

“We cannot run out of natural resources – if we run out of it we would be dead”

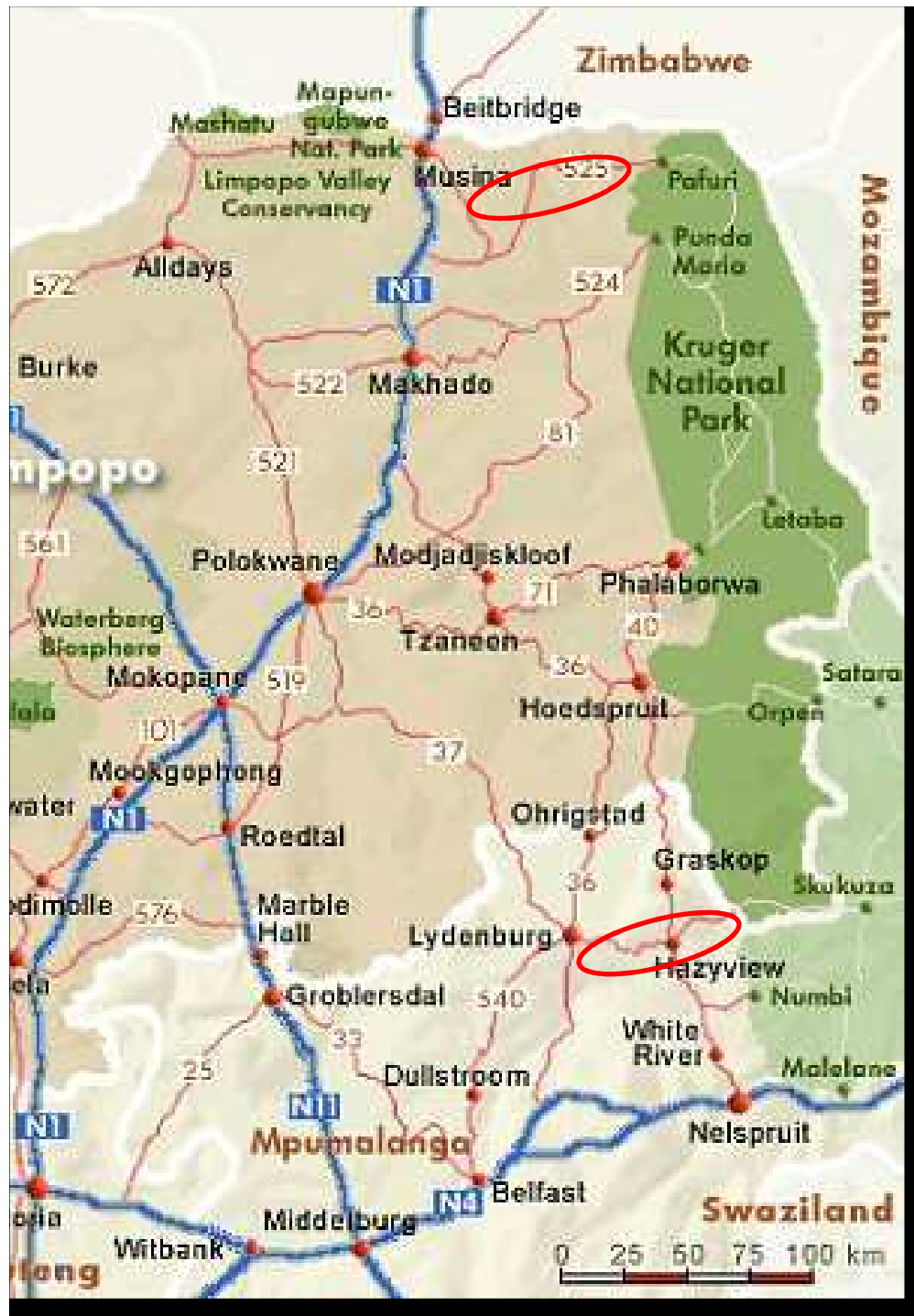
Exploring the potential impact of local beliefs on biodiversity conservation management.

