

Comments on national parks and future relations with neighbouring communities

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Considering the success of South Africa's conservation history, the question is asked why this achievement has failed to impress the major portion of the South African population. Reasons for this failure are discussed and in order to rectify the situation, key strategies of the National Parks Board for addressing the problem are dealt with. The process of stereotyping and the role that it played in establishing an unequal experience of the conservation history is investigated. This is followed by arguments why conservation agencies should get involved in the development of rural communities. The ability of conservation areas to act as engines of development in rural areas is highlighted. The conclusion is drawn that neighbouring communities need to be involved in joint decision-making and shared responsibility, and it is suggested that this process should be handled in a dialogic way. Lastly a broad view of affirmative action is advanced, which will allow for meaningful integration of community relations with an affirmative action programme. Proposals are made for an affirmative action programme for the National Parks Board.

Key words: Affirmative action, conservation, strategies, stereotyping, myths, social responsibility, development, joint decision-making, local communities.

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Background

South Africa has a proud conservation history. Examples of achievements are the successful rescue of the white (*Ceratotherium simum*) and black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), the bontebok (*Damaliscus dorcas dorcas*) and the Cape mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*) from the brink of extinction. Populations of elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) and crocodile (*Crocodilus niloticus*) are growing, with increases in marine turtle, whale, seal and seabird populations along the coast of South Africa, as opposed to their decline elsewhere. While these achievements cannot be ignored, they go largely unacknowledged by the greater percentage of the South African population, more specifically the rural populations that are in daily contact with our national parks and game reserves.

The birth of conservation in South Africa is often cited as Paul Kruger's efforts to proclaim a game sanctuary in the Transvaal lowveld in 1884. From there on the popularised history of conservation unfolds, giving us Kruger National Park in 1926, the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and several other parks in 1931. Today we have 17 areas managed by the National Parks Board. Apart from this, there are numerous conservation areas managed by Provincial authorities, such as Itala, Hluhluwe, Willem Pretorius, Suikerbosrand and De Hoop. The 'national states' have their own conservation departments, such as Kwazulu, whose Bureau of Natural Resources manages areas like Ndumo, KaNgwane with Songimvelo and Mthetomusha, or Bophuthatswana with Pilanesberg. Why is it then that with such a

success story we have failed to take with us the majority of the population of this country?

The aim of this paper is therefore to examine the reasons for the divergent experience and understanding of South Africa's success story in conservation. This is followed by a discussion of the National Parks Board's strategy for addressing this in the future.

The reasons for failure

One can look to the Richtersveld for an illustration of the reasons why early attempts at creating a national park in this area failed. Although the idea of a park in the Richtersveld was mooted in the early 1970's, according to Ramphele (1991) most residents remained blissfully unaware of these plans until at least 10 years later. On the other hand, environmentalists and outsiders were informed of the plans in journals such as *Custos* and *Panorama* where the proposed park was lauded as a potentially great achievement for conservation, an area of national and international importance. It was argued that the environment had to be protected from the local population (Ramphele 1991). The fact that these claims could be made unchallenged without the knowledge of the local inhabitants for as long as 10 years (Ramphele 1991), is illustrative of the way in which conservation was often conducted in South Africa. Archer (Fig & Archer 1993) has shown that the first formally minuted discussion by the Management Board of the Northern Richtersveld of a national park being proclaimed, only took place in 1986. Discussions were also held with the unpopular and unrepresentative House of Representatives structures, which resulted in the local community at grassroots level being ignored.

Although the structures were a result of the apartheid system, the way in which they were used and local communities were by-passed, is indicative of the Euro-centric approach. This version of hegemony — 'cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class' (Ritzer

1988; Hall 1985) — ignores opinions, perceptions, values and interests of the people who are not identified as part of the westernised cultural and political mainstream. Ironically, these are often the people most affected by the proclamation of a conservation area. Euro-centrism thus tends to display a paternalism, elitism and an attitude of supremacy that regards local people as ignorant and therefore of lesser importance.

While many similar examples such as Pilanesberg National Park, Maputaland and Kruger National Park (Fig & Archer 1993) exist, the reasons for failing to bring Black rural people aboard the conservation movement can be summarised as follows:

- The conservation movement was (and still largely is) of Western design, not incorporating the uniqueness of the African context.
- This movement offered no room for the interests, values, opinions, perceptions and participation of rural people.

