



People-environment trade-offs in managing communal rangelands of South Africa

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Context

- Communal rangelands in South Africa provide a range of vital ecosystem services both to the public sector and the local communities who have stewardship over them.
- However, government policy focused on delivery of broader ecosystem services to the public (e.g. water provision and carbon sequestration) may not always be congruent with the shorter term provisioning services (e.g. livestock production) desired by communities.
- Moreover, communities themselves are highly heterogeneous with different social groups prioritising different types of rangeland services.
- A Trade-offs lens is a useful way to work through some of the potentially antagonistic rangeland priorities between these different sets of stakeholders at different organisational levels (Figure 1).

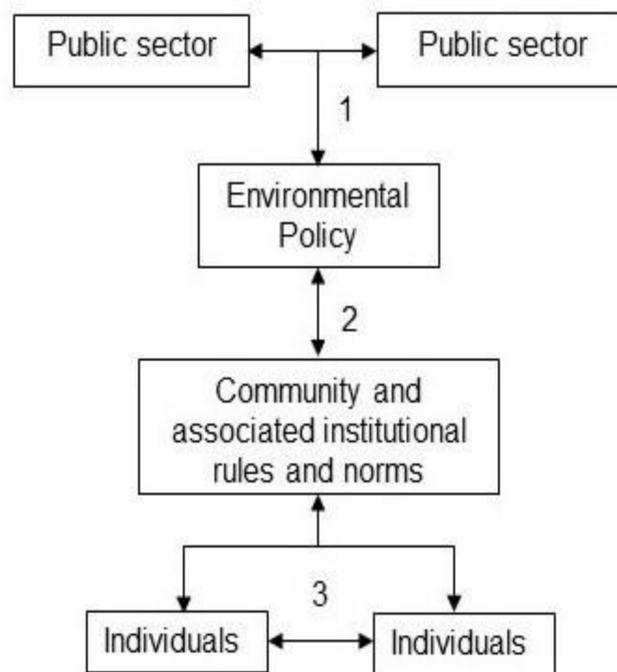


Figure 1: Conceptual framing of key areas of interaction between different stakeholders in determining ecosystem service trade-offs for communal rangelands, identified as: 1) Between different public sector actors in determining environmental policy 2) Translating policy into practice in communal rangelands 3) Within and between community stakeholders.

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Methods

Research was undertaken at three communities in the uMzimvubu catchment of Eastern Cape Province. We undertook focus group discussions at communities to establish priorities for rangeland use. We then held a workshop involving participants from communities, local and national government and academia to determine potential ecosystem trade-offs between stakeholders. More detail is provided in the workshop video: https://youtu.be/9NUL_p5HpmY.

Results

Ecosystem trade-offs between the different sets of stakeholders were identified at the three main levels out in Figure 1:

1. *Governmental policy.* Governmental and NGO actors identified an antagonism in policy between government-driven efforts at improving water availability through the Working for Water (WfW) scheme, which removes invasive wattle trees, and other environmental services of national importance such as carbon sequestration.
2. *Policy and community.* Likewise, a contradiction was identified between public policy and community practice, in WfW paying people to remove wattle when the wattle itself provides important provisioning services (e.g. fuelwood, fence poles) to local people.
3. *Community.* Finally, it was clear that divisions existed between within communities in how different social groups prioritised environmental services from rangelands. Men prioritised rangeland for livestock grazing whereas women focused more on timber products, thatching grass and medicinal herbs, some of which are antagonistic under current arrangements.

Conclusions

- Land use planning in communal areas must focus on balancing ecosystem services more effectively between different stakeholder groups, such that synergistic (win-win) rather than antagonistic relationships are fostered.
- In many communities, management of invasive wattle will be central to how these relationships are negotiated at different stakeholder levels.
- A possible focus might be on strategically retaining areas of wattle that support community need and managing the remaining cleared areas in ways that balance needs of different community groups with those of governmental actors. Modelling work using different land use scenarios is being used to explore this.

Further details of the project can be found at: www.coventry.ac.uk/cawr-tocasa