Karen Nortje



Three main questions:

- To what extent do local beliefs influence perceptions of finite resources?
- How may cultural practice influence the way in which people use and value natural resources?
- And, in what way can research on local beliefs with regard to 'nature', the 'natural environment' and 'biodiversity' be better incorporated in current thought on protected area management.



EU – LiveDiverse

- *Communities/Villages: Tshiavha, Mbahela, Mushithe, Thondoni & Beleni*

WRC:

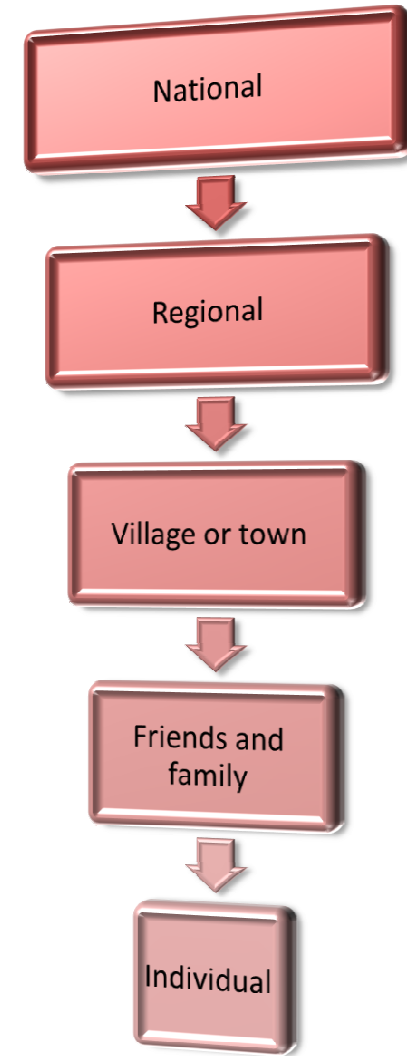
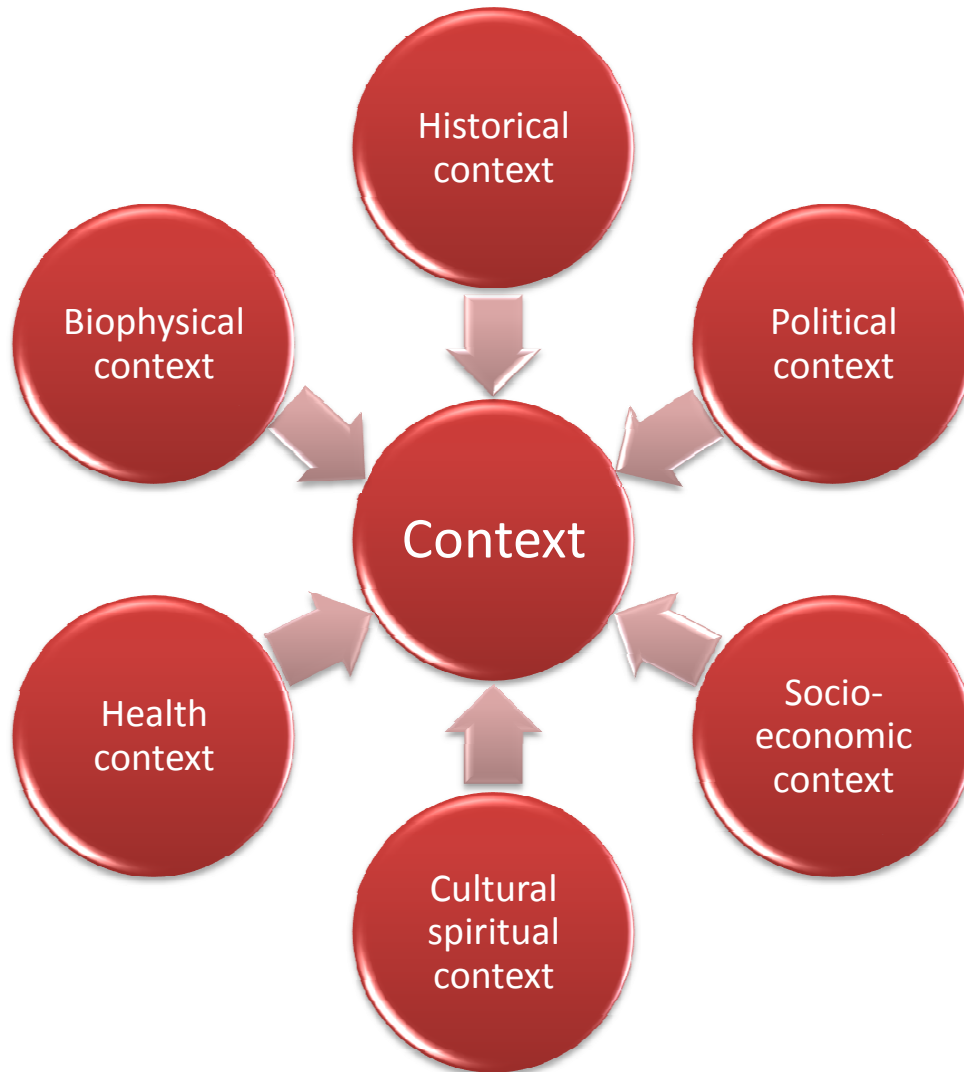
- *Communities/Villages: Hazyview, Huntington & Mcobaneni*