Most conservation agencies in South Africa today are aware of the lack of support for conservation by rural communities. It is obvious that many conservation agencies are actively working towards rectifying this situation. The establishment of the Richtersveld National Park was a painful exercise, but it has made the National Parks Board very aware of the importance of community involvement at all levels and at all stages of the conservation process. This experience and other insights that have been gained from taking note of the feelings, opinions and perceptions of people who border the national parks, have forced conservation authorities to take an in depth look at themselves and design strategies for the future to address this particular problem.

Key strategies of the National Parks Board

In a recent publication (Robinson 1992), a number of key strategies (as identified by the

Executive Committee of the National Parks Board) for addressing the challenges of the future are listed. It is of considerable importance that no less than four key strategies are aimed directly or indirectly at addressing the problem of the lack of support for wildlife areas by rural communities. These key strategies will be discussed, taking into consideration contributing factors leading to problems, and stating objectives aimed at rectifying the situation.

Key strategy 1

Create an organisation which is recognised by the majority of South Africans as the legitimate owners to whom the task of managing national parks on behalf of the people of South Africa has been entrusted.

The main thrust of this strategy is to reframe the account of the development of conservation in South Africa, by sensitising conservationists to the history and experience of Black rural communities with regard to conservation in their areas. The popular version of history is documented in many ways, also in many text books still used in South African schools. These versions of South African history are written mainly in Euro-centric terms, often stigmatising other groups (Adam & Moodley 1987). Several recent publications have sensitised the South African public to the fact that such portrayals of history are often one-sided and biased and therefore not acceptable to the broad population (Thompson 1985). Such one-sided interpretations deepen the divergency between cultural groups and further alienate already alienated groups. The popularised myths contained in these accounts of history further entrench misperceptions, institutionalise discrimination and justify the *status quo*.

A closer look at some of these myths illustrate how they operate in South African society. A popular myth is that Black rural people destroy their environment. The implied counterpoint to this suggests that White

entrepreneurs, no matter what they do, make a positive contribution to our world, as long as it is big and makes money. Westerners tend to define things as good simply because they are large and growing (Lauer 1989).

Examination of these beliefs show that this myth is riddled with inconsistencies. No mention is made of traditional conservation practices, attitudes and taboos of Black nations and tribes (Robinson 1992). However, Black people are often accused of denuding the land, chopping down trees and killing the game in their area. What is not said, however, is that they have no alternative. Rural people cannot make a choice other than to stay alive. Therefore, they need to cut down trees for firewood, because there is no other source of energy. They overgraze their land, because they have no other choice. The homeland policy forced too many people into too small a space (Ciskei's population doubled between 1970 and 1982), so that eventually 80% of South Africa's population is crammed into 13% of its land area (Ramphel 1991). When wild animals threaten what little crops one has to feed one's family, it makes good sense to destroy the animals that damage those crops. When you do not know when your family will see meat again, who will refrain from killing an impala if one knows it will feed them for the next two weeks?

Contrast this with many White farmers who have the luxury of several choices. Let us look at the destruction of forests, lowland fynbos (Theron *et al.* 1979) and Valley Bushveld, in order to plant crops that should not be there and are ecologically unjustifiable. Consider the increased use of poisons. Think of hunting practices — hunting for fun or sport is seen as legitimate but hunting for survival is poaching and therefore punishable by law. Black people are accused of cruel hunting methods, but when you do not have a rifle, how do you kill an animal? How does this compare with Whites on a hunting expedition in Botswana, cruelly torturing a lioness to death for the fun of it? (Comrie-Greig, 1984, 1985). Look at the record of overgraz-

ing in South Africa on White farms in areas where people had a choice, where they were not fighting for survival. The entire Karoo is testimony of agricultural malpractice (Van Oudtshoorn 1991).

When one weighs these two interpretations up, one begins to see how unfair the myth is to Black rural people. The same argument exposes how inaccurate the implication is regarding White farmers, White entrepreneurs and White industrialists — by comparison many of them should look much worse.

This myth was used to illustrate its power and potential to influence attitudes, perceptions and the way in which society acts towards particular groups of people.

Consider another myth, one which claims that Black people are not conservation conscious. The lack of grounding for this myth was clearly demonstrated at the Earth Life Africa Conference in Pietermaritzburg during September 1992 (Hallowes 1993). Personal experience with Black people has always indicated that they are very susceptible to conservation principles. The Earth Life Conference very dramatically confirmed this and highlighted the Black participants' devotion to conservation (Hallowes 1993). What was most impressive, was their holistic and pragmatic attitude towards conservation (Hallowes 1993). In this regard they are ahead of the average westernised citizen of South Africa, who in the experience of the author, tends to think about conservation in a rather narrow-minded way.

