

**FARM WORKERS AND LAND TENURE REFORM: THE CASE OF GAME FARMING IN  
HOPE FOUNTAIN IN THE EASTERN CAPE**

By

Kelly Luck

Anthropology and Development Studies

Rand Afrikaans University

**Abstract**

Land tenure reform is the one aspect of the government's three-tiered land reform programme which directly affects farm workers. This paper evaluates land tenure reform through an exploration of the proposed relocation of ten farm worker families from the farms in Hope Fountain, near Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape on which they live, to a piece of land which has been donated by the new game farming land owner. It is an account of the bureaucratic processes undergone, and the expectations of the participants. What is revealed is a highly stratified, fatalistic and divided community, as well as government officials and NGO representatives caught up in 'sustainability' discourses which have little or no bearing on the current plight of this particular community.

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Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research

Working Paper No. 58

ISBN: 1-86810

Contact: Anne King at [aking@ufhel.ac.za/](mailto:aking@ufhel.ac.za/)

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*“I am old and I am finished now. I am sad because I can not live here anymore but happy that I can make a new start and live a better life than I live now in a new place”*

**Ted, farm worker**

*“It is not a nice life here; there are no good houses and no toilets. Water is scarce. Now that I know I have land of my own I feel free. When I think of what I will do with my own land I will plant vegetables as sometimes we do not have the money to go to the shop”*

**Nancy, farm worker**

*“I can’t wait to be on that other farm. The reserve here is closing in it is not so safe. The houses are damaged with the rain, perhaps in the new place the government houses will be better”*

**Sally, farm worker**

*“Me I will not go because we are being forced. The farmer cannot decide for us. In this government of ours, in this new South Africa we will not be forced to go anywhere”*

**Samuel, farm worker**

This paper examines in detail the plan to relocate the residents of three farms<sup>1</sup> in Hope Fountain, near Grahamstown (see map on page 29), from their present locations on the three farms to another area of the game farm. It is an account of the bureaucratic process undergone, and the expectations of the participants involved in the proposed relocation. De Wet (2001: 333-4) makes the insightful point that resettlement in South Africa has only been talked about within the context of Apartheid. Information on post-Apartheid resettlement is limited for two main reasons: the limited number of documented cases, and the lack of sufficient time in which to monitor the psychological, social and economic adjustments or maladjustments of targeted communities. Given these two constraints, and the fact that the residents of these farms have yet to be moved, the information presented below is more an account of the *expectations of resettlement*, than an act of resettlement.

The discussion is divided into three main sections. The first major section is a review of the motivations of all the parties involved. The bureaucratic aspects of the land tenure reform process are also outlined. This includes an identification of the various role players, and an explanation of the process which must be under gone to secure approval for tenure related projects. The second section looks in more detail at the development of the project and the reactions of the beneficiaries to the proposal. The residents of the three farms are divided over the proposed move. This division is directly related to certain economic conditions and the prior existence of a land claim within the immediate vicinity. The division has caused a great deal of conflict between co-residents. Although those in favour of the project have made a

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<sup>1</sup> A large number of pseudonyms for both people and geographical locations have been used in this paper. The three farms in question are referred to as Glenville, Millsfontein and Fonteinberg. The game farm is known as Buffalo Lodge, and the planned relocation site is called Nollspoort.

concerted effort to come together as a community given the fact that they will shortly have to live in closer proximity to one another, conflict and jealousies still persist. Those opposed to the move have begun to gossip about those individuals who are willing to move, due in part to their increasing uncertainty as to the wisdom of their choice. The third and final section outlines the vested interests of the individuals and organisations involved in the resettlement process. This section culminates in an account of the 'stakeholder meeting' which took place at Buffalo Lodge in October 2002. The build up to the meeting, and the events that transpired shortly thereafter were particularly illustrative of the fact that NGO and government officials are trapped in a cycle of development rhetoric which may in fact be to the detriment of the beneficiaries. The 'all or nothing' attitude adopted by many officials; a lack of clarity as to which department should do what; the constant calls for a consultant to discover the role of local and provincial government in the 'project'; the need to make things 'sustainable', and discover not "what the people want," but "what they are entitled to", is alarmingly reminiscent of the disastrous social engineering that marked so much of the last century in South Africa.

### **Setting the Context: Game Farming and Farm Worker Eviction**

Game ranching/farming is defined as the commercialisation of wildlife by private landowners (Department of Agriculture, 1994: 64). There are currently 500 private game reserves in the Eastern Cape - 100% more than in 1992 (Huggins et al, 2002: 6), and with every indication that the growth trend will continue. Consequently Minister of Agriculture Thoko Didiza, recently intimated that given the threat game farming poses to food security in South Africa, the government would consider drafting legislation to curb their proliferation (Daily Dispatch: Thursday 9 May 2002).