*“Working with people is a priority
for SANParks”*

www.SANParks.co.za).

Who are these *people*?

Different contexts play a role here



When we talk about beliefs what is
it that we are talking about?

*“The notion of beliefs is traditionally used to
denote acceptance of some statement,
proposition or ideology; or as an expressible
idea or point of view” (Heidmets & Raudsepp,
2001)*

Beliefs – for example:

- Do people speak in a manner that denotes “this is how things are” or, “this is how we do things”?
- Why do people do the things they do? Is it because they can or because they believe that this is the “right” way to do things?
- Think in terms of cosmology – what are the ‘laws’ which underlie the way in which you understand and interact with the world

What is important to remember when it comes to beliefs?

- Can be both shared and individually held
- Informed through socialisation, indoctrination, study, self discovery, experiences etc.
- Both consciously and unconsciously held
- Manifest in all manner of behaviour, from day-to-day living to ritualised and cultural practice
- Are subject to time and instance
- Beliefs are not subject to and cannot be judged in terms of 'science' and/or 'rational' behaviour

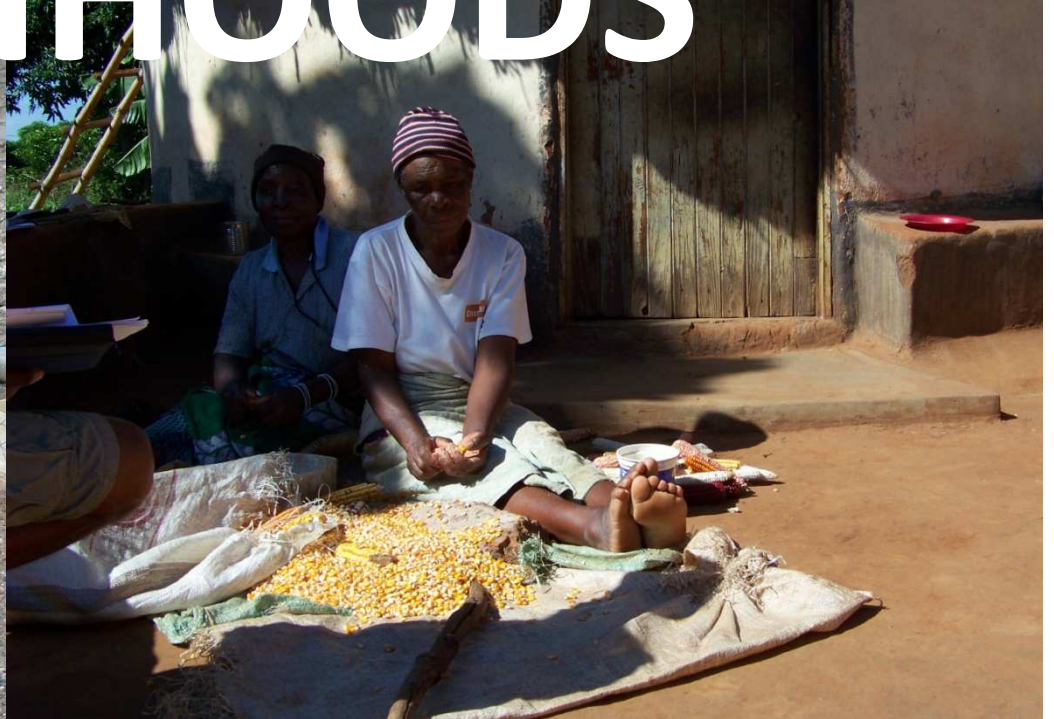


HARDSHIP





LIVELIHOODS





NATURE & BIODIVERSITY



DO NOT DEFOREST
VHA SONGO REMA MIRI

Care for the environment
Kha vha tsireledze mupo

Approved by:
Zwo fenelwa nga:
Traditional Leaders
Mahosi
Tshikondeni Mine



BELIEFS & CULTURAL

PRACTISE



Beliefs around water

- The source – ancestors, God, government, ‘white’ people
 - Disempowered relationship
- Upstream/downstream linkages – few links made
 - “if people throw things in the river, it will be taken away.”*
- Water for people versus the rest
 - Speaks to utility rather than other values

Beliefs around nature

Natural resources are infinite

“We cannot run out of natural resources – if we run out of it we would be dead”

Nature is something that belongs to everyone

“We shouldn’t be paying for water, because water is a natural thing. It’s nature you know, so we mustn’t pay for nature; nature will always be nature so why should we pay for nature?”

Power and responsibility

Knowledge transfer

- It is the job of the elders to teach young folk about traditions