The psychological process that allowed this distortion of interpretation to take place, is not unique to the field of conservation. It happens all the time, in all walks of life, and it happens to all kinds of people. It is called stereotyping, and has a few important characteristics:

- stereotypes (or myths) are generalisations about people based on membership of a social category;

- there is a tendency to attach derogatory stereotypes to outgroups and favourable stereotypes to ingroups (Hogg & Abrams 1988).

Myths and stereotypes are socially shared, and tend to persist over time and resist change. Therefore it requires but one small step to accommodate stereotypes within social groups in such a way that it becomes part of an interrelated set of beliefs and propositions. The primary function of such a set of beliefs and propositions (a particular group's ideology) is that it explains the world to that particular group (Hogg & Adams 1988). It creates the terms of reference for the world. What is particularly important, is that it makes it very difficult for individuals to break out and perceive things in a new or different way. In a stratified society one then finds that the dominant group attempts to impose its own ideology on others, because this helps to consolidate its own position (Hogg & Adams 1988). This form of hegemony enforced a Euro-centric approach on conservation through the years. Only now is it realised that this approach has to be redesigned with full participation of rural communities, and with immediate implementation.

Simplistic interpretations of South African conservation history are unfair, filled with contradictions and are bound to create more conflict in future. Humans are cognitive misers, and therefore tend to take mental shortcuts (Baron & Byrne 1987). This means that unless a deliberate effort is made to think otherwise, most people will continually fall into the trap of thinking in the comfortable and secure old ways. What is needed is to shake off the chains of an outdated ideology and make a conscious effort to clarify our thinking, so that a new paradigm for conservation in Africa can be created.

The objective of the National Parks Board is to ensure that all South Africans experience conservation as part of their own history (Robinson 1992). Therefore a deliberate effort must be made at describing conservation

history as objectively as possible. To this end it will be necessary to unlearn certain attitudes, and introduce new insights to National Parks Board staff. Explicit efforts must be made to change paternalistic attitudes towards communities, as these can be as thorny as racial or professional arrogance, and these elements are often fused (*in litt.*). An openness towards the perceptions and experiences of other groups must be instilled, so that recognition and acceptance of their account of history can be promoted. Managers should be encouraged to discover through open debate why others think and behave in the way that they do, why rural communities are often bitter and angry (Fuhr 1993). Fuhr (1993) further recommends that instead of forcing people into a predetermined corporate culture, the culture of the organisation should be expanded and enriched to allow for the diversity of interpretations of the past history. In this way the consciousness of rural Black people regarding their own responsibility (which was eroded substantially by the legislation of the past) can be enhanced to levels where it can be said that the rural Black people have come aboard (Robinson 1992). Such sensitisation training has already been initiated for management staff in the National Parks Board.

Key strategy 2

Develop a comprehensive and clear corporate social responsibility strategy for the organisation and ensure that it is applied effectively.

The question is often asked, "Why does the National Parks Board want to get involved in the development of local communities?"

This question must be addressed philosophically. To clarify the philosophical argument, the assumption is made that the existence of a successful national park system reflects an acceptable level of environmental ethics and the moral commitment of the nation to conservation. One could therefore envisage such

a national parks system as the top of a pyramid of social responsibility.

Based on knowledge of the trophic pyramids in ecosystems, it is known that the top of this pyramid is totally dependent on the quality of the base that supports it. Should a healthy and representative national park system (that will earn the respect of the international community and that will fulfil the objectives of the heterogeneous South African community) be seen as the top of the environmental pyramid, it follows that this will only be possible if it is supported by a solid base.

What does this base consist of? A successful national park system can only exist in a sustainable society. A sustainable society in turn can only be brought about by a policy of equity, which allows communities access to



the essential resources that are required to create a sustainable lifestyle for themselves. Only once this position has been achieved, will the National Parks Board be in a position to feel confident that the future existence of national parks under its jurisdiction is more secure.

Armed with this argument, and taking into account that poverty has been identified as the biggest threat to conservation, it makes sense that the National Parks Board should have and develop a clear corporate social responsibility.

This responsibility could be defined as creating a positive working relationship with the communities who live on the borders of the parks, in order to stimulate the creation of sustainable life-styles within such communities.

