornamentals), much to the delight of settling Europeans or visiting traders. Entrance into the commercial sphere as a direct means of survival (or empowerment) cannot be understated here,

When Mi'kmaq men and women moved into commercial fishery, agriculture, or craft production in the 1840s, 50s, and 60s they did so not because they wanted to, but because they had to: by that time, their ability to hunt, fish, and gather was sharply curtailed, and they had few other options. (Parnaby, 2008:31)

¹¹ Parnaby tends to describe the Mi'kmaq as a frail, marginalised group, axed by colonial Europeans. Though such a depiction may be entirely correct, it does evoke a certain romantic, essentialised connotation of the peripheral other. This is exacted by the grim images of poor, enslaved locals and tales of violent evictions.

Historical cases such as that of the MiꞖmaq indicate the market or commercial value a 'culture' can have in contemporary society. This trend bespeaks cultural and social differentiation in the economic sector. Brands and products have diversified and extended into 'markets' at the outskirts. As Pratt (2007:5-6) attests, 'cultural products once the realm of 'one offs' and 'live performances' are now readily reproducible millions of times (for the same economic input). This has sparked a batch of creative producers, wishing to craft livelihoods from their cultural subjectivities.

Ultimately, the cultural economy is one where constituencies have come to position themselves in generic market form. Ethno-enterprises negotiate their value in economic terms and have to produce, package, brand, sell, profit and distribute accordingly. Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:24) condense this notion:

Those who seek to brand their otherness, to profit from what makes them different, find themselves having to do so in the universally recognizable terms in which difference is represented, merchandised, rendered negotiable by means of the abstract instruments of the market: money, the commodity, commensuration, the calculus of supply and demand, price, branding. And advertising.

For the Makuleke, a cultural industry is of much significance. It is a primary argument of mine that this community has increasingly situated themselves in a creative, socio-cultural industry, one that promotes their social cause and campaigns for their economic salvation. The Makuleke have come to market their 'cultural authenticity' packaging it not only for the immediate tourist, but also the 'distant customer'. To achieve this however, especially relating to the broader terms of the market, branding is essential. Note the Comaroffs' last line from the excerpt above: 'And advertising'. Representation to and for the outside (consumer) has become a matter of necessity for the cultural producer. This holds true for the Makuleke, with special reference to their elite groups and management structures. Let us briefly examine the context of cultural branding and its significance.

Cultural branding

“Cultures, like brands, must essentialise ... successful and sustainable cultures are those which brand best” (Chanock, 2000:24).

From the above, it is apparent that the (not-so-new) movement of cultural enterprise is significant, especially concerning the survival of economically depressed communities. Yet to both create and maintain a cultural product, it is essential that groups unify in their marketing endeavour. Indeed, cultural enterprises are business-like and convey a public image. And like Chanock aptly points out, once this image fragments, the entire (marketing) campaign may be undermined. When entering an existing cultural industry therefore, ethno-enterprises often resort to commercial representation in attracting their primary target market. This denotes the employment of *branding*. More significantly, *cultural branding*.

Branding, representation and symbolic meaning have already become important tools in the conventional business context. It is here employed vigorously and its utilisation holds much social (albeit retail) value,

[A brand is] a process of attaching an idea to a product. Decades ago that idea might have been strictly utilitarian: trustworthy, effective, a bargain. Over time, the ideas attached to products have become more elaborate, ambitious and even emotional. This is why, for example, current branding campaigns for beer or fast food often seem to be making some sort of statement about the nature of contemporary manhood. If a product is successfully tied to an idea, branding persuades people – consciously or not – to consume the idea by consuming the product. Even companies like Apple and Nike, while celebrated for the tangible attributes of their products, work hard to associate themselves with abstract notions of nonconformity or achievement. A potent brand becomes a form of identity in shorthand (Walker, 2006:1).

Walker offers a powerful anthropological definition by tying identity with the *notional* in the *emotive* sense. Not only is a (commercial) brand evocative of a “need to consume”, so too it has become a “way of life”. In the social and cultural space, the brand strategy has become an influential means to draw tourist-consumers. This process underpins what Bennett (2005) refers to as “cultural objecthood”, a type of public objectification. It is trademarked, by the instance of branding, so that the tourist or the consumer can either identify with or remember the product.

Today, we see many corporate industries actively pursue publicity techniques *and* blend them with a 'cultural flavour'. Sir Richard Branson's commercial giant Virgin is a good example. Virgin Active in 2009 launched a massive advertising campaign, aimed at winning new clients for its 'active lifestyle' product. The product being *Zumba*: the passionate dance, the lifeblood of Columbia, 'now in your country'.¹² Supposedly, Zumba is an energetic salsa that was popularised in 'sexy Latin America'. Recent Virgin brochures depict Zumba history, from accidental insemination in the 1990s, to widespread addiction throughout the last decade. With the result of Zumba flyers being a pictorial homage to sweaty Latinas and now 'active' Africans.

Happy dancers notwithstanding, Virgin Active Health Clubs and its larger Virgin brother are crucial actors in understanding the power of cultural branding. With emotive keywords and exotic imaging, they sell to us a product that embodies the 'spirit of Latin Americans', one that exudes a vibrant, trouble-free character. Virgin packages the foreign in such a way that it entices familiarity, as they urge us to experience the 'flirty road to fitness'. The branding campaign here honours its two basic premises: cultural (re)production and emotional attachment.

Brands that stir the emotions of the consumer have become commonplace, both in economic and cultural circles. The latter, as with the former, has integrated modern advertising techniques in the 'production and alienation' of culture. A culture that presents itself evermore as a collective subjectivity that is exteriorised for the market (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:28). The market exterior then is increasingly exotic (i.e. South American Zumba) for the fat-walleted tourist or consumer, who marvels at the fantasy depicted in the advertised image. This speaks to the vitality of branding for it has the potential to both attract emotional investment and secure financial return.

Yet the brand, cultural *or* commercial, has become much more than a cheap ploy at drawing customers. In my recent interview with Kate Clayton, marketing consultant for a Capetonian social enterprise, she points to the many uses of cultural brands. According to Clayton,¹³ brands now exceed cultural trademarking and extend into organisational management. They have the value-added impact of boosting revenue, attracting potential members, emotionally resonating with existing constituents, and striking fear in the eyes of other cultural competitors.

¹² Virgin Active Zumba brochureware, also available for online viewing. See Virgin Active Zumba (2009).

¹³ K. Clayton, pers. comm., 2009.

Branding is enormously potent in stimulating human activity. So the cultural brand has become increasingly dear in the identity economy; a near-automatic device that marks ethno-dominance. Elliot and Davies (2005:155) assert the power of brands in the following statement:

In a consumer culture people no longer consume for merely functional satisfaction, but consumption becomes meaning-based, and brands are often used as symbolic resources for the construction and maintenance of identity.

Note the referral to ‘meaning-based’ and ‘maintenance of identity’. Branding has now evolved from external imaging (i.e. corporate logos) to something entirely different. Something *meaningful*, if you will. These are concepts that are very relevant to cultural industries and their active pursuit of commercial and social recognition. The Makuleke community too is significant here, as they negotiate the business environment with a recurrent cultural production schedule. We shall explore their take on cultural objectification, not only concerning tourists, but also themselves. Moreover, we shall examine how branding has not only abstracted their difference but also its value in ‘uniting’ a people under a lucrative commercial umbrella. Behold, Makuleke Inc. ó a Community Ltd.



The signpost outside the KNP Punda Maria gate

Chapter III – Makuleke Inc.

Before moving on to the heart of my analysis, it is necessary to define a workable concept of community. I refer to it almost habitually but have so far neglected to describe its practical arrangement in the context of the Makuleke.

Situating ‘community’

Generally, community is defined to be located within a small geographic entity; in the case of development and/or community-based conservation, a ‘rural village’ image may come to mind (DeMotts, 2005:31). When classifying a community from a CBNRM perspective, it can constitute three primary elements: it is a small, spatial unit; its social organisation is homogeneous; and it has a set of agreed-upon norms (Agrawal & Gibson, 2001 cited in DeMotts, 2005:31). The areas surrounding that of a ‘typical’ communal settlement would comprise agricultural lots set aside for resource utilisation or subsistence farming. In the Makuleke case, that would be the vast lands marked for potato farming, the local irrigation scheme or clustered vegetable patches (see Annexure 2).

However, the above description veils the many social, economic, political, cultural and environmental dynamics that characterise community or communal organisation. Like the concept of culture, community is shaped by a range of factors, spatial, socio-economic and otherwise (Agrawal & Gibson, 2001; McDermott, 2001). Within the context of community-based natural resource management, does a community *as a rule* comprise a small unit with a close-knit, social organisation and set of consonant norms, values and behaviours?

DeMotts (2005:31) points to the significance of diversity and variability: different groups may have different salience within and throughout different communities. Subjectivity and individuality is not necessarily accounted for in a harmonious, homogeneous community organisation. Much like culture, community is a flowing and boundless social arrangement that cannot be pigeonholed in universal or generic terms. But what of uniformity – surely there is a kind of collectivity and connectivity between members of the same community? Certainly there must be a quality of *shared* norms and behaviours?

In the context of the Makuleke, I take all of the above to be somewhat germane. The three primary constituents posited by Agrawal & Gibson (2001) are particularly useful. For the Makuleke in Ntlhaveni is a spatial unit with a relatively homogeneous social organisation and an agreed-upon set of norms. It also has agricultural plots, which is apparently a distinctive feature of the CBNRM village. However this community is not especially small, nor is it *that* unvarying in organisation, or even that cohesive in terms of norm acceptance.

From the time I spent in the Makuleke region, I was made conscious of its many uniform characteristics, in socio-cultural experience (subjectivity), ecological arrangement (demography), and bodily traits (physiology). These include, for example: a shared heritage and homeland; shared language; collective memories of the removal; rampant shortages in service delivery and basic resources (shared poverty); a joint intention in alleviating their troubles; widespread gender inequality; a general affability toward outsiders; a 'respectable' and 'successful' outer image; a contested inner image; near-identical family and household organisations; and the like.

I was made conscious too of this community's many *heterogeneous* characteristics. There was a considerable differentiation between its older and younger cohorts – a generational 'gap'. I noticed that the younger group distanced itself more from aspects such as the removal narrative and the rural lifestyle. Instead, their sights were on the urban jungle with its bright lights and promises of freedom, both financially and culturally.

I was also made aware of internal dissonance within organisations such as the CPA and Cultural Centre. Moreover, the tribal authority has been at war with neighbouring Mhinga for decades. The murder of a well-known community activist further spurred the conflict and created much internal bewilderment. HIV/AIDS is another subject matter which the community appears to be extremely divided on. Whilst my respondents all noted that premarital sex and polygamous partnering were almost *innate* to their community, they each responded differently to the idea of a killer virus, silently destroying their youth.

At this stage, a simple definition of 'community' is impracticable, not to mention illusory. As I indicated, there is here a sense of collectivity negotiating a sense of divergence. Essentially, this counterbalance comes to define the Makuleke community – a flowing collective, if you will. But the classification of community, like culture, can be problematic. It can also be utilised or

exploited at the prerogative of those who are *dependent* on its meaning. For example, during the Makuleke land claim process, a unified, strong and unvarying community impression was *crucial*. This speaks to the importance of branding yes, but also to the *internal* moulding of what “community” can, should and will mean.

Therefore, definitions and classifications of community are not only abstract, but also serve a practical purpose. It is here that incorporation and branding play a vital role, in both shaping and directing the meanings of community. For this “meaning” this...connotation, is *essential* to the many processes and activities that now envelop the Makuleke: restitution, (eco)tourism, socio-economic development, CBNRM, and conservation.

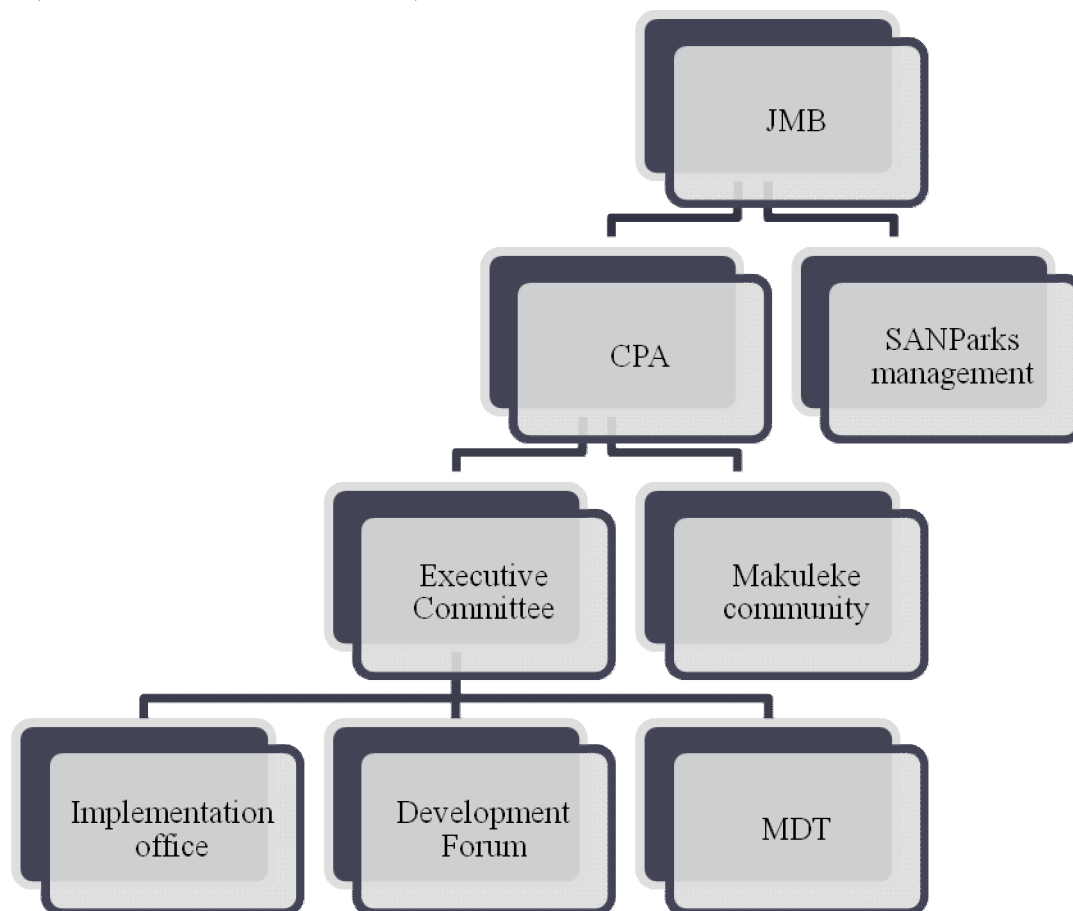
The onset of incorporation

To recap: after regaining their land formally in 1998, the Makuleke chose a route of social enterprise; one that would be sustained via the local KNP tourist market. Such a venture would stimulate job creation and a constant flow of income, whilst remaining true to the ideals of conservation promoted by KNP management. An official body was crafted, namely the Communal Property Association (CPA). This was the vehicle that would manage and distribute incoming funds to ensure that community needs are met. With this the now rejuvenated Makuleke community, as represented by its governing bodies, entered the untapped field of business.