Reasons for the onset of game farming can be grouped into three broad categories; its association with eco-tourism, environmental sustainability and agricultural deregulation in post-Apartheid South Africa. Favourable exchange rates make South Africa an affordable destination for a wide range of international tourists, most especially hunters and other nature based tourists. Game farming comes under the banner of eco-tourism, with an estimated 80% of income being derived directly from hunting and eco-tourism. From an ecological viewpoint, game farming is considered as vital for the continued existence of wildlife in South Africa. Game farming is also a critically important factor in the conservation of the Eastern Cape's 'thicket biome vegetation type' (UPE Terrestrial Ecology Research Unit), and is widely held to be more sustainable than crop and livestock farming. The deregulation and liberalisation of the agricultural sector has led to a decrease in profits for a number of farmers. Game farming promises high capital returns once initial outputs have been recuperated. In post-Apartheid South Africa, land reform, the establishment of basic conditions of employment for farm workers, agricultural deregulation and increased stock theft all add to the reduction of direct agricultural activity, and the increase in game farming.

### *Farm worker eviction*

Evictions related to the onset of game farming are quite common. An extract from local Grahamstown newspaper, the *Grocott's Mail*, dated 19 June 2002, suggests that farm evictions are continuing (see box 1). Farm residents are usually considered superfluous to the commercial operation. Their labour is not needed, and their continued residence on the reserve is seen as a threat to security, including their own. The continued existence of people and their domesticated livestock on the reserve is potentially dangerous to them if predators or other dangerous animals, like buffalo, are introduced. Beyond these concerns, many landowners simply do not want extra people on their land. They do not enjoy the responsibility of having additional occupiers. They are not prepared for any complications which may arise because of this: stock theft, poaching and vandalism. Eviction is therefore something which has occurred both before a transfer of ownership, and once the new owners are established.

#### ***Box 1: Eviction from game farms***

##### EVICTIONS FROM FARMS

The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) is concerned with reports of farm evictions in South Africa, including Albany District. Allegations of farmers who advise their workers to relocate to urban areas because farms are to change ownership continue to reach the offices of the PAC. Reasons given by farmers are that farms are to become game farms and that the new owner/s want workers to leave before they take over. Farmers would then show their willingness to help the poor workers by buying them building materials and offer[ing] transport. Workers, their families, etc. would be rallied to urban areas of the Albany district at night. Those workers who are reluctant to the illegal removal, albeit politely communicated would be harassed (sic). It's no wonder that squatter camps are mushrooming in almost all our urban areas, particularly within the district of Albany. Local authorities are hard-pressed to provide amenities and basic services.

The PAC cannot help feeling that these evictions, whether legal or politely effected, cause great suffering for the African worker. It can also be added that they are an embarrassment to the government. Farm workers have sought-after skills of producing food and that of delivering it to the nation in the wake of the fast diminishing numbers of white commercial farmers. We also believe that not every inch of our land must be turned into game farms. Hunger and poverty cannot be fought successfully without extensive farming in food production over and above tourist oriented game farming.

The residents of Buffalo Lodge were understandably concerned about their own residential status, and the possible threat of eviction when Jan, the manager of Buffalo Lodge and his partners bought the farms. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2001, together with Glenville resident Uncle Zolani, my research assistant Zweli and I went to the Legal Resource Centre in Grahamstown to seek advice in this regard. Zweli and I had met with a representative from the Centre shortly before to enquire as to the legal rights of the families resident on the three farms. He had informed us about the existence of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act

(ESTA) 62 of 1997<sup>2</sup> and the fact that despite this protection, farm workers in the area continue to face eviction. He suggested we set up a meeting and bring representatives from the farms to discuss their situation. The outcome of this meeting was the forwarding of letters to Jan regarding ESTA.

The decision to donate land to the people was in part prompted by the fact that the residents had sought legal advice. Jan mentioned at a meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July between himself, one of his American partners, the residents, and Bongani, an employee of the NGO involved in the case, that he wanted to discuss things with the people directly, and that there was no need for lawyers. Since a dialogue was opened between themselves and the landowner, the residents had successfully managed to manoeuvre themselves into a better position.