While the social responsibility programme of the National Parks Board is aimed at stimulating sustainable development within bordering communities, it must be borne in mind that sustainable development is a participatory process which requires investment of resources before it yields a return (Breen *et al.* 1992). Over the years National Parks have proven themselves to have the ability to become engines for rural development. This is due to their location in rural areas and the ecotourism market that is created, as well as the existence of a wide range of skills and activities within the parks (Breen *et al.* 1992). Geographically they are very well placed to fulfil this role. Even though a national policy for eradicating poverty is lacking, the National Parks Board can make a very effective contribution with its social responsibility programme through pro-active behaviour and by networking with other role players (*in litt.*).

It is indeed fortunate that South Africa's national parks often have some of the necessary resources required to stimulate sustainable development. For instance, culling programmes in the Kruger National Park produced in the order of 160 000 kg of animal hide per annum (Fourie 1991). National parks could also provide considerable building material, as is currently happening at Addo Elephant National Park, with the recently established Addo Liaison Committee. Farms that were bought and incorporated into the Addo Elephant National Park have a number of buildings and other structures that need to be demolished. By making this building material accessible to the community of Nomathamsanqua, the National Parks Board is providing access to an important resource. Negotiations are also being conducted with the Department of Water Affairs to make

certain deproclaimed portions of the park available to this community, as well as securing water for irrigation, which will enable them to establish vegetable gardens. These gardens will be capable of supplying vegetables to the local community and could possibly satisfy the needs of the Addo Elephant National Park.

One of the most lucrative trades in national parks is the curio trade. In 1985/86 the curio trade in the Kruger National Park was valued at R3,5 million (Fourie 1987). By facilitating the development of a sustainable curio industry within local communities and by creating the structures through which the products can be marketed, national parks can provide a significant boost to the local economy. Not only does this provide an opportunity to develop local industry, but it also creates the opportunity for the empowerment of local people, if they are afforded the opportunity to take ownership of the process by means of which such products are marketed. A practical example would be to assist local communities to create a curio market at the entrance gate to a park, and to drive the venture themselves, with some logistic assistance from the park authority. In this way the direct benefit of a sales point created by the park, as well as direct benefit from the flow of tourists created by the existence of the park would be evident.

The objectives of the National Parks Board in this regard are that the senior management in the various national parks must create structures for regular contact with adjacent communities. These formal standing committees must establish communication channels capable of dealing with issues like:

- identifying goods and services which can be purchased by the national parks from within these communities
- assisting with the general development of the community through education in sound environmental practices, for instance, permaculture and a provision of essential resources

- developing policies and agreements for resources sharing or exchange schemes, for instance the gathering of thatching material for personal use in exchange for roof maintenance (Robinson 1992).

Such formal standing committees have already been formed in Addo Elephant National Park and Vaalbos National Park, with the intention of expanding the concept to include all national parks. The initial success of these ventures indicates that this strategy is well aimed.

Key strategy 3

Develop a national park system in a manner that will provide communities on the borders of national parks with an opportunity to influence and share responsibility for the conservation effort.

While social responsibility strategies tend to focus on material means and benefits for communities from national parks, this is not all that is required to create a healthy relationship with neighbouring communities. It has been pointed out before (Fourie 1991) that an holistic approach to community development should be followed. Material needs are only one aspect of a broad approach, and to this end sensible commercial exchanges relating to the utilisation of renewable natural resources should be created.

However, rural people have indicated at different venues and on various occasions that participation in the management and decision making process affecting the nature reserves in their immediate area is of crucial importance. The participation by local communities in affairs that affect their lives from day to day is something that was grossly neglected in the past. The history of the Richtersveld negotiations is a case in point (Ramphela 1991). Allowing local people participation in the decision making and management instills a sense of ownership of that conservation area within that commu-

nity. This satisfies the higher needs experienced by such communities, in terms of the social and spiritual levels of life. The experience of control over one's own destiny satisfies the need for self-esteem and personal growth (Viljoen *et al* 1987), thus stimulating the development of social skills and competence, which leads to greater recognition by others. This further improves the capacity of rural communities to become equal partners in negotiations.

The GEM workshops at Broederstroom (1992 and 1993) concluded that the Richtersveld National Park is one of the best examples of a community park within South Africa today. However, this did not come about without effort and pain. The National Parks Board went through a process of negotiating with various bodies and parties for no less than 18 years before the dream of Richtersveld National Park became a reality. This process could have been shortened considerably if the right approach had been taken from the start.