To borrow a concept from Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:12), I refer to this business undertaking as *incorporation*. Makuleke leadership increasingly realised the potential natural, social *and* financial value of their (mother)land. If they were to reap these fruits, they had to mobilise in a business-like fashion. Lamson Maluleke, royal family representative, himself underscored this necessity. According to Mr Maluleke¹⁴ the leadership could not bargain, not to mention govern, and lacked clear vision and organisational goals. They had to emulate a corporate structure in order to assemble and effect any real change.

¹⁴ Pers. comm., 2008.

The organisational or business structure Mr Maluleke referred to would come to be recognised as the Communal Property Association (CPA). As stated in the introductory overview, this would be a principal commercial vehicle.¹⁵ And although SANParks and the Joint Management Board¹⁶ would be the primary management authorities of the Makuleke region, the CPA in itself would be responsible for any business-related activity. The CPA has an Executive Committee (Exco), with the Chief as chairperson. The CPA also has an implementation office, ensuring that their mandate is carried out. As advisory body, the Development Forum includes representatives from all three Makuleke villages (Maluleke, 2008:4). Finally, the Makuleke Development Trust (MDT), which constitutes the main fund-distribution account, is headed by elected community trustees (Mello & Thornhill, 2007:295).



Makuleke Inc. organogram

¹⁵ Even though it would also be the outcome of a legally required process, so mandated by the land restitution directive.

¹⁶ The Joint Management Board (JMB) was formed to administer the executive management and development of the Makuleke region within the Kruger Park. It consists of three members of SANParks Management and three members of the Makuleke CPA.

From the very beginning, the CPA (supported by the JMB and Development Forum), would constitute a body that would house the vested interests of the *community*, both financially *and* socially. In a meeting with the Land Claims Commission (LCC) (2008), one I was fortunate to attend, the dual purpose of the CPA was made terrifically clear. The LCC representative stated the following:

The land should generate sufficient income with reference to job creation and community development. Funds should be dispersed properly and appropriately, and ultimately be aimed at developing the community. Beneficiaries should be bona fide members of the community. The development plan is informed by the needs of the community ó collective decision-making, not executive only. Therefore community beneficiaries determine fund allocation and use, as represented by the CPA (LCC workshop, 2008).

Note the keywords: collective decision-making and community beneficiaries. The LCC representative emphasised the huge importance of the CPA's community electorate. The CPA would not have the authority, social nor political, to allocate funds on its own account. It would have to consider and incorporate the needs of grassroots Makuleke members. This was in effect easier said than done, for the CPA had grave concerns that it was hampered by lack of consistent funds, restrictive contract-clauses, skills shortages, and general internal disarray. I will attend to these issues shortly, but for now it is imperative to focus on the CPA's chief endeavour: 'community incorporation' by means of trade and income-generation.

One of the results of incorporation was the development of two upmarket lodges and a downscaled visitor centre. These were to be their tourist attractions, and primary sources of income. But these were also *tangible* outputs of democratic restitution, mediated by an economic focus. These destinations were, frankly, not run-of-the-mill motels. They were modelled to be elegant, luxurious and expensive; monuments, as it were, of a now-powerful constituency (see Annexure 3). Even the modest visitor centre, catering for the cash-strapped anthropologist or adventurous volunteer, was not ill equipped.



Pafuri Lodge

At this point, it is crucial to note that these centres exuded a *cultural* flavour. This to the extent that they set out to represent what is *authentically* Makuleke. Both lodges were kitted with curio shops, displaying *traditional* arts and crafts, made by local Makuleke residents. The story of their removal was told and retold by our host; I was back on memory lane, paging through the ominous landscape of a people once suppressed. But I was *assured* that, horrendous past notwithstanding, they now embraced economic development and social betterment. Our host pointed to the creation of jobs, the flow of tourist revenue, the sale of crafts, the freedom of access to the park, the feeling of being appreciated by unknown visitors, and so on.

If our host felt confident, so did I. The reason being that the Makuleke had reached a novel frontier. As a population who were at one time political underdogs, they had evolved into a holding company; venture capitalist; *tribe into corporation* (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:4). Ethnicity, identity, and cultural being have become items of market substance; value-producing

means to financial ends. With this the Makuleke join the ranks of other once-marginalised-folk-turned-entrepreneurs; for instance the South African Bafokeng and the Kenyan Ameru, Aembu and Agikuyu communities. For the latter, a similar approach held real social and economic appeal (MEGA Welfare Society excerpt, cited in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:10),

MEGA Initiative Welfare Society is a community organisation formed to foster social/cultural and economic development of Ameru, Aembu and Agikuyu people of Kenya. It . . . is driven by the desire to demonstrate how a community or a region can bring about prosperity by exploiting the cultural richness and entrepreneurial skills and resources of its people . . . MEGA Holding Initiative Ltd. intends to be a major Vehicle for economic developments in this Country and in the Region by: . . . [d]eveloping projects and offloading the investment to its members as individuals or a group of individuals . . . [and] [w]orking as incubators of projects and of mobilisers of Venture capital.

Somewhat closer to home, we find a parallel case with the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN). The RBN is a community in South Africa's North West Province, of about 300 000 Tswana-speakers. This population owns 1 200km² of land, which is home to the Bushveld Complex, the richest known reserve of platinum group metals and chrome in the world (RBN, 2008:4). Royal Bafokeng Holdings (Pty) Ltd. is the primary investment vehicle for this group. It was set up in 2002 to both administer the community's mining interests and develop a diversified asset base. According to the RBN Fact Sheet, this company's overall objective is to maximise the returns on its investments to provide the Bafokeng nation with sustainable social benefits (RBN, 2008:1).

The abovementioned examples have a common thread. Here, the instance of incorporation is clear. Both in Kenya and South Africa, ethnic coalitions are moving into the (social) enterprise space. They have become active ingredients in their own identity economies. The MEGA campaign for example *proudly* exploits the 'cultural richness' of its people. Whilst the Bafokeng nation trades on 'culture' and platinum.

The Makuleke, whilst being entirely different, share much in common with these ethno-enterprises. The Makuleke have also created a fiscal vehicle, catering for much-needed development and upliftment. They also want to maximise their financial returns, the lodges being the most obvious means to achieve this. The commonest thread between these ethno-incorporations being that they stand strong as economic *and* social powerhouses. They become venture culturalists thus, capitalising on that which makes them both *unique* and *unified*.

Ecotourism and the cultural economy

At this point, it is critical to observe that the Makuleke CBNRM-programme, as well as their move toward cultural incorporation, is framed in a context of ecotourism. Ecotourism is defined by the International Ecotourism Society as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people' (The International Ecotourism Society, 2008). Ecotourism in this sense ties in with the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's *goals for tourism* (cited in Mahony & Van Zyl, 2002):

- to increase the ownership of tourism businesses by previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs);
- to increase the involvement and participation of PDIs in tourism operations;
- to create business opportunities for PDIs in the tourism industry.

From a historical perspective, ecotourism would serve to remedy past injustices relating to conservation displacement (see Dieke, 2001). It differs from 'ordinary' tourism in that it is able to both sustain natural conservation and award local communities the possibility of income-generating tourist activities. In the Makuleke case, ecotourism is a very tangible model. It is the overarching solution to gaining community benefits from tourism and simultaneously conserving the land as stipulated by SANParks.

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, tourism is an important source of income for the Makuleke (along with the major sources of wages and grants). The lodges generate fair revenue during the year, and promote responsible travelling given their location within a conservancy. Moreover, local ecotourism here also meets the key objectives set by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. For previously disadvantaged Makuleke are *now* allowed an active part in the tourism industry, both in participation and ownership. The Makuleke have come to negotiate their immediate environmental space by *sustainable* means. Turner (2006:17) shares the importance of nature-based (or eco-) tourism:

In the long run, revenue from natural resources is meant to serve as the main source of community development. Communities are to achieve development by putting nature on the market. The most substantial sources of income from protected areas involve tourism. Tourists are accustomed to paying for access to nature *in* nature, for related services such as transportation, lodging, and guidance, and purchasing

goods and souvenirs linked to the experience such as postcards and local crafts. These goods and services are, in principle, compatible with conservation.

In terms of the Makuleke's venture-ing activity too, ecotourism is of much significance. The leadership of the Makuleke directly mobilise around tourist activity and draw direct benefits from eco-proceeds (however small respondents claim it to be at this stage). And as Turner claims, it is a trusty income-generator. Ecotourism can be a lucrative draw-card when a community is struggling economically. In many African protected areas, tourists pay good money to glimpse local fauna and flora, underpinned by pristine landscapes, exotic routes and unusual locals. The Kunene People's Park in Namibia is a superb example of the tourist-to-nature-to-community tiers: a 'sustainable, world class People's Park that is unfenced, secure, safe and [a] stable tourism destination and is co-managed with the full involvement of local people to conserve the unique flora and natural beauty of the Kunene Region'.¹⁷

The concept of a *stable tourism destination* is not to be taken lightly. Research makes clear that tourism is a colossal global trade – receipts exceeding \$2 billion a day worldwide during the last 4 years (see Cheong, 2008). It resonates with Adorno's 'culture industry'; of course, tourism aligns itself with the activity of the tourist-consumer, one that is willing to purchase 10 nights in a luxury Pafuri camp, cushioned by African decor and served breakfast in bed by smiling Makuleke workers. And the cultural tourist industry is not solely marked by sightseeing (and sight-buying) per se, but exacted by the soothing concept of 'sustainable tourism'.

By its high-level definition, sustainable tourism is conceived around three notions: the environment, the economy, and culture (see the United Nations Environment Program, 1987 cited in Cheong, 2008:11). The natural element would constitute the productive use of natural resources without hampering the use of those same resources for future generations. This includes natural heritage and biodiversity. The economic element would be that which creates or supplements income-generation through tourism, and ensuring that there is equitable access to the tourist economy. Finally, the culture leg entails a respect for local custom and the promotion of inter-cultural understanding (Cheong, 2008:11).

¹⁷ Extract from the Kunene People's Park presentation (2008), hosted by Namibian government delegates to Pafuri.

I digress. What does tourism mean for the Makuleke, particularly sustainable *ecotourism*? How does tourism concern the (local) cultural economy and the move towards incorporation? The answer is twofold. Tourism would hold benefits in terms of increased revenue. But the majority of the Makuleke community may never see the direct advantages of this income. Welfare grants and other forms of financial assistance may be seen as more *directly* beneficial to these members. However, any money generated from tourism is welcomed, especially for local infrastructure development.

Tourism contributes much to the cultural economy here. For without the visiting eye, its heavy pockets, and its undying curiosity, there are little inputs, which mean little returns. This, of course, is no good. A worker at the Makuleke Cultural Centre drives the point home:¹⁸

Tourists are good because they bring us income. [But] this place is not busy; we are not working. Sometimes we go two weeks without tourists. We gain nothing...

The problem of little to no tourism is clear. To further complicate the issue, ecology cannot be dismissed either. Conservationists in the Kruger National Park hammer on the significance of biodiversity; the point is that it should be unscathed by tourists. But the absence of tourism means the absence of community livelihoods. SANParks is reluctant to allow subsistence agriculture or hunting, given the protected status of the land. Tourism without *sustainable* tourist activity in policy perpetuates the vicious cycle. Catch 22.

Seemingly, the only plausible solution to the conundrum would be a policy that promotes tourism, conservation *and* community development. All parties are then compensated for. This gives rise to an economic-social-natural equilibrium, framed in tourist activity. And essentially, this is the backdrop of the Makuleke case. The local cultural economy, then, is both contextualised in and dependent on, a broader conception of ecotourism.

The elite structures that strive to incorporate that which is uniquely Makuleke do this exactly with tourists in mind. Visitors to their lodges set the tone for a business-like approach, and justify their commitment toward Makuleke Inc. What is more, this arrangement is ideal for *branding*. Already there is the market, already there is the product ó what is needed is a selling point,

¹⁸ Pers. comm., 2008.