### **The Proposal**

Buffalo Lodge has proposed donating the 20 hectares of the farm Nollspoort that it owns to the residents of Millsfontein, Fonteinberg and Glenville. Nollspoort is in the Hope Fountain area. It borders the Masizame Communal Property Association (CPA), and is just over a kilometre on the dirt road from the entrance to Glenville in the direction of Alexandria (see map on page 29). The reasons for the donation are numerous. Initially, the Lodge wanted the households at Millsfontein to stay in their present location. This was primarily because of the fact that the residents were already grouped together in a pre-existing demarcated area of the farm. The Lodge proposed the payment of settlement offers to the residents of Fonteinberg for them to relocate off the farm<sup>3</sup>. The request by the former owner of Glenville that the residents be permitted to remain where they are was accepted. In July 2001 however, at the meeting mentioned above, the residents of the three farms indicated that they did not want to leave the farms, but rather stay together. The resolution reached was to investigate the establishment of an on-site settlement for the residents. The site at Nollspoort was chosen because it borders the Masizame CPA<sup>4</sup>, because it is the pension point for the majority of the community, because it is on the access road, whereas their present locations are not, and so provides more convenient access to the mobile clinic and lifts to and from Grahamstown and Alexandria. It is very close to their current location and so will not disrupt existing networks and relationships. It brings the children closer to their school. From the Lodge's point of view, it is significantly removed from the remainder of the reserve to allow for the unfettered movement of the game.

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<sup>2</sup> The Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 protects occupants of privately owned farm land from arbitrary eviction and provides mechanisms for the acquisition of long term tenure security. Few cases of illegal eviction have come before the courts and few permanent settlements have been approved (Lahiff, 2001). For a detailed discussion of the principles and failings of ESTA see Isaacs (2003).

<sup>3</sup> There have been instances where farm residents have taken settlement offers from landowners. Those who were willing have pooled the payouts to buy land elsewhere. Others have taken their money and settled in urban areas.

<sup>4</sup> This is significant because the residents of the three farms in question have a number of cross cutting ties with the CPA: kin, co-membership of church congregations and burial societies.

The people of Masizame are encouraging the resettlement due in part to their desire to run goats on the land. They are suggesting that the resettled people graze their cattle at Masizame, and allow them to run goats on the grazing at Nollspoort in return. This idea has not been received particularly well given the problems currently encountered by the people of Masizame, and the long history of rivalry that exists between the two groups of people. This has led to open criticism from the residents of Glenville in particular regarding the deep divisions within Masizame and their lack of agricultural success (see Molapisi, 2002). Of the 17 families currently resident on Glenville, Fonteinberg and Millsfontein, only 10 have indicated their intention to resettle on the donated area. The other 7 families maintain that they will either stay where they are or join kin in the urban areas. The various reasons for accepting or declining the offer of land are detailed below.

Jan's American partners were perplexed by the proposal. They frequently remarked that buying land in America was a lot less painful. Less painful in terms of the fact that when purchased in America, land is vacant, and does not come with residents. On the whole though I found them to be pragmatic and business minded. They frequently suggested that 'taking care' of the inhabitants was the best way to ensure that their fences remained in tact and current snaring and poaching levels were reduced. One of the partners frequently spoke about his view of how the relationship between him, or the lodge, and the occupiers could be. This relationship included employment opportunities once the lodge became more established and sharing the hunting spoils with the community. This is arguably a little romantic given the current impoverishment of the people in relation to the relative wealth of the game farm. They did however see the donation of land as a good way out of an otherwise bad situation. Jan mentioned on many occasions his intention to get the 'game farm running properly by the 2003 hunting season'. By this he meant that the occupiers and their cattle would be relocated, their houses demolished, the old farm rubble cleared away and the lease on grazing land that Patrick, the resident farmer at Millsfontein, rents out terminated<sup>5</sup>. The lodge wants to create a picture of the reserve as uninhabited and unspoilt bushveld. The majority of the residents do not enjoy their current living conditions and the restrictions imposed by game farming and are eager to relocate. As mentioned above, for Jan and his partners this is the best way out of a 'bad situation'. When they bought the land they inherited a group of occupiers. To satisfy the occupiers, and create their image of the game reserve, the donation of land is the best solution. Unfortunately for them, they were the only parties to the proposal with a timetable!

### **Getting Official Approval for the Project**

The government is in favour of small enclaves of rural settlement as opposed to continued urbanisation. ESTA and the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme were designed to provide for residential security, land acquisition and to increase agricultural output. In the context of farm

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick has sold the farm but negotiated a *usufruct* for himself and his family. The transfer of the land from Patrick to Buffalo Lodge has taken a long time to go through. In the interim Patrick rents out grazing land.

workers, the government favours what it calls on-site developments. These refer to the provision of tenure security to farm occupiers through the allocation of land on their existing farm. Off-site developments can be movement to agri-villages<sup>6</sup> or the pooling together of settlement offers or grants (LRAD) to purchase land.