What is required to establish a participative process? It is essential to set up a dialogic relationship between the various parties. By definition a dialogic relationship implies an openness between parties, which means a willingness to listen in an unbiased way to the interpretation of the other party, while at the same time being open to challenge one's own interpretation. This can only take place if both parties participate on the same level and on the same terms. The mutual understanding that arises from this process does not necessarily imply consensus, but rather an acknowledgement of and respect for the other party's position. This dialogic approach thus acknowledges the local communities as full partners in the participative process and this then forms the basis of a quality relationship which is so essential for setting the process in motion (Van Schoor 1986).

Mutual understanding, shared responsibility and democracy do not come about without effort. It is never given, but must be deliber-

ately strived for. It often seems cumbersome to accommodate the other parties at various stages in the process. It is time consuming, and the temptation for taking short cuts is always there. However, experience has shown that taking short cuts invariably leads to unforeseen problems arising in the future. Therefore, although it may seem a big effort, although it may seem time consuming, the democratic process is a recipe for lessening problems in the future — problems which could be far more time consuming and far more costly to rectify.

Although the National Parks Board has tackled this problem in the Richtersveld, it must be acknowledged that a continuous, deliberate effort will have to be made to maintain the democratic process. The Richtersveld, however, is a unique park in the sense that it was proclaimed from the start as a community park. Many other parks present a very different situation. In the case of the Addo Elephant National Park, the Addo Liaison Committee was set up with representatives from the community. A process was set in motion by means of which decision-making can be shared, with specific reference to those aspects that affect the lives of people living in areas adjoining the park. Projects are launched on a joint basis, focusing mainly on stimulating development within the community towards the goal of creating a sustainable lifestyle. While the day-to-day management of the park is more obviously the responsibility of the National Parks Board, the aim is to draw the community into decision making regarding all aspects that affect them, or where they could possibly make a contribution.

Key strategy 4

Develop and launch a sound affirmative action programme which is assessed through targets and performance.

Affirmative action and the community

The generally accepted interpretation of affirmative action is that it is a technical term referring to personnel policy, mainly used when individuals from disadvantaged communities are appointed in an organisation to redress imbalances. If affirmative action is interpreted in this way it leads to a narrow and often negative perception of a process which in essence should be progressive and constructive. Maphai (1993) calls this the 'narrow affirmative action', and cautions against resistance from whites. In his wider concept of affirmative action, he points out that it would be a mistake to invest all effort into affirmative action to the detriment of issues such as poverty and social welfare. These matters are interdependent, and call for a wider approach to affirmative action, as indicated in the Draft ANC "Bill of rights for a New South Africa" (Loxton 1993). Article 13 of the abovementioned Bill suggests that affirmative action should have as its goal 'the general advancement in social, economic and cultural spheres, of men and women who in the past have been disadvantaged by discrimination.' Affirmative action should therefore consist of a series of carefully targeted steps to empower people to take charge of and improve their own lives. Bêteille (1993) also points out that affirmative action should not only be concerned with higher education, but should encompass rural communities and therefore interact effectively with development and reform programmes in rural areas. With this interpretation of affirmative action, it can be integrated very significantly with the other key strategies mentioned above.

In the same sense that the individual employee has been subjected to a handicap by discriminatory practices, communities have also been subjected to handicaps. In spite of cultural differences which led to differences in values, norms and beliefs, there are important differences which can be attributed to disparity caused by government policies enacted in the past. Examples of this include the development of conservation as described

earlier, education, provision of services to communities (health services, extension services, agricultural aid schemes), land ownership, availability of credit, agricultural subsidies, legal systems, etc. Apart from these inequalities, the values, norms and beliefs of the western community were largely enforced on that of the non-western communities. This Euro-centrism led to the creation of second class citizens with the resultant undermining of self-image and self-worth, the emergence of acquired helplessness and dependency as well as the destruction of cultural tradition and structures of authority. The imbalance was further strengthened by the creation of numerous harmful myths and stereotypes (see Key Strategy 1 above) regarding the non-western communities. The joint effect of this process was responsible for the creation of masses of people with generally low self-worth, a below average faith in the future and a poorly developed level of social skills.

It is however within this sombre picture that the challenge for affirmative action lies. By perceiving affirmative action honestly and fearlessly as an opportunity to progressively eradicate imbalances created by past policies, the National Parks Board can play a very positive role. A broad perspective of affirmative action will allow the meaningful integration of community relations with the affirmative action programme.