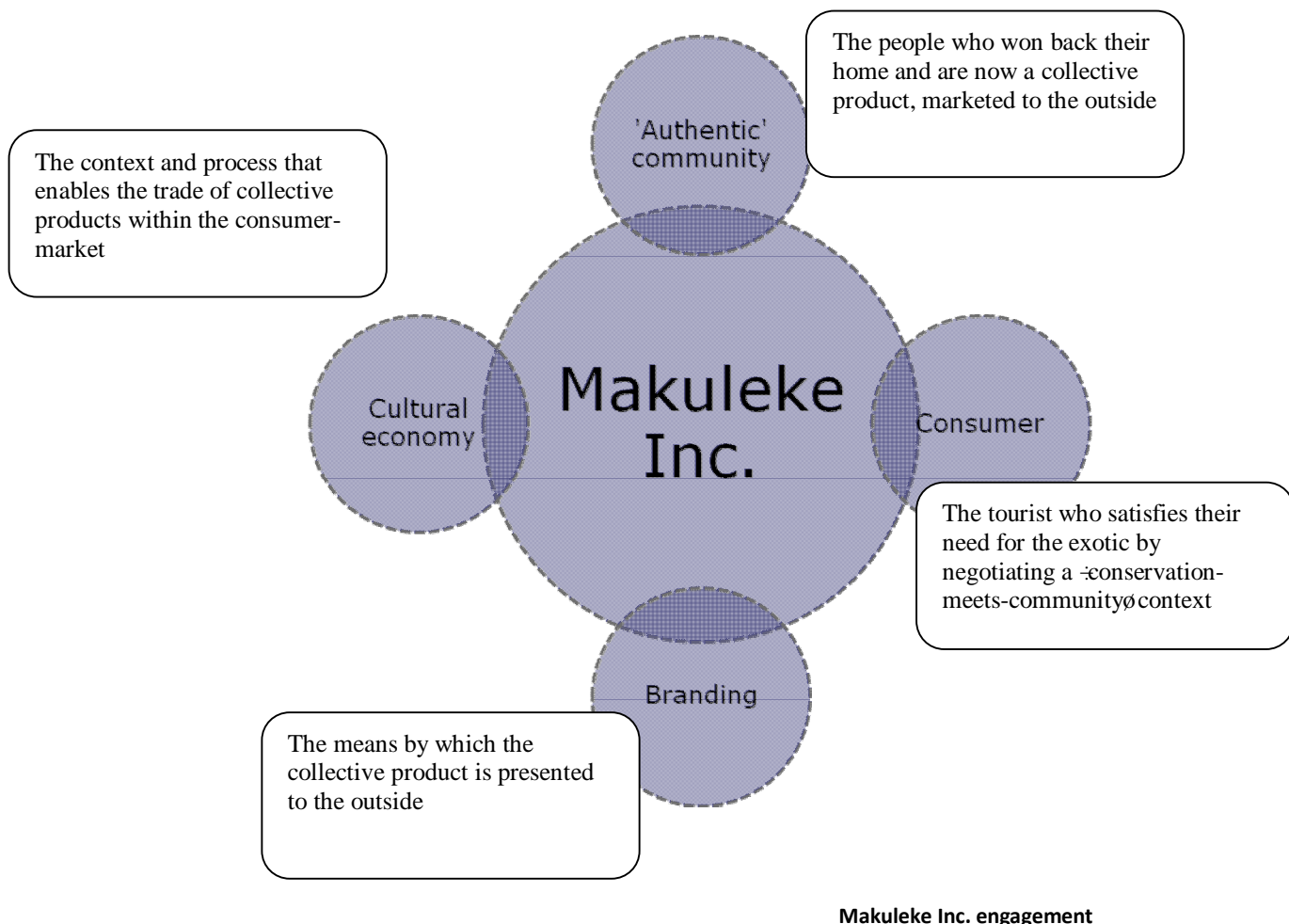
packaged so exclusively that it is “simply a must-have”. Before attending to the phenomenon of (cultural) branding however, let us explore in more depth what Makuleke Inc. can and may entail in the milieu of the free market.

Incorporating a market-based solution

“The poor need help, but they are not helpless. Many are already active in markets as innovative producers and discerning consumers.” (Bernstein & Zille, 2006:1)

Up until now, what I have tried to demonstrate is the Makuleke’s shift from land claimant community towards incorporated (or, business) community within a cultural economy. This economy then, is that of tourist-consumers, who trade their money for a sense of “local authenticity”. This money is employed, subsequently, to both sustain community livelihoods *and* draw even more consumers. Tourism is thus vital to the cycle of the cultural market. And branding is vital in prolonging the cycle of tourism.

At this point, it is important to note that these entities are never homogeneous or even autonomous, but in fact varied *and* interdependent. Makuleke Inc. is never a closed body with machine-like organs that all have the same function. Its members, though sharing a common context, heritage and custom, are not alike. Makuleke Inc. is not a full and self-governing circle, but instead an assortment of stakeholder *engagements*. Even the cultural economy, with the tourist-consumer as its key ingredient, is not a rigid block but a hybrid bloc. And it must be said that Makuleke Inc. is not *equally* shared by all, nor equally accessible to all. Its “product” – among others, the authentic tale of a removed and reinstated community – is not uniform but interpreted differently across socio-cultural borders. I can best illustrate said engagement below:



This diagram points to the interaction(s) of elements that constitute Makuleke Inc. It also signifies the many blocs that are integral to effective incorporation. It is apparent that Makuleke Inc., as well as its constituents, hinge on the market. Or at the very least the *potential* of the market. Here, the market serves to promote all that is cultural incorporation, product-trade, and branding. It is the basis that founds Makuleke Inc. and it is embedded at the very nucleus of the social enterprise.

One of my chief assertions has been that community-based natural resource management has, in the case of the Makuleke especially, coincided with a market-based (conservation) strategy (see Turner, 2006:16). The overarching CPA structure being the resident organisation that manages such an approach. This move implies that the Makuleke community gains direct financial benefits out of their re-acquired land. Notably, this occurs through revenue from tourists who visit their lodges, located on a conservancy that is the Kruger National Park.

Monies are allocated to a trust fund that is the Makuleke Development Trust, and dispensed at their prudence. Increasingly, this has become a market-based solution to community development. Development in this sense denotes the improvement of both communal resources and communal wellbeing. Respondents noted a few basic needs: upgrade public buildings, community clinics, roads, and the local electricity grid; create jobs, access to better facilities, and freedom of movement within the KNP; and, provide household subsistence monies.

Essentially, a market-based solution is a resolve that relies on trade to address socio-economic challenges like those mentioned above. Frandano et al. (2009:3) present a neat definition:

An alternative and complement to traditional government expenditures, aid, and philanthropy, market-based solutions give low-income people better access to socially beneficial products and services that genuinely and directly improve the quality of their lives and livelihoods.

In the case of the Makuleke, the emerging market has enabled them to push their collective product and employ it in social development. As a bottom-of-the-pyramid tool, it allows for much economic leverage. Yet, as Frandano et al. (2009:4) again point out, the promise of market solutions depends on adopting the right business models, which must be tailored to the particular socio-economic conditions of the deprived. Business models that òfunction well when dealing with affluent and middle-income customers are unlikely to work for low-income marketsö (ibid.).

The idea of a well-oiled business model is very relevant to the Makuleke and its official body, the CPA and its Executive (Exco). The latter are the *elite* business agents in this community. If it were to be a sustainable market-based solution, especially in light of a global recession, the elite have to ensure that it is tailor-made for its beneficiary stakeholders. If not, it may well serve to alienate members and perpetuate the stream of past injustices that have so haunted them. Should

this business model neglect its social responsibility, it may result in a market-disease, not remedy. One that refrains to take subjectivity and cultural essence into account.

Therefore I consider the fact that market-based solutions are not all they set out to be. McAfee (1999) ponders market solutions that depart from social contexts and serve the interests of the elite in market-share. For these solutions yield much financial benefit ó or at least have the potential to do so ó but bottom-pyramid members rarely extract any real value.

If a community's aim to become more business-like is taken to be a process of *collective* decision-making and distribution, then surely benefits cannot solely accrue to those in power? Surely 'socially beneficial products' have to be socially beneficial? Are those that constitute the majority of the Makuleke population even aware of their participation in the market? Is the CPA a viable and approachable entity that works not only to the advantage of its customers, but also its *constituency*?

Alas, becoming more business-like and crafting sudden market-solutions presents many challenges. Transparency, for one, is often absent, according to these community members:

We know nothing about the CPA. We expect more community projects. The CPA must facilitate this process and call all of the community. Why have these projects not taken place?

They are there to benefit for themselves. I don't see progress in [the] future.

Community cohesion is often experienced to be a farce. This statement was expressed by a Makuleke youth:

I do not feel the 'cohesive community'. The brother and sister thing is silly; many people will not care whether you live or die. People around here think small. We are lacking developments. The 'big thinkers' have failed to produce. Our generation has ambition and dreams. People here have skills [and] they don't use them. But we need to unite.

Leadership is problematic, according to a CPA representative:

We don't have a solid leadership. Everyone wants to interfere, like the Royal Family. Everyone wants to implement where they don't have the authority to do that. Our model is very strong outside but there are complications inside.

Community members seem to express that all is not well with the leadership and its orientation towards the market. They doubt if they will ever see any of the actual benefits generated from ecotourism and CBNRM. Moreover, the elite's incorporation has not been transparent, to such an extent that those at the grassroots are in the dark concerning fund distribution and supposed development. The notion of a 'collectivity' negotiating an emerging market is also vague to some, creating distrust in business-like incorporation.

True, initial incorporation did coincide with an eagerness to 'get the ball rolling'. Both the leadership and the general community wanted to see immediate benefits; instant capital flow that would result in libraries, museums, restaurants, sport centres and small enterprises. This enthusiasm was later overshadowed by restrictive contract clauses, administrative constraints, and a lack of expertise. Hence, the developments, interpretations, and representations of incorporation are not only marked by a slick redemptive narrative. One that depicts the once-lost-but-now-found Makuleke who conquered Mount Land Claim and raised the flag of restitution. Rather, incorporation is also characterised by internal conflict, collective doubt and a general lack of transparency and accountability.

Perhaps we are on the verge of a Community Limited here – limitation by incorporation, as it were. The Land Claims Commission did not even share the CPA's market orientation. The LCC representative, mentioned earlier, made it very clear that the CPA should *not* run a 'business'. This venture will portray them as referee and player at once...which, evidently, is problematic. In addition, he criticised the lack of local development; noting mismanagement and fractured policy. Rather, he underscored 'collective decision-making' and 'community-as-sole-beneficiary' to be the CPA's sole concerns.

Throughout I have attempted to show the Makuleke (leadership's) enterprising framework and some of its associated challenges. I will now evaluate the *management* of this business-like structuring process through the employment of cultural branding.

Chapter IV – A people's brand

“The global image of the Makuleke is a wholesome one.” (CPA Executive, 2008)

We have now reached a new chapter on the Makuleke Inc. frontier. To reiterate: this community and its conglomeration of leaders, appears to have moved into the sphere of incorporation. Incorporation is in this sense defined as becoming more ‘business-like’ in the approach to community-based natural resource management. To achieve this, Makuleke leaders have targeted the local ecotourism market, with its emphasis on responsible travel to conserved regions. From this market they extract income, based on the promotion and residency of three tourist centres. These centres (intend to) embody what is ‘authentically Makuleke’ by means of advertising and branding. Yet, as we will come to digest, the process of branding underpins incorporation, and extends beyond mere tourist lodges and ‘cultural centres’

I attempt to show here how incorporation has become more ‘cultural’ via its continuous emphasis on branding *culture*. Culture being those shared or collective dynamics that work to characterise communities. In this case, I refer to Makuleke values, subjectivities, and ideas. I take into account here the multitude of actors and factors that shape ‘culture’ I understand also that culture is interpreted differently and it is not my intention to pigeonhole the members of this group as a homogeneous community.

That said, the narrative of forced removal is significant too as it is consistently reiterated to stake claims. I assert that this narrative, along with a variety of cultural dynamics, is objectified for the tourist market, both locally and abroad. This gives rise to a discourse of cultural exoticism and commodification, in which ‘unique people’ becomes ‘unique product’ This is central to the cultural economy of tourism. One in which the tourist-consumer engages with and acts on the unique product, call it ‘cultural artefact’ This leads to revenue, hopefully, and completes the production chain so as to benefit the ‘productive community’

Yet, how does one *enterprise* (produce, market and sell) the inimitable characteristics of a community? How does one go about even *determining* the unique configuration(s) of a community? Is this taken for granted by a pecking order of old school ‘tribesmen’? Does a unique Makuleke even exist? Does it *need* to exist?

The answer is yes. Seemingly, a unique Makuleke does exist. And it needs to, at least according to its influential camp of culture vendors. And its bottom-of-the-pyramid dwellers as well. These individuals believe in a wholesome community image, as emphasised by the CPA executive above. Rather, they *want* to believe in it. For this image, presented intact to the non-Makuleke, non-Limpopo, non-(South) African mainstream, generates much excitement. Students, tourists, research workers, development officials ó these are the fish caught on the Makuleke Inc. line. The Cultural Centre workers draw close attention to their image's ostensible weight,

We are like role models.

We are viewed as a strong community.

People from the outside come to learn from us.

What does this wholesome role model image consist of and how is it maintained? Is it shared by all? First off, I establish that the Makuleke create and retain their wholesome image through objectifying their distinctive culture for the market. Crafting it into a consumable people's brand for others to digest. Second, as we will see in Chapter V, this process births a *non-typical* or reverse cultural exoticism, whereby Makuleke now depict *themselves* as the 'other'. And lastly, this process fashions and refashions a new or different sense of belonging. One that is characterised with both self-isolation *and* realisation. Let us examine these findings.

A people's brand

Throughout this analysis I claim an existing Makuleke brand or image. One that is a fundamental component *and* offshoot of (cultural) incorporation, as we shall come to understand. But I have so far neglected to elaborate on this trademark. In other words, what is its structure and who are its ambassadors, participants and consumers? Through spending much time with community members, executive and otherwise, I managed to identify a brand composition. I propose three central elements to the Makuleke icon, namely visual culture (inclusive of cultural artefact), cultural text (inclusive of historical narrative and ethnographic description), and cultural discourse (inclusive of social interaction and dialogue). Note this brand is more complex and heterogeneous than a mere sum of its parts. Rather, it is the result of an ongoing, dynamic interplay between such components.

Visual culture

One of the more tangible means in which the Makuleke community is branded can be described by the employment of 'visual culture'. Here, *visual systems* are utilised to introduce elements that render the Makuleke exclusive, exotic and strong. Visual systems are the processes by which individuals produce visible objects, construct inert visual settings and communicate by visual means (see Banks & Murphy, 1997). Both within the Makuleke community itself, and in the neighbouring Kruger National Park, visual systems work to produce (and instil) visible representations of Makuleke cultural essence. The examples are ample and deliberate, as we see below.



The Makuleke signpost – when visitors first approach the cultural centre, they are greeted by a billboard. This advertises the 'homestay' capacity of the centre, inviting tourists and researchers alike to experience and appreciate the local 'culture'. According to James Maluleke, centre manager, the hyena signifies vigour and is employed to indicate the community's magnificent achievement as land claim victors. He also claims its historical significance to be related to the pre-removal conflicts with the peoples of Venda.¹⁹ Here the Makuleke were branded as 'hyenas', indicating 'those who attacked during the night, when everyone else was sleeping'. The signpost is perhaps one's introduction to both the professionalisation of the community and its leadership – a marker of becoming more business-like – and its historical strength and tenacity.