There are a number of prerequisites before government will endorse any project involving the resettlement of farm workers. Tenure security is the first priority. Section 4 of ESTA grants the Minister permission to release Settlement Land Acquisition Grants to secure tenure. These grants can be held in conjunction with other additional grants: either LRAD grants released by the DLA or local housing grants from the ministry of housing. Having realised that one grant was not enough to purchase land and develop housing and other related infrastructure, the government now allows beneficiaries to hold more than one concurrently. To qualify for these grants, a number of conditions need to be met. These are summarised in table 1.

*Table 1: Conditions for gaining government grants*

GRANT	STIPULATIONS
Settlement Land Acquisition Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The development should be cost effective</li> <li>▪ The development should meet the interests of the occupier and the owner</li> <li>▪ Where occupiers prefer an on-site development, but the proposed development is off-site, good reasons should be given</li> <li>▪ Efforts should be made by the occupiers and owner to meet the above requirements</li> <li>▪ Whether the occupiers are spouses or dependents of long term occupiers</li> <li>▪ Whether there is an urgent need because occupiers face eviction</li> <li>▪ The development should have the support of the majority of the adults among the present occupiers*</li> <li>▪ The occupiers should earn less than R 1500 per month</li> </ul>
Housing Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Subsidies must be used to provide occupiers with affordable residential property with secure income</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> An agri-village is envisaged as a rural township where dislocated farm residents can reside. The main idea being that concentrated settlements are easier to service. Although a few agri-villages have been established on wine farms in the Western Cape, there is nothing to the best of my knowledge in the Eastern Cape. Local farmers are concerned that bad planning and poor implementation will lead to large scale dissatisfaction. If not accompanied with a livelihood component the fear is that the village will be a source of criminal activity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Applicants for the housing subsidy must earn less than R3500 per month</li> </ul>
LRAD Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personal minimum contribution of R5000. In the case of farm workers however this is taken as personal labour, and no monetary contribution is required</li> </ul>

\*This will have serious ramifications in terms of the fact that support for the development is not unanimous. But since the majority are in agreement it will go ahead.

(Compiled from DLA, 1997 & Lahiff, 2001)

Having decided on donating land to the families resident on the three farms, Jan approached the Port Elizabeth branch of the DLA and was put into contact with Tad. Tad made a trip out to the lodge and met with Jan in July 2001. The initial meeting was followed up again in August of the same year where they discussed Jan's intention to donate land to the occupiers. No real advancements were made during the rest of 2001. Jan was waiting for the transfer of the land in question from the previous owner to the lodge to take place. During the first half of 2002, Victor, Bongani's successor at the NGO, contacted Jan by telephone on a number of occasions. He phoned to enquire as to progress in the establishment of the agri-village decided upon in July 2001. Jan re-iterated, whilst getting increasingly more annoyed, that he was waiting for the final land transfer and instructions from the DLA. Victor made no attempt during this time to communicate with the farm occupiers. Bongani had not introduced him to the people. This might have been a little difficult since although putting himself forward as an advocate of the people, Bongani did not actually know anyone by sight or by name. This was due to him only having visited Fonteinberg twice since 1999, and none of the other farms. Local council officials insist on time frames and sustainability, but suggest that people continue to repair their rain-damaged houses because things "will take time". They should it appears "*just wait*".

These projected delays could have something to do with the difficulties experienced by local government when committing to such projects. Government insists on the inclusion of as many relevant role players as possible. Tad maintains 'that the more role players one has, the more chances you have of success'. Since local government is identified as the first port of call, the DLA insists on 'buy in from the local authority'. The local authority has however indicated its reluctance to become an active stakeholder in the project planning and implementation process. The engineer's office has indicated that the council is not clear on its designated role in such developments. It is reluctant to involve itself in rural development because of an apparent inability to support and service such developments. They are prepared to carry out the necessary assessments but do not want this to be taken as an indication of their endorsement of any particular project. The sentiment of the local authority is summarised by the following account given by a senior member of the city engineer's office:

I would be nervous to commit myself to any rural development. These small-scale rural settlements are inherently problematic. Proper planning is not always possible. Things seem to filter down from national to provincial and ultimately get left to local. Policy is fine but the government has to consider the implications. It might make the financing available but think of the practical issues. Housing from the Provincial Housing Board is a commercial unit. By that I mean a serviced unit. Service provision is potentially problematic in the rural areas given that very little infrastructure exists. The councillors also tend to assume that the council will take on such developments. In the past the emphasis was on sound planning and infrastructural support. Today the focus is on rural development, delivery and poverty alleviation. I have learnt that you often have to forgo many sound planning principles and realise that compromise is inevitable.

The rationale for the government's support of on-site developments is two fold. In the first instance they are opposed to further urbanisation given existing overcrowding in urban townships and informal settlements. Secondly, post-Apartheid political life demands land reform and the securing of people's rights to land and ultimately social justice. The councillor is seen as pivotal to the delivery of such objectives. The local authority is therefore directly implicated in the management and support of these developments. Their reluctance due to a perceived lack of capacity casts a pall over local rural on-site developments and indicates further delays and frustrations as the council considers its position and the practicality of the government's land reform programme.