To illustrate how affirmative action can be integrated with the other three key strategies, the following hypothetical argument is offered:

The nursery in the Richtersveld National Park is currently placed at Sendelingsdrift, approximately 60km from the closest Nama community living at Kuboes. In its present position the nursery is directly controlled by the National Parks Board. The idea is that profits made by the nursery should be shared with the community and will then be seen as one of the benefits offered by the park to the community.

A closer look at this situation will reveal that it does not satisfy the basic objectives of community involvement. Firstly the relationship between the National Parks Board and the community will remain that of an owner of a resource on the one hand, and a receiver of a gift on the other. The principles of affirmative action requires that this relationship should be rectified. Although the area is managed by the National Parks Board, the Richtersveld plant community is a resource that belongs to the Nama of the Richtersveld. Therefore the Nama people should have ownership of a process such as the breeding and selling of indigenous plants of the Richtersveld. This is impossible as long as the National Parks Board manages the nursery. The nursery operation should thus be aimed at creating the necessary capacity and skills within the local community so that it may be taken over in its entirety by them. When this happens, the National Parks Board can be seen not only as a facilitator of the process of growth within the community, but also as a partner dedicated to powersharing.

In the second place, the placing of the nursery at the National Parks Board office complex approximately 60km from the nearest town conflicts with the concept of ownership by local communities. With the current placing of the nursery, the following is inevitably implied:

- the National Parks Board alone is in control,
- the local community may get involved, but then on the terms of the National Parks Board,
- the National Parks Board can do it better than the local people,
- job opportunities linked to the nursery will only be available if such people are prepared to work for the National Parks Board,
- it does not matter that the local people are inconvenienced by the placing of the nursery, but the National Parks Board should not be inconvenienced.

Apart from the practical benefits, it will have extremely important symbolic significance to place the nursery within Kuboes. Such a move will demonstrate the fact that the National Parks Board is prepared to share control over certain aspects of the park with the Nama community. It makes sense not only in terms of the creation of new job opportunities, but also by improving the accessibility of direct benefits from tourism for the local people, and contributing to capacity-building within the local community.

Theoretical perspectives on affirmative action

There are currently three perspectives on affirmative action in South Africa (Krafchik 1993). The first school of thought, which emerged in the 1980's, defines affirmative action as a black problem to be corrected by a series of training interventions, designed to teach black people how to perform in the current organisational culture. This '*black advancement*' model sees development as putting training and skills into black people, without changing the environment within which they operate (Human 1991).

The black advancement model is opposed by the *diversity management* school of thought, because, it is argued, by concentrating on race and gender to the exclusion of other forms of diversity, needless confrontation is provoked (Krafchik 1993). The central principle of this perspective is that all societies contain diversity, and that this diversity should be highlighted in an organisation by attempting to channel this into improved productivity. Krafchik (1993) feels that the South African society is not yet ripe for this approach - 'we first need to go through a healing period which acknowledges the serious racial and gender divisions in society'.

The perspective most likely to succeed in South Africa is the *people management* approach (Krafchik 1993; Human 1991). This approach acknowledges that a person's performance is only partially the result of train-

ing and inherent ability. The balance of the performance is influenced by the culture of the organisation and the way in which the person is managed. It points to the erroneous assumptions made about black managers who have failed in the past, which attributed their lack of ability as the cause of their failure. On investigation, however, it has been revealed that underperformance was the result of either the way in which a person was managed, or negative expectations which create the failure as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Human 1991). The people management approach believes that black manager development is as much a white problem as it is a black problem, because white managers play a crucial role in the development of black managers, influenced by their own willingness and ability to develop their subordinates (Human 1991). The importance of expectations communicated to subordinates and the self-fulfilling nature thereof, can and must not be ignored (Lauer 1989).

In describing why affirmative action programmes fail, Human (1991) is strongly critical of the black advancement perspective, arguing that such programmes fail to take cognizance of the fact that the development and progress of black staff depend largely on the assessment, re-education and training of *white management* in people management skills. Krafchik (1993) also argues that the South African society is not ripe for the diversity management option. South Africa is currently experiencing a period of intense change - from a strong identification with race and gender to a more open and democratic social structure, where race and gender will become less obvious as social categories. This, however, is bound to entail a process of social evolution that will take some years. For this reason it is recommended that the National Parks Board should apply the people management approach to its own affirmative action programme, as the most appropriate approach for the present time.