¹⁹ See also the Affidavit by Chief Phahlela Joas Mugakula before the High Court of South Africa, March 2006.



The Cultural Centre and Homestay – one of the huts (or *ōrondawelsö*) in which visitors reside. Note the structure: thatched roofing, clay exterior, trunk pillars, and circular design. Many of the community residences share this architecture. Within the cultural centre it is employed to convey an ‘authentic’ Makuleke feel. The centre manager affirms that it was designed to have the visitor experience life in a regular Makuleke home. One could argue that it represents a kind of stereotypical ‘African’ dwelling, given its rural setting, circular arrangement and use of natural building material. (I am no specialist in the field of architectural symbolism though and have no intention of depicting this as your typical African abode.)

Interior-wise, the hut is kitted with two beds, a bathroom facility and cupboard space. The guest feels completely at home with ceiling fans for sweltering days, mosquito netting for peaceful sleep, magazines for pre-bedtime entertainment and some tea and java for the morning rise. Marketing jargon aside, these huts respond to the visitor’s demand for a ‘traditional’ experience along with ‘modern’ amenities and comforts.



The cultural outlet – the middle arena at the Homestay in which the cultural economy plays out. The building on the left-hand side is the ‘showroom’. Here, community members display some of their handmade arts and crafts. This space is largely disused, however, and only contains a sparse number of purchasable items. In centre-view, one finds a mini amphitheatre. Here, guests are treated to *Gigi*: a musical rendition of the Makuleke removal from KNP. The performance is commissioned for a small fee at the will of tourist groups.

This space is key in understanding the dynamics of cultural branding. It provides a central location at which the community can showcase themselves and their hand-crafted goods. It is also a place of social interaction between the visitor and local peoples through theatre. Essentially, it is a consistent enabler of branding as it evokes a flavour of local cultural identity, introduces the trade of ‘cultural’ articles, and acts as a production-house for historical narrative.



A tourist gaze – the *Gigi* in full swing. As I explained above, *Gigi* is a musical account of the Makuleke removal from the Kruger National Park in 1969. It is performed by local community members, consisting largely of females. The performance is given upon request by visiting groups, in this case an American family. The narrative is mostly in Tsonga making it difficult to grasp for the average foreigner. The play is scripted in such a way though that it focuses mainly on expression through music and dance.

I note *Gigi* here for its importance as a visual marker of cultural subjectivity. The play is constructed to inform the guest of the pain experienced by the community during and after their forced removal. The viewer is also enlightened as to the land restitution process, post-1998. The show peaks with the viewer actually engaging and dancing *with* the performers. *Gigi* is an example of a ‘visual narrative’ representing a collective suffering (that is, a visual depiction of the Makuleke removal from KNP). Nowhere did I find a better branding instance; functioning to condense a historical narrative and packaging it for the tourist gaze...for a ‘proper Makuleke’ experience.



The Pafuri Lodge [Pafuri Camp, KNP] – a glimpse of restitution. This is the second lodge that was developed after the Makuleke triumphed as land claimants. Again one notes the time-honoured structure: thatched roofing, trunk pillars and circular or oval formation. This once more calls to mind the typical or familiar Makuleke style of housing (though not necessarily exclusive to this community). Note also the handmade wooden furniture and the display of arts and crafts. Out of picture on the front left and centre, one finds the lodge's large restaurant and meeting place. This is complimented by the buffet-style counter and bar on the right.

The Pafuri lodge has a variety of functions. As an initial joint-venture between the tour operator Wilderness Safaris and the Makuleke CPA, its chief purpose is to generate revenue. Therefore, it boasts a 'cultural display case' much like its little brother, the Cultural Centre. It employs only Makuleke residents and thus serves as a major site for tourist-to-local engagement. Ultimately, the Pafuri Lodge is a prime example of a cultural-economic facility aimed at introducing yet again an 'exclusively' Makuleke flavour and interaction locale.



The Baobab tree – symbol of a tragic past. This tree is located at the revered 'Old Makuleke' camp, inside the Kruger National Park. It is within kilometres of the Punda Maria gate. Our guide explained its symbolic suggestion of 'what once was but is no more'. This specific tree marks a large area at which community members convened for important gatherings. Our guide went on to point to the exact spot beneath the tree that the Chief usually occupied. It was clear that this location held genuine value for the local Makuleke, who often paid their respects (usually of a religious nature) here.

This Baobab tree adds to the visual culture portfolio so eagerly publicised for tourists. It is a particularly useful branding tool. Indeed, it conjures images of a peaceful group abruptly shoved to the peripheries by a totalitarian system. The vacant Chief's chair connotes a definite cultural quality, symbolising how the Makuleke negotiate their historically intimate and familiar environment. It signals cultural heritage – something the visitor is deliberately made aware of. The Baobab tree is a potent visible representation of 'authentic Makuleke'.



Local residence – another hint of restitution perhaps? Above we notice a local Makuleke residence. This particular house is located within the Ntlhaveni community and is not far from the Cultural Centre. The occupier is not known to me and I would not like to make any assumptions as to possible ties to the royal family, CPA Executive or at least -beneficiary elite. What can be observed with certainty though, is this housing's difference to the majority of dwellings within the community.

I include it here because of its significance as both a generic visual representation *and* specific marker of (cultural) branding. As a generic symbol, it depicts a very -post-restitution state of affairs. Regardless of the owner's identity and ties, this house signals the rise of either increased benefits to Makuleke PDIs or socio-economic improvement, or both. I cannot help but thinking of its suburban-type arrangement: standard cubic design; corrugated tile roofing; gate and fencing; front yard; (attempt at a) garden; curtains; garage and driveway.

Such houses are markers of economic freedom and improvement; of a community once oppressed but now thriving; of (possible) flowing benefits; of a fresh empire; of Makuleke progress. Unlike the Baobab tree above, this house shows no signs of an awful past. Modern residences like these are very visible in the area and are powerful indicators of a post-restitution, contemporary Makuleke environment.



The Malala tree – an economic opportunity. I was first made aware of this tree by Enos (surname unknown) above. Essentially, by harvesting the rich juices in this tree, one can create Malala beer ó a very popular drink throughout the Makuleke region. Enos alerted us to it given his interest in the local cultural economy. He stated that both the Malala and Marula trees (not pictured here) were ample in this area²⁰ ó and hence, often associated with a distinctive Makuleke experience.

We spoke about the potential of mass-producing Marula cream²¹ and Malala beer²² by harvesting these plants *locally*. This prospect very much excited Enos. Symbolically, this tree and its Marula brother are significant in terms of both cultural commodification and branding. Firstly, these artefactsø could underwrite an authentic Makuleke (brand). And secondly, they could serve to reaffirm a notion of an ethnic collectivity that is concerned with an economically active

²⁰ Also found much throughout the South African and Mozambican lowveld.

²¹ Given its major success as cream liqueur product.

²² Very popular in the Makuleke camp, and further along, on the Mozambican border.

product that generates revenue. In other words, this tree is very much a cultural product that can be injected into the local trade market; which boosts both the brand and the local income stream.

To analyse listed visual artefacts and how they portray the image of the Makuleke, one must note that vision is to some degree socially and/or culturally constructed. A relationship is present between how individuals learn to use visual systems and how they subjectively see the world. In addition, the foundations of representational systems vary cross- and *interculturally*, both in terms of what is selected and how such features are represented or encoded (see Banks & Murphy, 1997). Therefore, tourists and even community members themselves view these features through different lenses than would I, a researcher delving into their -behind-the-screens meanings.

These symbols have come to be powerful representations of cultural identity, and social and economic improvement. Culturally, they depict an almost -traditional way of living against a new (or at least different) lifestyle. We see this play out in *Gigi*,²³ showcased by the Cultural Centre, and signalled by the Baobab tree. Socially, these symbols portray a fresh kind of interaction between Makuleke and non-Makuleke. We notice the onset of tourism and its resulting engagement between outsiders and insiders. The two lodges and Cultural Centre are leading facilitators of this dynamic. And economically, these symbols represent growth, strength, and increased benefits. We observe this in suburban-type housing, 4-star bush resorts and craft trade.

By employing these pictorial representations, I have attempted to underpin the visual-cultural elements that work to *display* the Makuleke community. These exhibits visually articulate a sense of Makuleke culture, social interaction and history. However, they fluctuate in quality, meaning, interpretation, relevance and even authenticity. Despite the genuine or accurate portrayal of the Makuleke, this process of visual exhibition is obvious and deliberate. It cements the basis of a Makuleke brand.

We have come to recognise the Makuleke icon. However, what I have not yet explored is that this cultural showpiece is not simply a cue for the unknown visitor. As we shall come to understand, it is also a function of *internal* recognition. We will explore its practical and

²³ Also, see Annexure 4.

theoretical implications at a later stage, but for now it is important to signal visual systems as the bedrocks of a 'people's brand' I will now examine yet another brand-foundation: cultural text.

Cultural text

Up until this point, I have elaborated on some of the visual systems that are employed to represent an exotic or traditional 'way of life'. The tourist encounters these throughout the Makuleke communities in the Ntlhaveni region, as well as in neighbouring Kruger National Park. I have listed some of the foremost examples, delivered mainly through the three central tourist hubs: Pafuri Lodge, Outpost Lodge and the Cultural Centre and Homestay. Despite visual representations being rife, visitors are also introduced to culture in a different format – that of text.

I speak here of another, semiotic approach to cultural being. For Geertz (1975), the notion of culture is manifest in an *interpretive* social science, characterised by the search for meaning. It is within these interpretative frameworks that 'cultures' are also construed as 'text'. Hence the booming anthropology industry of rich ethnographic portrayals, laden with thick descriptions. Ethnographic accounts have utilised thick description as a means to gain knowledge about diverse community structures such as that of the Makuleke. It is in essence an intellectual endeavour that comprises a detailed venture into the cultural representations, practices and subjectivities of peoples. In thick description, the actions, emotions, and values of individuals are given voice, most predominantly within cultural texts (Denzin, 1989).

Culture as text is then a type of process whereby people's realities are expressed, revealing their commonness without diminishing their particularity. Cultural texts are means to make others more accessible, reduce their 'otherness' and contextualise them within the frames of their own meanings and practices. Ultimately, ethnographic accounts as cultural texts are written representations of social happenings, experiences, and meanings that exist only in their moment of occurrence. In this sense, cultural texts interpretively inscribe social *discourse*. It is a microscopic process, drawing on the complexities of local situations to sustain broader affirmations about the roles of culture in the structuring of collective life.

Cultural texts are also shaped or reinforced publicly, as meanings are often shared publicly. In an era of globalisation especially inclusive of visual-written media and social networking identities increasingly mobilise in the context of nation-states, mass mediation, and migration. Cultural texts, also embodied in technology, are significant in breaching boundaries, intensifying and multiplying encounters among lives, sensibilities, and ideas (Abu-Lughod, 1999).

How does the Makuleke community factor into a cultural text framework? For one, and not dissimilar to that of visual representational systems, these peoples too are *characterised* within and through cultural texts. At this point, and as noted above, the central strand of textual representation can be distinguished as ethnography. Ethnographies certainly feature prominently in describing and interpreting this once isolated community. They then play a vital role in branding and brand management, and are imperative to cultural incorporation. As an expressive and interpretative chronicle, this form of descriptive anthropology has become essential (Rappaport, 1993:301 cited in Brosius, 1999):

[E]thnography is crucial in a world in which the domination of privileged discourse . . . threatens to make other discourses inaudible or unintelligible.

Ethnographic (or at least descriptive) accounts that have the Makuleke as focal point are abundant (see Robins & Van der Waal, 2008; Thornhill & Mello, 2007; Tapela & Omara-Ojunga, 1999; and Turner, 2006). And more so, are those that have the Makuleke play a secondary character to the lead roles of CBNRM (Steenkamp & Uhr, 2000), the context of land disputes (De Villiers, 1999), African tradition(s) and indigenous knowledge (Junod, 1927), ecotourism (Mahony & Van Zyl, 2001), cultural incorporation (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009), and sustainable development (Turner, 2006). Whilst these are not always ethnographies *per se*,²⁴ they certainly reveal much about the Makuleke commune and its local livelihoods, subjectivities and socio-cultural interactions.

The abovementioned accounts represent the Makuleke as people once flourishing, who were dislocated and dispossessed, and then became involved in a successful land restitution process. However, these narratives are often too simplistic and are assimilated into standardised accounts

²⁴ Which raises the question if ethnography can exist in absolute form, or if it is mostly interconnected with other forms of socio-cultural description and interpretation: quantitative and sociological, psychosocial, technological, philosophical and the like.

of community-based natural resource management, the sustainability of socio-economic development, responsible tourism and development, traditional authority negotiating a new democracy, gender (in)equity, people's parks, and the like.

What remains salient is that the Makuleke brand certainly leverages the cultural text in its multitude of forms – ethnographic, technological or otherwise. Whether this leverage translates into a cohesive, responsible, successful community image is an entirely different and complex issue. For we have to aggregate and consolidate the mass of academic, legal and public records to determine whether or not we are dealing with a once-off phenomenon, a reasonable prospect or a deliberate hoax. Let us take as a premise that ethnography and 'culture as text' too builds the Makuleke image in such a way that it reinforces our beliefs about this community.

Cultural discourse

The final branding bloc(k) in constructing 'the Makuleke' is cultural discourse. Though not inherently unrelated to culture-as-text, discourse refers here to communication and engagement (social, political, philosophical) with the concept of culture. In this sense, discourse takes the shape of public debate, verbal and non-verbal action, and historical narrative.²⁵ There are various actors who might deploy a cultural discourse – in the Makuleke case these may include scholars, journalists, members of the Makuleke Royal Family and CPA, Kruger National Park representatives, nongovernment organisations and land activists. These discourses assume a multitude of patterns and are integral to the Makuleke brand.

Cultural discourse reveals much about the local community, its social organisation, its economic interaction and its ecological context. We can examine a number of unofficial in-community or official out-community exchanges to determine how the Makuleke are (re)presented. Robins and Van der Waal's recent article (2008) dissects popular notions of the Makuleke as 'model tribe' and 'iconic conservationists'. The authors suggest that such representations deploy a *cohesive community image*. These representational strategies are also deployed by land advocates, NGOs, and development agents. The authors suggest that this image is both 'a product of changing

²⁵ Cultural discourse may well take the shape of text, especially in an academic sphere. However, under the *Cultural text* section of this chapter, I made reference to ethnography being the major form of cultural text/discourse. Thus, I do not discuss it here.

historical circumstances and a contributor to contemporary discourses on land restitution and conservation (2008:53).