If the local housing authority will get involved at Buffalo Lodge and commit itself to housing and housing grants, then Tad will apply for the LRAD grants, valued at approximately R20 000 per household, as a kind of safety net. Since the land has been donated, the community do not have to use their grants to purchase it. The grants will serve instead as a means by which to establish housing and other related infrastructure<sup>7</sup>. The DLA do however require an agricultural component. Despite the fact that the donated piece is small and only intended for residential and nominal subsistence purposes, Tad has suggested a low intensive agricultural practice such as poultry rearing.

### **The Reaction to the Project**

Ten of the resident families have accepted the offer and seven have not. There are various reasons for this divergence of opinion. A pattern does however emerge in relation to relative economic and employment status, and housing provision. Those with better quality housing do not want to leave. Government built low cost housing will not be as spacious. Those employed by Patrick do not want to leave and risk losing their work related benefits. The supporters of the move are all in poor quality housing. Uncle Zolani is

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<sup>7</sup> The land in question has no pre-existing buildings. Since it is only a portion of a farm, there are no farm buildings or other physical developments on the land.

employed but only receives a cash wage and no other benefits. He does not stand to lose anything by relocating. Those who are employed casually do not get the same benefits as full time workers, and can therefore be resident anywhere.

### ***Resistance***

The seven families against the move have been adamant right from the very beginning that they were not interested in relocation, but for very different reasons. The sentiments of the seven resisters are as follows:

- Paul and Samuel live and work at Millsfontein. When Patrick bought the farm in 1999, they were the only two of the six resident families in permanent employment on the farm. They continue to work for Patrick at R400 per month plus additional rations of 50kgs of maize, 12,5kgs of flour, 12,5kgs of samp, 2,5kgs of sugar and tea. None of the other residents work for Patrick, nor do they have permanent employment elsewhere. Paul, 46 has seven dependents and Samuel, 41 five. Samuel's son is a building labourer and occasionally gets casual work, his wife was a farm worker until 1998, and now sells beer at R10 a quart to add to the family income. Both men have stock. Paul is the only member of his family bringing in any income. Both men sat in on a number of the meetings between Zweli, myself and the other residents. They were always however sceptical of the resettlement. Initially they indicated concern over the quality of the grazing and having to live in close proximity to the residents of the other two farms. Samuel in particular was always convinced that new rights in the new dispensation would protect his residential status. But the rights afforded under ESTA have certain conditions. Samuel is not a long-term occupier. And given that the majority of occupiers have accepted the proposal he may well find himself in a difficult situation. Both seemed unwilling to accept the fact that although they work for Patrick, he no longer owns the land, nor can he make any decisions in relation to their residential status.
- Elliott is 60 and lives with 31 year old daughter at Glenville. Although I often encountered him at rituals and beer drinks, beyond a polite greeting he had very little to say. He drinks a lot, something which is not accepted by the church going residents of Glenville. Excessive drinking is frowned upon and considered as a blight against one's reputation as a man. There is also some deep-seated feud between Elliott and his immediate neighbours that no one is willing to discuss. He has always maintained that he will move himself, his family and his cattle to Uitenhage should the need arise. He never believed that the planned resettlement would come to fruition. Now that it looks set to

take place he has allied himself strongly with the other resistant families and begun to spread rumours about Uncle Zolani and his advocacy for the relocation process.

- Malusi lives at Fonteinberg. He is 62. He lives with his wife, aging sister, 3 daughters and 4 grandchildren. He works for a neighbouring farmer, and his wife and sister collect disability pensions. They live in an old farmhouse, left to him by one of the previous farmers. He had always expressed uncertainty about moving to Nollspoort. Initially it appeared as if this centred on his strained relationship with his fellow occupiers<sup>8</sup> and his desire to keep the house. Later it became apparent that there were more pressing and overriding factors. These included his inclusion in the Salem Commonage Claim.
- Frances and Ntombi, both 62 live alone. Ntombi was born at Glenville. The connection between the two women is through Ntombi's status as Frances' late husband's cousin, and the marriage of Ntombi's son to Frances' daughter. Towards the end of 2001, Ntombi's son took his wife and his two children and moved to Colechester to join her family. Ntombi has strongly resisted moving saying that she wants to die and be buried on the farm where she has lived all her life. Having lived on the farm since the early 1950's Frances claims that she does not no, nor is she prepared to accept another area and another way of life. This other way of life that she is talking about is living in close proximity to people who she is familiar with, but has always lived at relative distance from.
- Nikki is the last of the people resisting the relocation. She is 73 years old and lives with Samuel and Paul at Millsfontein. Mid way through 2002 her eldest daughter left to join her own sons in Port Elizabeth. Nikki's eldest son Danny died tragically in September 2002. During a heavy bought of rain he disappeared from home. He was mentally disabled and often went for walks alone. But he did not come home this time. People feared that he had drowned in the Bushman's River whilst it was in flood. Patrick called the police. Neither they nor the residents found him. It is assumed that he is dead. I suspect that Nikki is afraid of change. She was born on Glenville and has lived at Millsfontein since her eldest daughter was employed as a domestic worker in 1986. She also has 4 head of cattle. Paul and Samuel have advised her that the grazing at Nollspoort will not be suitable<sup>9</sup>. She has since pleaded ignorance of the proposed move, primarily