Having accepted that a *people management* approach is the most likely to succeed in the

present South African situation, the implementation of such an approach should be considered. Several recently held workshops have focused on affirmative action and its implications for South Africa. Conclusions indicate that four possible types of interventions exist (Weiner 1993).

- Policies which aim to reduce racial inequality, but which are themselves racially neutral. Kennedy (1993) and Puthuchearry (1993) both expressed fears that race-based affirmative action will entrench race-mindedness, and deepen the ethnic cleavages. Such policies should be broadly directed towards the disadvantaged (Weiner 1993).
- Policies aimed at eliminating barriers to entry. The aim is to end legalised and official forms of discrimination, as well as the informal and often unintentional barriers. To this end a process of consensus on affirmative action strategy within the organisation is essential, so that the structure of opportunity is levelled, officially and unofficially (Weiner 1993).
- Policies that improve the quality of the pool from which individuals are recruited. These interventions are directed towards capacity-building, enabling the disadvantaged to acquire the knowledge and skills required to be effective in their work (Weiner 1993). Too little focus on creating abilities, whilst favouring the mere removal of disabilities, created a lack of upward mobility amongst the disadvantaged strata in India (Béteille, 1993).
- Policies that set quotas which fix the outcome of the affirmative action process in numbers. This is an inflexible approach, likely to erode standards and induce feelings of inferiority amongst beneficiaries (Weiner 1993; Baron & Byrne 1987).

It is clear that any single intervention will fail to address the issue satisfactorily. It is therefore proposed that the National Parks Board formulates a broad-based policy, based on

interventions 1, 2 and 3 as described above. Intervention 4 could be applied loosely and be phased in over time to avoid negative consequences. However, this should not be seen as the main thrust of the strategy, but rather as a by-product. Making use of the principles of the people management approach, such interventions should run parallel to a programme of sensitization of white management staff, to ensure that a favourable organisational climate is created.

Strategy and technique

Keeping in mind that a *people management* approach is proposed, a strategy should be developed for implementation. Krafchik (1993) suggests that the process should be enacted in three phases, namely the *organisational review* phase, the *action plan* and the *implementation and monitoring* phase. Furthermore McGregor (1992) proposes that strategy should be implemented on three levels, namely the strategic level, the organisational level and the individual level. If the people management approach is to be pursued, it then follows that people at all levels should be drawn into every phase of implementation. Furthermore, as substantiated previously, the National Parks Board should not stop its affirmative action programme within the organisation. Because the organisation functions within a particular environment, the concept of affirmative action should be broadened to include the environment within which the National Parks Board operates, and especially the sphere of relations with neighbouring communities. Therefore strategy should not only include the *organisational sphere*, but also the *environmental sphere*.

1. *Organisational review phase*

This phase aims at creating an opportunity for the organisation to take stock of where it finds itself, and where it wants to be. McGregor (1992) feels that a company audit should be done at this stage, determining the present culture. Krafchik (1993) emphasises that it is crucial that this stage must include an honest

airing of fears and other emotions evoked by the subject, so that all staff members will have had the opportunity to be heard. Communication with all staff is essential from the outset, not only to air fears and emotions, but also to ensure that all staff understand its objectives (Alperson 1992). It is pointed out that consensus within the organisation or community is essential to the successful outcome of programmes, as this will ensure broad-based support and participation.

McGregor (1992) suggests that top management commitment is procured during this phase. This could be done by workshops with senior executives, aiming to create awareness of what affirmative action is, why it is being implemented, assessing the company's objectives, expanding the focus of senior management to assimilate target groups for affirmative action and formulate an action plan. The end result should be a common language throughout the entire organization with regard to affirmative action and what it means to the organisation (McGregor 1992).

In the *organisational sphere* it is proposed that sensitisation of staff to essential aspects of the affirmative action programme be initiated in order to recruit their full support for the programme. Consensus and co-operation is essential for the programmes to be successful, therefore the training of white staff in preparation for implementation is vital. A favourable organisational culture must be created. Sensitisation training has already been planned and the process has been set in motion at a Park Warden's meeting (Southern Parks) in November 1993, where a sensitisation workshop was offered to senior staff.

For the *environmental sphere* it is suggested that the handicaps within disadvantaged communities surrounding our parks are identified and acknowledged. Investigation of the *status quo* in neighbouring communities should aim to expose handicaps so that resultant opportunities may arise from that.