The 'iconic Makuleke' was presented to us in a similar way by members of its own Communal Property Association and Royal Family. During some of my latest personal interviews (2009) these individuals, regardless of their rank or authority, expressed a definite pride towards their homeland and its people. This type of self-admiration is emphasised by the Cultural Centre workers I quoted earlier. The notions of 'role models' and 'strong community' very much contribute to the 'cohesive' and 'iconic' image described by Robins and Van der Waal. Earlier I also quoted Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:15), referring to a well-known man venerating this cohesive and tight-knit community.

Another narrative that features prominently in the Makuleke cultural discourse is that of its forced removal. At a convention with Namibian delegates from the Kunene People's Park (2008), Mr Lamson Maluleke dubbed his community as the 'children of the wilderness'²⁶, deserving of justice (and financial compensation!). The poignant aspects of the removal narrative were continually expressed by CPA members and some of the older generation community residents.

For example, I pointed earlier to our host introducing us to the Chief's 'traditional throne' beneath the Baobab tree. The opportunity was seized here to discuss the removal and so too the subsequent pain and loss suffered by distraught Makuleke. Yet the removal narrative was usually topped with the celebratory ending of Makuleke being the ultimate victors. And so it is the case elsewhere – throughout the Namibian delegates' workshop, around the dinner table with Chief Phahlela, watching soccer with the Cultural Centre manager. Conversations were never sour when they examined the prospects of social enterprise, maximised revenue, and community growth.

Robins and Van der Waal (2008:68) note some of the reasons for this cohesive representation:

²⁶ Referring also to the educational programme offered by Wilderness Safaris, teaching rural children the importance of conservation (see Wilderness Safaris, 2009).

Unlike many land claimant communities, the Makuleke community is widely perceived by NGOs and donors to be a relatively cohesive and consensual community. This perception of 'tribal continuity' and cohesiveness does indeed have some substance; it is not simply the product of fiction or false perceptions. This 'relative cohesion' can be partly attributed to the fact that the Makuleke have lived in the same place, and under the same traditional leadership structures, since their eviction from the KNP in 1969. The relative stability and cohesiveness is probably also partly due to the community's successful rallying strategies in its ongoing conflicts with the neighbouring Mhinga Tribal Authority.

One could list more reasons for the 'relative cohesion' experienced by NGOs, land activists and donors. Perhaps the fact that this community has undergone a collective struggle has bound them closer together – into kind of a tight-fitting, well-oiled unit. Crime is low; religious conviction is high; housing and support is offered to border-jumping Zimbabweans; the Cultural Centre manager gets waved to and honked at by *every* passerby; basically three quarters of the resident population showed up for a prominent man's funeral; and the like. Moreover, I was received with open arms at each and every one of my respondents' homes or offices. Both kids and adults jumped and smiled at the sight of the *mulungu*.

These are all indicators of cohesiveness. Such indicators are a *result of*, and *complement to*, the overarching Makuleke brand – that of a unified, tough, idolised people. But these dynamics should not overshadow the fact that this community is subject to a range of troubles. Robins and Van der Waal (2008:70) emphasise the duality between iconic status and increasing complexity:

The Makuleke land claim continues to animate discussions on how to reconcile conservation and 'community development'. However, the iconic status of the Makuleke should not blind us to the complexities involved in ongoing struggles for land and livelihoods in the Makuleke area. Control over land has continued to be perceived as precarious, even where land restitution has taken place in a post-apartheid constitutional democracy that is meant to provide security of tenure.

Mr Lamson Maluleke, as the secretary of the JMB, underscored these complexities on various occasions during my 2008 visit, citing in this case the CPA's relationship with SANParks:

The Makuleke have their own problems despite their success.

Even if the land [issue] is peaceful, you still get people who are arrogant.

We are benefiting, even though I am concerned if we are [not] benefiting *equally*. [Original emphasis]

Co-management can never be equal.

The above expressions do not strictly undermine the discourse of Makuleke being an 'iconic' and 'respected' land claimant community. They are nonetheless legitimate means to drive home the point that the Makuleke camp too experiences its own set of problems. Regardless of the positive and confident discourses they deploy, the actual state of affairs is more troubling. For the general notion of cultural discourse as branding bloc(k) then, a significant dynamic comes to the fore: that cultural brands are never experienced to be absolute or homogeneous. And as we shall see, the brand itself is subject to much (internal) contestation. Considering these factors, the Makuleke brand translates as less resolute and more vulnerable.

Questions of theory

I write in Chapter III about the particular notion of 'community' and its organisation in the Makuleke context. Here we have come to recognise the Makuleke grouping as a kind of flowing collective, constituting both homogeneous and heterogeneous elements. Moreover, I noted that despite this community not necessarily being cohesive, (outward *and* inward) representations of unity are vital. I have attempted to describe these representations as accurately as I possibly can, but have not devoted attention to their theoretical underpinnings. Indeed, the construction and (re)presentation of a community is manifest in a number of complex dynamics. Janneck (2006:6) introduces us to the social-theoretical and historical distinction between communities:

The construction of community is about creating conditions of belonging so that individuals come to see themselves as members of a collectivity . . . This can happen in different kinds of contexts and at different levels. Since Tönnies, the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, i.e. between traditional rural and local communities and modern urban industrial society, has become a commonplace of history and social theory . . . This general distinction has important implications for the more specific significance of individual and communal identities.

Staying true to this 'collectivity' communities are systematically represented as unified or organised. And so too their collective identities continue to be expressed as holistic and cohesive. This works to build a type of 'singular oneness' whereby a community is perceived as a unique,

integrated people. These processes are perhaps reminiscent of hackneyed depictions of 'homogeneous, coherent culture' as problematised by Gjerde (2004) and Said (1978).

According to Jannecke (2006) and Hall (1992), the singular community is (assumed to be) fixed in a unity such as that of ethnicity, which refers to shared cultural features – tradition, language, belief and values. However, as I detailed throughout this chapter, these 'shared cultural features' vis-à-vis the Makuleke community are presented (branded) as symbolic indicators. These markers work to differentiate the Makuleke from other communities and groups. In a case study on the systems of representation among the Tsitsikamma Fengu, Jannecke (2006:6) underscores the deployment of 'uniquely cultural elements'

The use of culture in this instance, functions as a source of meanings, a focus of identification, and a system of representation. It is through the memories of a timeless past, the desire to live together, to belong, and to perpetuate a communal heritage that a community's social identity is then imagined and discursively constituted.

Interestingly, Jannecke refers to an imagined social identity – one that is rooted in a communal heritage. She goes on to point to the 'use of culture' in constructing and maintaining this now 'fictional community'. This speaks specifically to the cultural tactics (visual, textual and discourse) that were employed in creating an illusory Makuleke – that of a strong people's brand. In this regard, Jannecke (2006:6) discusses 'systems of representation in community formation' – those processes that create and reflect (the Makuleke) uniqueness – or, otherness.

Constructed narrative and symbolic grounding are the foremost representational strategies employed by Makuleke (leaders *and* general community residents). Narrative functions as a composite story of meanings, past happenings and shared experiences. It is what I describe as 'cultural discourse' evoking symbolic connotation through constructed verbal/textual accounts. This process speaks to symbolic grounding. Here land as discursive theme is used to symbolically position the contemporary Makuleke community and legitimate/justify claims of entitlement to its land (see Jannecke, 2006:9).

I made particular reference to the story of the removal being significant here. The removal experience is retold as a symbolic homage to a 'land lost'. A romanticised past: one that spurs feelings of resentment and anger towards an undemocratic regime that dispossessed and

oppressed a peaceful people. And essentially, it is a strategy of representation that evokes the sanctity of time immemorial (Jannecke, 2006:7). A song by a Makuleke local describes this symbolic grounding, rooted in land as discursive subject (Friedman, 2005:19 cited in Robins & Van der Waal, 2008:58):

Go into the wilderness
They take us into the wild country
We have left our figs and our *mafura* and *lala* beer
We have left our graves behind us at this place
We are being overcome at the wild place
We have left our wild fruits
And there is no more relish in this place
Malnutrition is destroying us.

As theoretical premise, we take the instance of 'community' to be riddled with contrasting elements. It is an ethnicity of shared locale, language, value-systems, and social organisation. But for all reasonable purposes, its collective nature cannot and should not overshadow its diverse (and divisive!) socio-cultural dynamics. For the Makuleke community is continually subject to a range of varying identities and social practices.

Yet the conditions for belonging to this community should not disregard its members' expectations. For they *depend* on a powerful Makuleke image to be presented, flawlessly, to the outside consumer/tourist/visitor. Hence the advent of representational strategies – those processes that depict a homogeneous and powerful people. The (iconic) 'people's brand' as it were. Fundamentally, the people's brand is the result of an imagined identity – one that activates shared cultural features as symbolic markers through narrative, text and visual stimuli. Yet the question remains: how exactly does the people's brand relate and resonate to those that consume it?

Brand power

In Chapter II, I write about conventional branding as a process of tying idea to product. Gradually, as products diversify in an expanding market, so too have affiliated ideas become more complex and elaborate, with the effect of product-ideas eliciting all kinds of emotions in consumers. Behold, Walkerø (2006) *emotive construct*. Binding emotion to idea to product and thus securing buy-in. Mrs Clayton, local brand consultant, pointed me in the direction of well-known brand archetypes.²⁷ These depict standard commercial brands according to the seemingly æmotionaløor æhumanøcharacteristics they evoke. I list some of them here:

Archetypes and their primary functions		
Archetype	Emotive construct	Brand example
Caregiver	Concern for others	Volvo
Ruler	Exert control	American Express
Jester	Have a good time	Miller
Average Joe	Simply being æyouø	McDonaldø
Hero	Act courageously	Nike
Outlaw	Break the laws	Harley-Davidson
Magician	Effect transformation	Axe
Child	Pure innocence	Disney
Explorer	Maintain independence	Leviø
Sage	Understand the world	Exclusive books

This table might raise the anthropological eyebrow. Does the typical commercial brand exude an air of homogeneous typecasting? Are consumers actually suckered into thinking Axe boosts (or transforms) their masculinity and Miller encourages clown-like frolicking in the local pub? The answers to these lie beyond the scope of this research. But the automatic response may be that brands certainly induce stereotypical imagery. Caricatures that are deliberately shallow and

²⁷ Pers. comm., 2009.

evocative at the same time. And taken at face value, the frightening poise of one-dimensional *but* meaningful archetypes seems to pay off. Considering that the brands listed above are those mostly of corporate giants, it is hardly debatable that their marketing strategies are viable.

But what does the above phenomenon entail for *cultural* branding and cultural *brands*? If we take the premise that commercial brands induce the æmotive construct in consumers, can we assume the same for cultural brands? Initially, I would be inclined to draw a clear distinction.

Yes, it is feasible to treat a cultural entity as a brand, deploying all related design and marketing tools. On the other hand, the nature of a cultural institution is not measurable purely in commercial terms, and the mechanisms governing the laws of reputation and perceived value in the cultural semiotic sphere might slightly differ in focus and intensity than those ruling in the purely commercial world. (Bevolo, 2005:19).

But notably, and as asserted by Elliot and Davies (2005), brands are meaning-based. As receivers and consumers of brands, we exhibit ideas, values and feelings toward brands. This is the same for cultural brands. I referred to Virgin Active's Zumba (cultural) trademark, eliciting an æexotic, sensual South America. This would or is supposed to draw the consumer who longs for the unknown and revels the cultural spirit that is not their own. Heilbrunn (2006:103)²⁸ stresses the double impact brands can have,

In a ædesecularized context, economic entities (and mostly brands) have taken the symbolic place left empty by the retreat of the divine. A brand may be viewed not solely as a sign added to products to differentiate them from competing goods, but as a semiotic engine whose function is to constantly produce *meaning* and *values*. [Emphasis added]

Incorporating Heilbrunn's thinking, brands inform our thoughts and emotions to such an extent that they come to influence our *selfhood*, both individual and collective. Especially in the context of a cultural economy, brands and the consumption thereof, start to resonate with our identities. The dichotomy between the ðtraditionalö and ðdo-it-yourselfö self best illustrates what I am referring to here:

²⁸ Cited in unpublished document: *Give them something to believe in: the value of brand culture* – Whitepaper, 1.

- Geertz's traditional self is embedded within a *cohesive* cultural system that informs one's way of life and worldview.

A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order. (1973) (cited in Heilbrunn, 2006:103)

- Elliot and Wattanasuwat's postmodern self is continually and dynamically shaped by the *individual*.

The self is conceptualized in postmodernity not as a given product of a social system nor as a fixed entity which the individual can simply adopt, but as something the person actively creates, partially through consumption. (1998) (cited in Heilbrunn, 2006:103)

Note the clear difference. Our 'selves' have shifted from being defined by our surroundings alone. Rather (or additionally) we define ourselves *within* and *through* our surroundings. No longer are we determined or prescribed by our singular socio-cultural context. The opportunity arises to define our 'selves' from a variety of intra- and extra-cultural systems. We then continually generate and regenerate our sense of self within a hybrid backdrop of socio-cultural, economic, environmental and political dynamics. And this is where contemporary anthropologists see brands taking on a new and intriguing role (Heilbrunn, 2006).

In a brand workshop (2009) hosted by brand specialist, Mrs. Clayton, the following was quoted:

A brand is a recognisable and trustworthy badge of origin, a promise of performance and a means of differentiation. It exists in the mind or not at all.

Brands are thus valuable both in product/service *and* their perceived meaning. This meaning is then absorbed by consumers, who wish to *express* their inner and outer 'selves'. Great emphasis is then placed on the connotations that brands create, for staking claim in the way individuals express themselves and their value in crafting identity. Identity becomes a significant configuration of brand consumption.