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<sup>8</sup> The people at Fonteinberg have been accused of stock theft and house breaking, as well as game snaring. Malusi has had prior knowledge of one or two attempts, and has happened on episodes of stock theft. He has been told that since the theft is from the white man it is right, and is no concern of his. Fearing reprisals he has said nothing.

<sup>9</sup> The official carrying capacity for Nollspoort is 3,5 hectares per animal without supplementary feeding. And although 20 hectares will not be sufficient to hold in excess of 5 animals, the possibility of renting additional grazing land is being explored. The grazing in the encampment at Millsfontein is very poor. There are very clearly too many

because she feels increasingly that the world is closing in on her. But at the same time, like the other residents does not want to face change.

Motivations for resistance are thus as differentiated and heterogeneous as the people themselves, and are directly bound up with their personal situation in life. They emerge less through conscious articulation than in the context of everyday situations, and may only be revealed through participant-observation. This is possibly the best way to discover what people 'really' think, as opposed to what they tell you in a formal interview situation.

### *Salem Commonage Claim*

Nearly four and a half years ago a land claim covering three major farms (subdivided into 42 properties held by 18 individuals, three companies, one trust and one communal property association), or the '*Salem Commonage*' was registered in respect of a number of black families whose fathers had previously used the land for grazing, agricultural and burial purposes. The claimants, the majority of whom are labourers on the farms in question, maintain that their fathers were dispossessed of the land in 1948 when it was subdivided and sold to individual white farmers.

The commonage claim committee approached Zweli, my research assistant in the Cory Library where he works, to get all the relevant historical documentation regarding the land they were planning to claim. In August 2002 I wrote a letter to Paul and Samuel asking them to reconsider their stance and accept the offer of land at Nollspoort. I did so because Tad had request a list of the ID numbers of all the household heads involved in the planned relocation. Victor did not have transport to the farm. And since his phone lines were down, I could not get hold of him and faxed the ID numbers myself. A few days later I got a call from the Legal Resource Centre in Grahamstown. The Centre is handling the case for the Salem claimants. They asked me to convey a message to Paul and Samuel; that their status in the claim would not be affected if they accepted the move to Nollspoort. The rights awarded people in ESTA are separate to the land restitution process. Uncle Zolani and members of the Masizame CPA informed Zweli that the commonage committee had canvassed the residents, and encouraged Malusi, Paul and Samuel to stay where they are. The commonage people were critical of the planned development at Nollspoort suggesting that it would detract from the claim. When challenged on this, and asked by one of the residents at Masizame what they planned to do with the people at Buffalo Lodge, they said nothing. He continued by asking what they would do for those residents who did not want to move to Nollspoort since they could not in all likelihood remain in the reserve. Would they be in a position to house them? Their response was that the claim would be successful, and the farm occupiers would not have to go to Nollspoort, which is not claimed, but could move instead to land within the claimed area. The claimant's

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cattle for the estimated 2 hectares they now subsist on. The objection to moving in this regard possibly has to do with a reluctance to move in with people and compete with their cattle for grazing.

lawyers however maintain that the claim is unlikely to succeed, and that claimants may only receive cash compensation from government. Malusi is related to the committee members. They have encouraged him to stay where he is. And given that his farm does fall within the claim he supports their position, as much to hold onto his house (see below) as anything else.

#### *Different economic status*

Malusi lives in an old brick farmhouse. His co-residents live in a small one roomed brick and wattle and daub housing. He has a full time job with the neighbouring farmer. Only one of his other co-resident is in permanent employment but earns less. Paul and Samuel are the only two people at Millsfontein employed by Patrick. They each receive R400 and substantial rations. Relatively speaking they 'earn more' than their co-residents, even those families with pensions and child support grants. A cursory glance at the furniture in their homes and their windows (large French panes), affirms that they have better living conditions. And although all three support large families, they are in a better position than other residents. Despite the fact that Paul and Samuel do not receive pensions, their ration component makes up for the deficit. They are also permitted to draw water from the pump at the main farmhouse. The other residents rely exclusively on rainwater. These benefits are strong motivating factors in wanting to remain where they are. Even though Paul and Samuel have been assured that they will stay employed if they move, their history with Patrick, and his reputation 'as being difficult' has fostered the idea that leaving will mean being fired since they are no longer close to him.