How can you get other people to care for or look after our water?

By educating them and advertising, having conferences and having tv shows for kids and show them that you can make a difference while you are young.

Belief in traditional leadership and their power to rule

- God-given right

Q: Who does Lake Fundudzi belong to?

A: The Chief, Mr Netshiavha ...

Government is responsible

“Water will never be finished and will always be available because *they [i.e. Government] will never close the water*”.

Beliefs around conservation and
the need for places such as KNP

Conservation is important

- Participants expressed the need for conservation areas such as the Kruger Park.
- Most people however, (including those only five kilometres away from the Kruger gate), has never been inside the Kruger Park to visit.

Conservation is important

“The animals when it die, our grandson or grandchildren can’t know that animal if that animal die, they can’t know it. But if we protect that water, our grandchildren would know that animal. So it’s not right for it to die. It’s good to see the locusts, even here to see the locusts, because I want my grandchild to know the locusts. If I see the locusts I call my grandchild and say come and see the locusts. So that’s why I think it’s important, because if they grow up and don’t know those things it’s not good”.

Beliefs about the Park

- Dismay was expressed at the lack of social responsibility on the part of the KNP.
- Despite being 5km from the park, participants indicated that no support was provided by the park to help them get water i.e. sinking boreholes etc.

“people from the park think that animals are more important than people.”

Bringing local beliefs into current thought on protected area management

- The dynamic and inter-subjective meaning of conservation
- Analytical tools not reflective of reality
- Social sanctioning around nature conservation
- Compartmentalisation of conservation
- Juxtaposition of nature as utility versus nature as aesthetic value
- Juxtaposition of nature as free versus when you have to pay for it
- Conservation is not internalised

How can we get people to value conservation?

by helping them realize ^{how} ~~that~~ it could affect them because no-one cares unless it's about them