As a point of reference, a brand promise is not necessarily a product delivery ó hence your casual disgruntled customer. But as Walker (2006) acknowledges, the objective is for brands to *resonate* with consumers emotionally and cognitively, so as to evoke trust. Subsequent to trust, of course, is revenue (hopefully!). Therefore commercial and cultural brands alike share the purpose of expanding their pool of consumers by means of symbolic targeting. But essentially, these brands go way beyond the capitalist drive and become the ultimate inscribers of identity and selfhood.

A people's brand revisited

The Makuleke people's brand is one that is populated by three constituents ó visual culture, culture-as-text and cultural discourse. These elements contribute to the establishment, each in its very unique way, of the Makuleke. Visual systems, for example, work to produce meaningful symbols in and around the Makuleke community. These are intended for the visitor, each shaping a particular view of what it *means* to be a part of this collectivity. Culture-as-text is, essentially, an ethnographic description and interpretation of Makuleke identity and subjectivity. Like visual systems, ethnography frames the Makuleke socially and culturally and continues to build their image, internally and externally. As a final bloc(k) to the Makuleke brand, we see the significance of discourse. Produced and presented by land activists, nongovernment organisations, researchers, and local members (CPA, community residents, royal elite) discourse too defines (and defies?) the Makuleke icon.

Chapter V – Community Ltd.

So far we have been introduced to the qualities of the Makuleke brand, constituting a variety of symbolic processes. We have come to understand that this brand resonates meaningfully to those that consume it. It also serves as an outward expression of inner subjectivity ó how ever imagined that subjectivity may be. For the Makuleke brand is also a homogenising or abstracting process, sometimes disregarding its many divergent socio-cultural flows. Whatever the case, the Makuleke is an ongoing cultural trademark, continually defined and refined at the hands of those that both *craft* it and *interact* with it.

We are left with a series of unanswered questions. How is this brand contextualised within a higher-level theoretical (and anthropological) framework? And what is left for the social conditions of belonging to the Makuleke community? How is the brand managed and dealt with within this grouping ó is it contested? How does it function as catalyst of self-recognition and perhaps self-alienation? How does it contribute to a culture of incorporation? Does it in fact underscore the elite's business-like approach or challenge it? Does it bring about an incoherent Community Limited or a sound, resilient Community Ltd.? Let us tackle these concerns accordingly.

The ongoing cultural trademark

õThe community is in itself the brand. If there is no convincing set of properties that define the community as a community, and if there is nothing unique and different about the community they are going to have to invent something ó but this is risky. Often the best way is to find something that might at first seem quite ordinary and present it in a different way. So they should think in terms of what makes them special.ö²⁹

When I recently witnessed a performance by the Khayalitsha³⁰ dance group, Black Moses (2009), I was not surprised at what they had in store for us excited onlookers. The group was kitted in 'traditional African' attire³¹ ó animal-skinned dress, djembes, 'battle sticks' and beaded accessories. The spectators watched with great expectation as the dancers took the floor. In

²⁹ J. Johnson, pers. comm., 2009.

³⁰ An informal settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town.

³¹ As promoted by ethno-enterprises Rebirth (2009) and Ethnic-n-e-thing (2009).

moments, they broke out in unified song and fancy dance moves. The act peaked with two members tackling each other with sticks in a symbolic battle-dance. When the show finished, the audience gave a standing ovation and exchanged digital pictures of this never-before-seen spectacle.

Interestingly, the setting was a posh club in Campø Bay, Cape Town ó a hotspot for wealthy youths, seemingly unscathed by a global economic downturn. These were city kids, attending a 'Party for a Cause', relishing the exotic showcase by performers who reside less than thirty minutes away. It was a remarkable yet predictable experience. I expected Black Moses to represent a kind of 'local flavour' But like viewing the Makuleke *Gigi*, it was astonishing that this group could exact such a visual marker of cultural identity.³²

Content-wise, the *Gigi* and Black Moses performances have much in common. Both acts function as symbolic pathways into 'unique' and 'colourful' communities. They are the visitor's introduction to the (relatively unknown) landscape of *supposedly* distinctive cultural systems and social organisations. The only clear difference between these performances lies in their locales. *Gigi* takes place in-house at the Cultural Centre theatre, whereas Black Moses's performance was showcased in the heart of tinsel town. But essentially, both have the same outcome: objectifying culture for the market.

It appears we are dealing with the age-old anthropological theme of cultural exoticism (that I briefly attended to in Chapter II). Rapport and Overing (2000) suggest that the anthropological discipline has historically created an 'other' as object. This process essentialises cultural paradigms and homogenises social subjectivity. The outcome: a 'people' that is attractively strange or remarkably unusual (Boyd, 2009).

Exoticism has its roots too in social evolutionism and western expansionism ó the notion that some 'cultures' are more advanced than others. This gives rise to cultural homogeneity, void of contextual dynamics and flowing interplays. Despite being historically problematised by anthropologists such as Boas (see Lewis, 2001), cultural exoticism is rife in contemporary society. Here, it is very much an active process of making those at the peripheries, outside of

³² Also, see Annexure 4.

Western mainstream, appear interesting and mysterious. In this regard, Huggan (2001:20, cited in Boyd, 2009:x) asserts:

If exoticism has *arrived* in the 'centre', it still derives from the cultural margins or, perhaps more accurately, from a commodified discourse of cultural marginality.

Significantly, Huggan makes reference to cultural marginality as a commodified discourse ó one that translates into actual economic value as an article of trade. This undoubtedly speaks to the importance of exoticism in the cultural economy. Virgin Active's *Zumba*, Black Moses, the Makuleke Cultural Centre, *Gigi* ó these are all types of cultural entities that generate 'exotic interest' and, perhaps more importantly, tourist revenue. And notably, these entities come to represent cultural features and socio-economics at the fringe of conventional society.

Huggan (2001:14) (ibid.) goes on to explain the 'domestication' of the exotic so as to familiarise locals/tourists with (marginal) outlandish communities. Here, the attractively strange and remarkably unusual attains a more local or domestic flavour. This denotes that foreign destinations no longer hold a monopoly on extraordinary, unusual and exotic peoples and 'cultures'. For our local settings too comprise myriad interesting 'others' for us to explore (for example the resident Makuleke community). Finally, Huggan argues that 'curious tourism' is a safe and predictable means of exotic exploration: 'Exoticism posits the lure of difference while protecting its practitioners from close involvement' (2001:22) (ibid.).

From the above we can extract three key features of exoticism ó it essentialises cultural features and social groups (at the peripheries?); it can function within a cultural economy (by and large via tourism); and it is centered both domestically and elsewhere (extra-locally; internationally). At this stage it is crucial to note that I posit an exoticism that is not produced solely through the lenses of anthropologists. Nor is it an exoticism solely produced by tourists, visitors, and strangers. I put forward an exoticism here that points its focus inward ó the exoticism of the *self*.

Exoticism, and specifically cultural exoticism, is significant here for it frames the context of Makuleke incorporation and self-presentation. Indeed, an exotic Makuleke underwrites Makuleke Inc., as an advertising mechanism and grounds for expansion. It generates an ongoing cultural trademark ó rubberstamped with 'ethnic exoticness'. Here, the self is (re)presented in the ways I described earlier: visual, text, discourse. It is not as straightforward, however, to

determine the chief architects of this cultural arrangement, invoking pristine archetypes that ignore dynamic, untidy realities of life on the ground (Sylvain 2005:362 in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:94).

Throughout this thesis I posit that the *elite* structures play a monumental role in the branding and outward depiction of the Makuleke community. The Communal Property Association is the central player here, for it represents more than 15 000 local community members. And with the many discourses its Exco circulates³³ around strong land ownership (‘the land is well-controlled’), strategic policy (‘we have a clear business plan’), and representation (‘our model is very strong outside’), the trademark is continually strengthened. This alongside persistent cultural imagery and role model-like casting.

Moreover, the Royal Family adds to the CPA’s bargaining power – its chairman being a royal member – and functions as a consultative forum to the organisation in its various endeavours (however ill-advised by some). The role of the Royal Family, headed by the *hosi* or chief, is to provide leadership to the community.³⁴ The family acts as a royal council, to which some ‘commoners’ are included. Royal women also form part of this council. There is also the tribal council that administers the villages in Ntlhaveni. In each village, the headman or *ndhuna* forms his own council (ibid.).

Another actor that has a stake in the Makuleke display case is the tour operator, Wilderness Safaris (WS). The CPA chairman stated that WS management plays a role in the commercial marketing of the Makuleke community. This includes maintaining the content on the Makuleke website³⁵ and enticing foreign visitors with other brand samples like local crafts, food and accommodation. WS also kits the Pafuri and Outpost lodges out with traditional amenities and friendly locals – all aimed at making the visitor feel at home away from home.

³³ Chairperson of the CPA, pers. comm., 2008.

³⁴ Affidavit by Chief Phahlela Joas Mugakula before the High Court of South Africa, March 2006.

³⁵ The website has since disappeared from the online world (at the time of writing). The main Wilderness Safaris site today makes little reference to the Makuleke community, aside from briefly outlining their history. Perhaps one may question, then, the marketing role originally assumed by the tour operator, since they now reference no online Makuleke presence. Lodge-wise though, WS still maintains a traditional ‘Makuleke’ aura.

Finally, those that have the biggest stake in this cultural brand are the community members themselves. Throughout my interviews, I did notice a reverence³⁶ toward the cohesive community brand (or at least icon). According to these female community residents, the successful land claim, as always, is the topic of the day:

I am proud.

We are the first community to embark on a tourism project.

Most of the people are seeing what I am seeing. We are a success story.

The brand ambassadors I note above are not mutually exclusive. They work interdependently and consistently, producing an image on the premise of *cultural difference*. It is important to remember that while ethno-enterprise is always mandated by cultural difference it may not originate in, or have much to do with, the *content* of that difference (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:82) [original emphasis]. Therefore, the trademark can sometimes (usually?) exist outside of the difference it promulgates. Concerning the brand essence then, what makes the Makuleke different is their rural, traditional, holistic way of life and iconic triumph over an historical enemy.

At this point, we will take exoticism as our 'cultural leverage'. It is the platform that enables the ongoing cultural trademark. A trademark which is moulded by a variety of stakeholders, notably the Makuleke themselves. Alas, the tourist/visitor/scholar/reader/innocent bystander has a finger in the homogenising pie, too. But the existing brand, with its underlying methodologies (strategies) of representation, is crafted from the bottom up. The CPA chairperson said it himself: the removal narrative, local community development, cohesive collectivity, and the identity economy – these are the principal constituents (and activators) of the Makuleke trademark. The peering tourist merely colours the picture, strengthening the already powerful icon.

³⁶ But often too, a discontent.

Alienation

Conversely, the Makuleke peoples as brand custodians have also become brand testers. Throughout, I have emphasised the many underlying dissonances, usually expressed toward the leadership structures. Imperceptible socio-economic development, inadequate reporting, false unity were the issues that my participants claimed were less apparent in the (supposed) community's public image. These factors certainly undermine a wholesome people's brand – in fact, they serve to distance (or alienate) much of its constituency.

Local brand consultant, Mr. Johnson (2009)³⁷ speaks about the importance of brand essence here,

The better the brand is defined the less likely it will cause alienation, but in a community where there is little homogeneity, this can be difficult, hence the difficulties one gets in transient communities.

In this sense, the Makuleke community cannot simply be deemed transient. Yet, its socio-cultural composition is not characterised by overwhelming homogeneity either. Therefore a uniform, abstract and universal brand will not be wholly accepted by all. For this brand does not resonate equally and nor is it *always* shared collectively. Hence, alienation is likely to occur. Benjamin (1968:216) (cited in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:26) describes the modern impulse to render cultural qualities equivalent and fused through producing them in mechanical (and commodified) forms. Yet these forms very successfully dissolve the authentic essences (aura) of those cultural qualities (dynamics, paradigms, subjectivities) they come to signify. "Accessibility at the cost of authentic presence" (ibid.).

Adorno (1991) has also critiqued the commercial production and consumption of culture.³⁸ He suggested that all or most forms of cultural production and trade could constitute the "cultural industry". Cultural qualities, traditions, and lifeways would then be neatly arranged to generate profits, often at their own expense (1991:87). This could provoke a clash between those that represent and build the industry, and those that manage it: "the perennial conflict between artists active in the culture industry and those who control it" (1991:87).

³⁷ J. Johnson, pers. comm., 2009.

³⁸ See Lawrence & Phillips (2002).

Essentially, by process of commercial representation and selling the self, the Makuleke run an ironic risk. Indeed, their cultural realities are placed on a quintessential display case for the wondering tourist. This may very well serve to devalue that which makes it unique, simply because of its sudden mass consumption. In Chapter IV, I examined the people's brand as a defining characteristic (or inscriber) of identity, selfhood and subjectivity. And paradoxically, it is the case that the intensive marketing of this (ethnic) identity may well lead to self-parody and cultural reduction (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:26).

This cultural reduction may develop to such an extent that individual alienation is almost inevitable. Some of the general community residents I quoted earlier certainly affirm this point:

I do not feel the 'cohesive community'. The 'brother and sister' thing is silly; many people will not care whether you live or die.

People around here think small.

I don't see progress in [the] future.

It is clear that these members doubt the 'cohesive brand'. For these important stakeholders, there was just too much internal disharmony, not to mention untidy socio-cultural and economic realities. Earlier, I mentioned the surprising murder of a resident social activist, Gibson Maluleke (also known as G.M.C.). He was partly responsible for the community's large irrigation scheme that boosted their economic position considerably. He was also a major contributor in the land victory and a well-respected elder for most.

The fact that G.M.C. was shot at point blank range (according to police) poses an interesting counter dynamic – one that could fracture perceptions of the iconic brand and cohesive community. This murder was the first in the region for three years, and community residents have mixed feelings as to the possible motives behind it. This resident is speculative:

We don't know the exact reasons behind it. I think it's political. Some people didn't like what he was doing. His killers wanted to send a message with his death.

I am not aware what this 'message' may entail, and am cautious against interpreting it as political dissent. If so, it may well suggest that Makuleke cohesiveness is not shared by all. If not, it may well be an isolated incident, with little or no political connotations. Even so, G.M.C. was a renowned political figure and from what I gathered at his funeral, his killing is a grave setback for the community.