#### *Fear of change*

Beyond the obvious 'class' or economic considerations of these three families, the other four resist because they reject change. They reject that they should be made to move and alter their lifestyle. Their resistance manifests in a number of ways through the avenues of non-compliance and ignorance. They refuse to graze their cattle in the demarcated areas or co-operate with government and NGO officials, feeling that the 'farmers' should not be allowed to decide their fate for them. The sentiment is that the farmers have decided on the move and the government is siding with them. They consistently refuse to interact with government officials. The land claim and the maintenance of an existing way of life is the primary motivation for resistance. Inclusion in the land claim will allow for the continuation and preservation of existing life. Staying where they are will ensure the continued uninterrupted practice of their 'cultural traditions'. These are not of course not as undiluted by the colonial and Apartheid, but the point is the same; innovation and change in the form of land tenure reform are not wanted and not trusted.

Inclusion in the land claim will allow for the continuation and preservation of an existing lifestyle. Staying where they are will ensure the continued uninterrupted practice of their 'cultural traditions'. These traditions are not of course as undiluted by the colonial and Apartheid exercise as Mayer's (1980)

'red' adherents, but the point is the same; change is not welcome, and resisted by strong adherence to an 'old' lifestyle. Innovation and change in the form of land tenure reform are not wanted and not trusted, and resistance to such encroachment is through the veneration and continuation of their traditional lifestyle.

### *The 'small politics' of resistance*

The residents of the farms are sensitive about their reputations, which are formed in relation to their immediate neighbours, and employ gossip, joking and ostracism as mechanisms for maintaining social control. As 'face-to-face' communities (Brandes, 1975: 6), peasant communities have been understood as creating a feeling of distinctiveness vis-à-vis the outside world (*ibid* & Herzfeld, 1985). This distinctiveness is expressed through common values and morals, which are distinct from those held by other members of the nation state. Although contemporary theoretical discussions of peasants have been at great pains to illustrate the differentiated nature of peasant society, and its integration into larger global arenas (Kearney, 1996; Mackenzie, 1992 & Saul and Woods, 1989), people still attempt to produce a unified version of themselves. They attempt to shield outsiders from conflict and internal division.

In the case of the proposed resettlement, gossip has been used to assault individual reputations through direct personal attack, through insinuations of unwise, reckless behaviour, or by suggesting that outsiders, namely landowners, have forced people into a decision. The suggestion of outside influence is particularly damaging given the attempts to establish some degree of autonomy from such influence through the generation of particular resistance ideologies premised on manhood, reputation and Christianity. The contradiction inherent in this assertion cannot escape mention. Despite the existence of new labour and tenure laws designed to facilitate collective bargaining and prevent exploitation, informed by a history of subordination, farm workers still defer to landowners in terms of their residential and working conditions. The point is that although one is outwardly dependent on the farmer, farm workers consider themselves inwardly independent due to the existence of certain specified cultural codes. To suggest that landowners have forced people to make a decision, is a direct attack on one's inward independence, and therefore one's reputation. Outsiders might well decide your fate for you, but the semblance of independence is important.

The aim of the gossip is two fold. In the first instance, to co-inside with Brandes (1975), whether consciously or unconsciously, the goal has ultimately been to encourage the other residents to side with the resisters and so reconstitute a unified community. Secondly, people are feeling increasingly insecure in their position given the fact that the resettlement process has gained some degree of momentum through the lodge's hosting of a stakeholder meeting and the carrying out of certain agricultural and carrying capacity assessments.

As 2002 drew to a close Jan made a number of visits to the farms in the company of Victor and myself, to talk to the residents about the relocation. Those people resisting the move began to get nervous. Once Patrick and one of his two sons stopped working for the Lodge, in September 2002, Paul and Samuel feared that they might lose their jobs, and finally acknowledged that Patrick had no say over the land on which they resided. In a bid to exert some form of pressure on the other residents and draw everyone together, Paul and Samuel, in conjunction with the other residents began spreading certain rumours.