2. *The action plan phase*

Decisions and priorities established in the first phase should now be formalised (Krafchik 1993). It appears that the formalisation of policy has a close correlation to implementation, therefore it is strongly suggested that a written policy is created. Such a written document could also serve as a method of informing employees and the public of the company's commitment to its programme.

Once the written policy document has seen the light, execution can be made the responsibility of the line managers (organisational level), because the ability and willingness of the line manager becomes essential to the process (Human 1991). This phase is linked to a manpower analysis, to determine the growth potential and allow for planning in various departments.

Implementation in both the *organisational and environmental spheres* will depend on the creation of formalised policy.

3. *Implementation and monitoring phase*

In preparation of this final phase, line managers are taught coaching skills - skills that enable them to provide employees with the opportunity to develop, learn and grow in the organisation (McGregor 1992). These teaching programmes are linked to mentoring programmes, welcoming newcomers into the organisation, and familiarising them with the corporate culture and values (McGregor 1992).

During this phase the action plan is also implemented. Employees are selected for development, new candidates are recruited and screened and then subjected to an orientation programme. This programme spells out the objectives of the development programme, introduces the corporate culture and clarifies expectations (McGregor 1992).

It is important that the implementation is constantly monitored to ascertain the success of the specific programme. Monitoring

should highlight strong and weak points, and flexibility should be maintained to ensure the integrity of the process (Krafchik 1993). Evaluation should be a catalyst, feeding into the system for modification where necessary. Weiner (1993) cautions that programmes should be regarded as experimental, thus allowing for non-performance, failures and adaptations.

It is recommended that implementation in the *organisational sphere* considers development of own staff to bridge training inequalities, thus allowing disadvantaged staff to be promoted into more senior positions. Such training is already underway in certain sections, eg. wildlife management, where newly implemented training programmes are aimed at achieving this goal. During 1993 a total of 46 Game Scouts underwent specialised training in Southern Parks as part of a programme of development. This programme will be expanded during 1994. Both this aspect and the sensitisation training mentioned above has been included in the job description of a senior manager in the Cape Town Regional Head Office.

In addition an equal opportunity environment for appointment and promotion must be created. This refers to the eradication of institutionalised barriers, as well as informal barriers to appointment and promotion. Informal discrimination lurks in the attitudes and behaviours of people, where it is driven by sub-conscious values and beliefs. Because people are often not overtly aware of their existence and that they are practising it, it is extremely difficult to address. Innes (1992) suggests that these can only be satisfactorily handled by anti-discriminatory committees, with equal representation of white and black staff. The advantage is that black staff can pinpoint actions interpreted as discriminatory, while white staff can correct misperceptions regarding practices that are seen as discriminatory, but in fact are neutral.

In terms of the *environmental sphere*, eradication of identified handicaps within disad-

vantaged communities, in order to facilitate growth, should be tackled earnestly. Programmes should be developed to address inequalities and handicaps. Such programmes should focus on:

- *Essential life skills*
Examples of these are literacy training, communication and financial skills and certain job skills. Literacy training is already underway in several National Parks.
- *Capacity building*
This refers to those skills essential for the community to hold its own in the company of highly trained westernised institutions. This would refer to abilities such as meeting procedures, negotiation skills, management skills, business skills, agricultural skills, environmental skills, etc.
- *Developing ownership* of certain processes related to our national parks. The Richtersveld nursery which was previously discussed could serve as an example of attaining ownership. Another example is the development of community Field Guide systems to supplement the Field Guides services which are established in some national parks. Such community Field Guides should be able to operate as an independent entity, administered by the community, and facilitated by the National Parks Board. This concept could be applied in most parks, but would be especially relevant in areas such as Richtersveld National Park, Riemvasmaak and Schmidtsdrift.

Conclusion

There is ample reason for looking positively to the future. It will, however, require certain adaptations from the National Parks Board as an organisation. Firstly a deliberate effort must be made to transcend the biases and prejudices of the past, by adopting a thinking and open approach to rural communities. It will require changing the conservation paradigm, to reshape structures so that they may

lie comfortably in the lap of Africa. It needs a redefinition of rural communities as partners in conservation, and not as a problem for conservation. A constant effort must be made to uphold democratic processes and participative management, whilst guarding against the temptation of slipping back into familiar old ways and methodologies. Lastly a broad and bold view should be taken of affirmative action, to allow integration of community relations within a programme of affirmative action.

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