I mention it here as it appends the already long list of obstacles the community faces every day: the (perceived) lack of community development initiatives, inconsistent funding, weak lodge occupancy, 'rural boredom'³⁹, lack of economic opportunity, illegal immigration, gender inequality, general poverty, natural resource degradation, conflict over authority, lack of skilled and educated leadership, and a widespread lack of transparency in land management. The extent and impact of these divisive issues are beyond the scope of this research and I never had the opportunity to explore them in greater detail. But they remain central to the very heterogeneous and divided character of the community.

Ultimately, like the theoretical notions of 'community' and 'culture', 'brand' is another construct that cannot be pigeonholed. It is never a singular experience and it never has a generic effect on identity and belonging. Rather it can work to self-distance those who do not share its imagined cohesiveness. Although the brand is important in maintaining an outside (and inside) interest, it can never meet the need and desires of the entire Makuleke constituency. Nor can it account for the numerous outside perceptions of it – that is, the brand may resonate differently with everyone.

As an important grounding to identity then, we also take the contested brand as an inevitable offshoot and component of cultural incorporation. Arguably, it is a *necessary* consequence – one that forces the ethno-enterprise to reflect upon its qualities: leadership structure, diverse constituency and strategic framework. However, it may well be a destructive consequence too, forcing the business to fracture. This is the first markings of a Community Limited – one that implodes due to a misrepresented and mismanaged community image.

³⁹ Certain teenage residents expressed that their rural village was not 'stimulating' both socially and economically. For them, city life was more attractive given its lures of employment and the possibility of meeting new and exciting people.

Recognition

“Cohesion, a sense of shared purpose, belief in the brand, if it is to be strong, would be a cultural expression.”⁴⁰

The Makuleke brand, though resonating differently with everyone, and presenting an oft-imagined cohesion or shared tradition, is not necessarily a devaluation of culture. As Johnson points out above, the iconic, respected, unified, wholesome, tough people’s brand has much value as a cultural expression. He goes on, “The trick is to find that which unites in a motivating way. Think of Obama’s ‘Yes We Can!’ If there is a uniting clarion call then there is every reason to use it to build a community.”⁴¹

In light of the above, it seems as though the cultural brand may well be a function of recognition, in terms of both *others* and *the self*. If the brand is experienced as a valuable reflection of the myriad Makuleke lifeways, then it may well reinforce community building. Throughout I have noted the many constituents to the people’s brand – ranging from the customary display case (the Baobab tree, arts and crafts, *Gigi* performance) to economic franchising (Makuleke Incorporated). These factors, albeit commodified for the market, are significant markers of belonging – socially, culturally, economically, politically. Through these elements of representation, the message is conveyed: “We exist; we are different; we can do something we are proud of; we have something uniquely ours.” (Graburn, 1976:26 cited in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:10).

Livingstone Maluleke, one of the driving forces behind the successful Makuleke land claim, makes us aware of the Makuleke’s wonderful achievements:

We, the Makuleke people were one of the first communities to win back our land using South Africa’s land restitution laws. We feel that after a series of extraordinary negotiations we have placed ourselves, our supporters and private sector partners at the cutting edge of socially concerned approaches to conservation. As the Makuleke we are very proud of what we have achieved since we reclaimed our land. We are grateful for this opportunity to share our success with you and would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who provided the outside help that has contributed to making the Makuleke a well-known success story. We hope we do not let you and our community down. (Maluleke, 2008:7)

⁴⁰ J. Johnson, pers. comm., 2009.

⁴¹ *ibid*: interview with Johnson.

Mr Maluleke clearly reveres the community's innovative approach to social conservation, where both the environment and its local peoples are protected. This has given rise to a unique image of one characterised by role model-like features. Something to be *proud* of. Something that recognises communal *worth*. Interestingly, Mr Maluleke does not want to let us (the stockholding public?) and his community down. So important is this challenge, this innovative path of CBNRM and new sphere of cultural incorporation. Arguably, the people's brand has become a kind of support pillar. Indeed, much of the community's constituency depends on it, for survival, among other things.

As the near converse of alienation, recognition is another offshoot of business-like incorporation with its imagery of cohesive culture and a 'spirit of togetherness'. The latter is for example illustrated in the land claim where an entire community backed the return of their heritage. We remember our host in his nostalgic retelling of the land lost and the suffering that went along with it. We consider the Cultural Centre workers who make us aware (albeit timidly) of their community's strong, role model presence. We recall that nearly 75% of the community showed up for Gibson Maluleke's memorial service to pay their respects.

Recognition here may very well function as a type of pursuit for meaning, identity and communal belonging. This pursuit is indeed rooted in the hope that, by finding something valuable and viable to market, the Makuleke may (re)claim a collective heritage to cherish of something to affirm their self-worth and even humanity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:25). Consequently, the supposed unified collectivity that translates into a people's brand may be the ultimate catalyst for self-respect, acceptance and even realisation.

This is not to say recognition is always self-recognition. Earlier I mentioned the importance of the visitor (be it tourist, researcher or general outsider) in shaping the Makuleke view. These persons too are intrigued by what the exotic community has to offer. Their peripheral gaze into something 'unique' perhaps quenches their thirst for authenticity. This process is, for now, bidirectional. For one, it (re)deems the Makuleke as iconic, marvellous, successful, colourful, exclusive. And second, it heightens the desire for self-authenticity in the tourist gaze.

This argument resonates elsewhere, with Comaroff & Comaroff's (2009:25) (citing Xie, 2003:6) description of a similar process whereby tourism negotiates cultural authenticity:

Tourism...has turned a commodified dance performance into an 'authentic' aboriginal cultural expression, heightening the desire for identity and offering an affective vehicle for finding 'a true self'. Exactly the obverse, this, of alienation-by-abstraction, corrosion-by-commodification.

Not only does tourism heighten the desire for identity, it offers a 'road to realness' For *both* the viewer and the cultural producer. Whether the supposed realness is an accurate indication of reality, or an imagined construct, is another matter entirely. Whatever the case, recognition is as an offshoot of cultural incorporation is plays the important role of forging a sense of belonging. Self-recognition through the 'other' if you will: 'The only way our tradition and way of life can survive is to live in the memory of the people who see us' (White, 1995:17).

Community Ltd. versus community limited

Throughout this analysis I describe the Makuleke people's brand as a configuration of their collective identity and socio-cultural lifeways. It has to be considered nevertheless that Makuleke Inc. as ethno-enterprise, with an underlying social brand, is certainly not on the scale of their competitors. For example, the Royal Bafokeng Nation has R35-billion in assets, an extensive portfolio, and a well-established brand. Their 2020 Masterplan conjures a near magical community that resides in a type of inter-provincial ethno-hub (Royal Bafokeng Nation, 2008:6). This space would aim to make the community self-sufficient to lead dignified, healthy lives.

The Makuleke constituency has not yet reached this level of collective mobilisation. It seems futile to compare them to the RBN, save for their joint characteristic: a shared, unified people's brand. Much like the Bafokeng have the crocodile⁴², the Makuleke have the Hyena. Where the Bafokeng have platinum, the Makuleke have 24 000 hectares in a world-renowned conservancy. Where the Makuleke have the Communal Property Association, the Bafokeng have Royal Bafokeng Holdings (Pty) Ltd. These leadership structures have a similar purpose: to build a strong community by investing into it, socially, culturally, financially, and environmentally.

⁴² The crocodile is a genealogical icon of the Sotho/Tswana people, who include the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN). It is a definitive symbol of the RBN is clearly depicted, for example, on the RBN flag. Royal Bafokeng Holdings (RBH), the primary investment vehicle of the RBN, chose the crocodile's eye as inspiration for its corporate logo (RBN, 2008:2).

To effect this investment at every level, both groups strive to champion the concepts of authenticity through cohesiveness and togetherness. For this will in turn build a 'culture business' that is able to redress their inequities *sustainably* and with the benefit of social and economic growth. The notion of Adorno's (2006) cultural industry is manifest here: both groups seek empowerment through business and continued existence (or survival) through culture and cultural quality. The RBN undoubtedly succeeded in empowering themselves with over R2-billion social spending in the past decade (RBN, 2008:1). With their value in land assets, two exquisite lodges, a Cultural Centre, a host of community development initiatives, and a reasonably funded management structure, the Makuleke could well be on their way. Community Ltd. trumping community limited.

The cultural industry in which the Community Ltd. as ethno-enterprise operates, dictates that the Makuleke's customs and lifeways are presented as homogeneous products for the tourist other: 'The entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms' (Adorno, 1991:87). This process can align community members to a shared realisation of 'valuable homogeneity' whereby their 'sameness' yields revenue and interest, and is thus valuable. Indeed, the brand can forge a sense of *self-recognition* through its many symbolic features (or homages). These range from the tribute of custom, the sacred memory of forefathers and their hardships, and potential economic opportunities.⁴³

However, valuable homogeneity has to be taken as the ideal, not actual, situation. For it is never shared and enjoyed by all. Contestation is expected in any incorporated endeavour, and the Makuleke could well become 'consumers that feel reluctantly domineered by hegemonic business forces, including corporations, brands, ideologies, or the capitalist market system per se' (Giesler & Luedicke, 2008:1). This inevitably leads to alienation and a fractured belief in capital as the saviour: that is, the market and its promise of socio-economic development.

The debate, if there ever was one, ensues. Yes, the incorporated culture built on sameness and recognition may be rather enabling. This to such an extent that members actually identify with, and are proud of, the (imagined) people's brand. Yet one cannot simply assume this fantasy of well-oiled cogs working in unison to produce a remarkable Community Ltd., one that oozes

⁴³ See Chapter IV.

solidarity and triumph. For this incorporation neglects the very flows that constitute it ó internal disarray, cluttered subjectivity, the moorings of history, the repercussions of long-term inequality; community limited. Perhaps the Makuleke are neither a fictional Community Ltd. nor a legitimate community limited, but rather a vague amalgamation of both instances. As McLuhan suggests, the ethno-enterprise built on homogeneous branding may bring about a simultaneous process of self-distancing *and* self-recognition (1994:57). Let us examine this final stance in the concluding chapter.



Village main road

Chapter VI – Concluding thoughts

“Self-fulfilment and even the working out of personal identity and a sense of orientation in the world depend upon a communal enterprise. This shared process is the civic life, and its root is involvement with others: other generations, other sorts of persons whose differences are significant because they contribute to the whole upon which our particular sense of self depends.” (Kymlicka, 2002:249).

If we take the above to be true, we would come to assume community as the catalyst of socio-cultural subjectivity and identity. In essence, community and collective value is what this case study is built on. At this point, the Makuleke collective is and has been a source of understanding that goes beyond its spatial arrangement. Therefore what we learn and discover here may have broader implications. The various dynamics that are at play within this region, then, have consequences elsewhere.

Indeed, scholars, officials and general visitors travel from across the world to study this community, examining its successes and its failures. The Namibian government is a classic example – Kunene’s People Park had the objective of avoiding the dissension brought on by forced removals and subsequent land struggles. The idea for them was to “learn from the Makuleke case (successes and problems) – JMB operation, implementation lessons, relationships, private sector involvement”⁴⁴. They approached the CPA leadership and tribal authority with earnest respect for their historical achievement(s) *and* current developments.

The Makuleke community boasts significant accomplishments in terms of its headship, land management authorities and general membership. But these same groups have also encountered problems. Let us briefly recollect our journey thus far.

⁴⁴ Extract from the Kunene People’s Park presentation (2008), hosted by Namibian government delegates to Pafuri.

The bottom of the pyramid

The Makuleke have come a long way. Forced removal for them traumatic, “To discourage them from returning they were forced at gunpoint to set fire to their huts and livestock kraals. They were dumped in 3 areas to the south outside the Kruger Park, placed under the control of a Venda chief and told to rebuild their lives.”⁴⁵ In the decades since, the Makuleke did much to restore their community, especially in terms of sustaining livelihoods, re-establishing social networks and forging new futures.

In 1998, they achieved widespread acclaim with a successful land restitution case. But not only did they regain their physical homeland, they also negotiated a contractual people’s park with SANParks management. This resulted in an extraordinary community-based natural resource management programme, whereby the Makuleke would be jointly responsible for conserving and administering their land in KNP. The Makuleke was granted commercial use over their 24 000 hectare area, which meant that they were now able to extract tourist income:

The Makuleke can make commercial use of this area including arrangements in cooperation with the private sector. When doing so, they guarantee to conserve animal and plant species and undertake to abstain from all consumptive forms of management, such as mining (GTZ, 2009)⁴⁶.

These developments placed the community and its leaders on a national and international stage: they were able to redress the consequences of a cruel apartheid system by creating economic opportunities *and* fashioning a people-based approach to land conservation. However, as we have come to realise throughout this analysis, post-land restitution was never a case of pure bliss. A lack of transparency in land management and a general misuse of funds and authority resulted in much internal rupture and conflict. This despite official structures to guide and mobilise community interests.

⁴⁵ Steve Collins: Unpublished statement (GTZ Transform, 2009).

⁴⁶ Unpublished statement (GTZ Transform, 2009). In association with the Department of Environmental affairs and tourism (DEAT) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

I refer here not to the resident, executive leadership structures alone. For the Communal Property Association and Royal Family administrations were never solely accountable for the community's land in KNP. Indeed, the SANParks management board and the contracted tour operator, Wilderness Safaris, were also major driving factors in the supervision and utilisation of the area. And these agents had interests that did not necessarily accord with those of the Makuleke community. Lamson Maluleke's statement attests to the imbalance: 'co-management can never be equal'. For him this was the key factor; the foremost impediment in the Makuleke's CBNRM future. If the community was to achieve true success, it would need to eliminate its dependency on external agents.

[W]e have been treated as a nuisance rather than respected for our agreement not to move back onto our land. Our view is that we are landowners and should be treated the same way, if not better, than any of the 'white' SabiSabi partners that SANParks has a good partnership with in the south of the park. Why is a community partner seen as less important than a private sector partner? We are hopeful that our relationship with SANParks is changing. (Maluleke, 2008:6).

SANParks and Wilderness Safaris management's input over the Makuleke land will gradually diminish. This will take place in light of contracts that will ultimately transfer the land *completely* in the hands of the local community. The Joint Management Board was established as the mediator between pre- and post-land operation: 'The JMB is seen as an interim arrangement to build skills so one day the community hope to manage their land themselves'.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, from the commencement date, it would be at least 15 years for the Makuleke to gain 100% lodge ownership from Wilderness Safaris. And it would take considerably longer until the JMB would be permanently dissolved.

Legalities aside, the Makuleke community is subject to a number of other dynamics that hamper its future development. Of these, widespread poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are some of the factors that inevitably affect communal wellbeing. Shortage in both natural resources and social services is rife. My informants also stressed increasing gender inequality and the growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS to add to the already long list of socio-economic concerns.

⁴⁷ Unpublished presentation: *the Makuleke case* (Steve Collins, 2009).

In light of the above, it may be safe to argue that the Makuleke community is in a state of disarray. This despite their land concession and promise of income. Socially and economically they are still at the peripheries of mainstream society. The proverbial bottom of the pyramid. Yet, the elite structures recognised the impending disorder and acted accordingly. In this regard, the near-magical framework of cultural incorporation was crafted and presented.

The counter corporation

“The appeal of the Makuleke for donors, development agencies, the state and NGOs also stems from their apparent embrace of the ‘entrepreneurial spirit’” (Robins & Van der Waal, 2008:69).

As both a direct and indirect response to their state of disarray, the Makuleke community became more business oriented. I refer here mostly to the leadership structures: the Communal Property Association in particular. For the leadership could not bargain without power. Nor could they do so without collective buy-in. They were forced to adapt or at least emulate a kind of business structure that would accomplish their goals: social and financial gain. But how exactly were they to build such an entity?

For one, the CPA had to become skilled. Contract clauses necessitated that the CPA rotate its membership every three years odd. This created a skills shortage – a case where knowledgeable members would continually exit the forum and new, ill-experienced members would enter. Second, the CPA had to mobilise more than 15 000 members of surrounding Makuleke villages. For official meetings and discussions on land use were poorly attended – the majority of community residents were in the dark concerning imminent developments.

Moreover, there were considerable distinctions between development policy and implementation. The CPA could campaign, structure and advocate community building, but were not necessarily adept at executing these policies/strategies. Moreover, fund distribution was a growing concern and the need arose to have funds managed by a capable body. These needs certainly hampered progress – land governance and social impact goals were not reached according to both the CPA and general community members (including participants in this study).

These perceived needs culminated in Makuleke Inc. (see Maluleke, 2008:4):

- The Communal Property Association with an Executive Committee of 15 members;
- An Implementation Office that carries out the literal development implementation mandate;
- The Makuleke Development Forum as an advisory body to the Exco in terms of benefit distribution and development needs;
- The Makuleke Development Trust as a controlled bank account for funds from concessions and grants.

These elements would constitute an *organisation* capable of driving community interests. Indeed, it had an official directive of transformation, a strategic policy of benefit-sharing, a grassroots implementation team, all encompassed by a tactical decision-making body. These features would characterise the winning recipe of Makuleke Incorporated: a hopeful community wins its land back and converts into a profitable business. An ethno-enterprise that may mitigate and *counter* the community's state of disarray.

Makuleke Inc. would constitute a market-based solution to pressing community needs. This model fashions the poor or previously disadvantaged into economic actors. Community members are not mere beneficiaries; they now have the power to choose and negotiate the local (cultural) economy. Moreover, the Makuleke Inc. approach had at its core a blended value proposition. In investment terms, this denotes a business with a financial *and* social return (see Emerson, 2009; Heart, 2009). Indeed, social development and economic growth would occur in parallel (optimistically), as the outcomes of concessions and ecotourism.

As a result, Makuleke Inc. moved into the sphere of social enterprise development. A social enterprise moves beyond grants and donations, or the classic giving cycle. Essentially, it is a *business* that tackles socio-economic and environmental issues: poverty, hunger, lack of resources, illiteracy, environmental degradation ó the list is endless.⁴⁸ Which locates Makuleke Inc. firmly in the market:

⁴⁸ P. Shrimpton, pers. comm., 2009.

While the role of markets in the current global economic crisis is being reevaluated, market-based solutions in emerging markets have generated remarkable benefits to low-income people and offer enormous promise to do even more in the future. (Frاندano et al., 2009:4).

Towards social inclusion

“For the performers, this effort to broadcast their unique...identity and culture outward horizontally into national and global public arenas, evokes an enriched web of emotions, desires, passions, and interests.” (Graham, 2005:636; cited in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:25).

Of course, the Makuleke leadership needed something to market and sell. And that they had: themselves. Custom, socio-cultural lifeways and ethnic authenticity would form the key products of this thriving business. The marketing of these items had the object of making them lucrative and exotic for the tourist and/or consumer. Therefore, what was “uniquely Makuleke” was packaged into colourful bundles: visually, textually and narratively. These function as systems of representation and they symbolise an “iconic, traditional people”. Or at least, they intend to.

By branding themselves through themselves, the Makuleke join the ranks of many cultural products, broadly constituting an emerging cultural economy. Framed within the context of ethno-commercialism, the Makuleke community suddenly became (a) consumable. “Culture” and cultural dynamics have been objectified for the market in the name of economic survival. From the passionate dances in the heart of South America, to the uncanny dances in the heart of Capetonian townships, to the heart-rending dances in the Makuleke *Gigi*, cultural exoticism has gained considerable traction here. In all cases, the arrangement and presentation of culture, of ethnic collectivity, is a survivalist tactic, yes. Yet, as we have seen, it seems to offer so much more. Cultural exoticism at the hands of internal and external stakeholders serves a higher purpose: it affects and shapes notions of identity and belonging.

This is achieved, notably, by ambiguating the distinction between producer and consumer, performer and audience (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009:26). For the Makuleke community is both the maker and customer/consumer of its (re)presented self; in the process recognising its collective identity, domesticating it, and engaging with it. Conversely, “consumers also become

producers, complicit in that enactment: it is by lodging itself in the consciousness of the tourist-other...that their tradition persistsö (ibid.).⁴⁹

The role of this tourist-other becomes significant, then, in viewing and negotiating the Makuleke image. This -peopleø can continue its existence as a manifestation in the consumerø consciousness. Existence through memory. Survival through cultural exoticism. Finally, for the producer *and* consumer, these processes (re)charge collective self-awareness and forge new patterns of sociality, all within the marketplace (ibid.). On the ground, this may have two fundamental spin-offs.

For one, the unacquainted community member may very well associate with the image that surrounds him or her. It is, after all, one that evokes elements of traditionalism, collectivity and cohesion. It is an image that conjures the remarkable feat of a land and a *heritage*, reclaimed. Of a people freed through powerful resolve. For many of my informants, this builds a mode of self-recognition. Of belonging. Of being part of the wholesome whole. But for many, it does the exact opposite.

Cultural (re)presentation, exoticism, commodification, objectification ó these dynamics may well fashion a sense of self-awareness. But it may do so in the negative. Many of the participants in the study did not share the -unified themeø that so often governs Makuleke dialogue. This includes key members of the CPA and internal development bodies. These members question their leadersø òentrepreneurial spiritö and ponder why the funds have not reached them. They cannot necessarily identify with the perpetual cohesiveness marked by systems of cultural representation. They question the -big thinkersø and the limited developments. Essentially, they are alienated by the peopleø brand.

⁴⁹ These dynamics in mind, the Makuleke have much in common with their counterparts, the Khomani San. This group has too become agents of cultural production with the marketing of the Hoodia cactus plant, claimed by them as traditional intellectual property. See Comaroff & Comaroff (2009:86).

However, in my quest to discern Makuleke Inc., I did not encounter a mass swell of the aforementioned individuals. The *majority* interviewed, observed and researched, did share somewhat in the idea of Makuleke Inc. crafted by their leaders (and themselves). By and large, I found most Makuleke residents to be fervent brand custodians and proud community ambassadors. Yet, we should not allow this optimism to blind us to the very real dynamics on the ground that may reveal deeply embedded social strains.

Through cultural incorporation, ethnic branding and increased self-fashioning, the Makuleke community is on the path to widespread inclusion. In social entrepreneurship, they find a strategy that may well be able to mitigate their problems. If properly managed, they will build a strong and shared cultural enterprise; one capable of redressing social *and* economic imbalances. However, if ill-managed, the prospect of social entrepreneurship will lose its appeal.

It is imperative yet that anthropological analyses focus on this innovative intersection of community-based natural resources management, ecotourism and community development. As I stated in the introduction, much research is done in terms of the Makuleke land claim per se, and the (lack of) success of their CBNRM programme. Governance, benefit-sharing, and sustainability are the recurring themes. And importantly so, for much can be learnt from the internal workings of a community-based conservancy. However, there is not much research in the sphere of cultural incorporation and branding (representation), with obvious exceptions (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Robins & Van der Waal, 2008).

Indeed, the advent of social enterprise and entrepreneurship cannot be dismissed:

As role models, social entrepreneurs encourage an entrepreneurial culture by their very existence. As people witness their accomplishments and their stories are told and re-told, they help to light a path in another direction. Instead of maximizing profit and the return to shareholders, this species of entrepreneur seeks to maximize impact and the return to stakeholders in society. They are defenders of the global commons and the public interest. As change makers, these relentless innovators infect society with a sense of hope and optimism that a better world is possible. This is how the vicious cycle of pessimism; despair and malignant development can become a virtuous circle of decent work, fair, just and environmentally healthy communities. (Davis, 2002:29).

We have reached the end of our journey. And there remains much uncharted territory. Which course will Makuleke cultural incorporation take? Will it stagnate as a relatively non-transparent entity, with bureaucracy and internal disputes as the order of the day? Or will it be more inclusive and a visible, efficient vehicle of change? And what of the so-called "community image"? Will it stick to its messages of shared tradition and cohesion, or will it come to represent and recognise a more complex, dynamic community? What will this entail for recognition, alienation, ethnic identity, and the conditions of belonging? And finally, will the modern Makuleke embrace the fourth sector so as to dismantle the moorings of history and forge new patterns of socio-economic growth? My hope is that these questions will be addressed resolutely in the near future.

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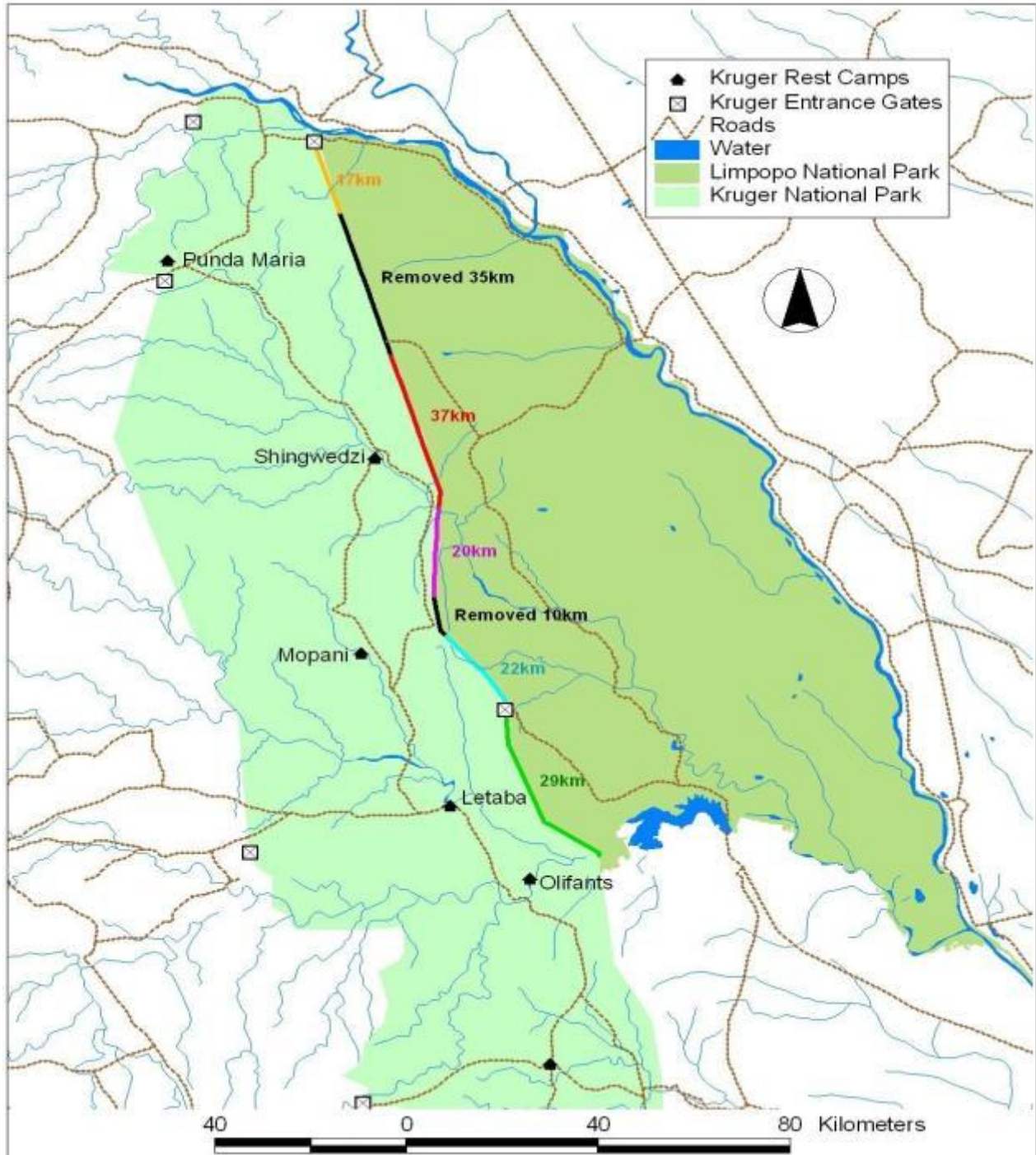
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Annexure 1



Extent of the Southern African Transfrontier Conservation Area: the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. Map from Kruger National Park presentation hosted by the Makuleke CPA Executive Committee (2008).

Annexure 2



The Makuleke Hydroponics Tunnel Farming Project produces quality fresh vegetables for Pafuri Camp and a number of other eco-lodges in the area (Wilderness Safaris, 2009).

Annexure 3



More images of the luxurious Outpost Lodge (2009).

Annexure 4



Makuleke dancers celebrate the opening of the Pafuri Gate in 2004. Note the “traditional” attire. This is an example of a display case where onlookers can view a so-called “cultural celebration”. See SANParks (2009).