Paul and Samuel led the charge against Uncle Zolani saying that he was pushing the people towards leaving. Elliott said that he was against leaving because they were being forced into a move. Nikki maintained that she had not heard about the development. These comments only surfaced towards the end of 2002. The reason for this is because very little had happened during 2001. In 2002 however the DLA asked for ID numbers and a stakeholder meeting was held. After the meeting a number of agricultural and engineering assessments were carried out. Although nobody has moved anywhere, things have taken on a new immediacy. The commonage claim will not be settled in the near future. The affected farmers only received official notification in October 2002, nearly four and a half years after it was lodged. The legal process will be slow and arduous, and the planning should it be approved even more time consuming. People may well be concerned that the claim will not be settled before the other residents relocate to Nollspoort. Those residents not directly associated with the claim did not, or rather chose not to believe that the resettlement would happen. Given the slow pace of land reform in the Eastern Cape, and the country at large, and the fact that very few people around them have gotten land, they did not think it possible. They indicated that they would leave, but only 'if they had to'. This suggests a belief that the need would not arise. Now that events are moving towards a resolution they have realised that they could be left with nowhere to go. Given that the project has the support of the majority of the resident adults it will go ahead, leaving the remaining residents out in the cold. People have therefore resorted to gossip to try and force their co-residents to adopt their position, and in the spirit of *ubuntu*<sup>10</sup>, share their fate with them.

### *Acceptance*

The ten families who have accepted Jan's offer have done so for a number of reasons. They do not enjoy the restrictions currently imposed by the reserve:

It is crazy here. The fences are going up, the animals are inside. There are more gates and fences than before. The wild animals often eat my father's fowls. We are not free to move like before. We have no choice but to go. But to go is also a good thing. To go means we get government housing and land of our own which is close to the road. Life will be better, it will be less restrictive.

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<sup>10</sup> Sense of togetherness and mutual hospitality.

Nollspoort is on the road and is the pension point for most of the residents. People also recognise that they have very little in the way of choice. As Uncle Zolani explained to my father when he visited in November:

When things first started to happen I was worried about where I would go. The township is not safe, and I have lived here for a long time, we all have. And now that we have land I feel a lot better, I feel I can start a new and live out the rest of my life in peace.

Another very pressing reason is the provision of housing. Wattle and daub suffers terribly from rain damage. One of the Glenville residents has moved his whole family into the cow shed because his house collapsed in September 2002. The idea of low cost brick housing that would hopefully be rain resistant is a strong motivating factor.

Whilst the men stressed housing, lack of restriction and land ownership (3 of the houses are female headed), the women emphasised the closer proximity to the school and the road for the mobile clinic. This is reflective of the larger division of labour and the association of men with provision for the family, and the women for caring for its well being.

Those who have agreed to move are integrating themselves into the national and international world of development and modernisation. Although essentially pleased about gaining better quality housing and land of their own, they do feel that they have no other choice. Game farming is restrictive and current impoverishment creates a situation in which people have nowhere else to go. They might accept their fate, but they do employ certain strategies to secure the best possible situation for themselves. Like Mayer's (1980) 'school' adherents, they have agreed to 'play the game' with a view to manipulating the situation to place themselves in a more secure position. By accepting to relocate they are hoping to accrue the benefits of assimilation; better housing and land ownership. And as for the commercial ambitions of the DLA, with their land arguably not big enough for even a low intensive commercial activity, the people will do as their forefathers did: keep cattle and grow subsistence crops.

People are filled with expectation and have a very positive attitude about the proposed resettlement. They all maintain that they will live quite happily together despite their current separate residence. Although people actively make an effort to come together as a 'community' in preparation for the relocation, the dynamics of their interaction will only be evident once the move has taken place. The fact that the grazing is theoretically not enough given the identified carrying capacity of the land is not a concern for residents, who maintain that the grazing will be fine. The possibility of renting additional grazing land is being pursued.

## **The Stakeholder Meeting as a Social Drama**

Turner's (1974) notion of the 'social drama' can be applied in examining the 16 October 2002 meeting at Buffalo Lodge. Turner maintains that "disturbances of the normal and regular often give us greater insight into the normal than does direct study" (1974: 35). A focus on the extra-ordinary, in Turner's case, conflict, frequently illuminates many aspects of everyday behaviour not readily observed under normal circumstances. In this case, the meeting serves as a break from the regular routine, a 'social drama', which illustrates many of the themes discussed in the broader study on which this paper is based. These include: a history which discourages people from interacting directly with the agents of change; suspicion of outsiders; a high level of fatalism regarding the changes that people are experiencing; and the perceived need for mediation.

The meeting as well as the events in the immediate run up to it also proved informative as to the nature of government and NGO involvement in the 'development process'. Frequently uttered phrases such as 'development is a process and not an event' seem to reflect a situation in which government is slow to action and NGOs even slower. As already stated, NGOs are to some degree compromised due to their subordination to the competition for international aid; their collaboration with the state; and the potential for financial corruption (Gariyo, 1996). In support of the above, Gupta (1998) maintains that the international order represented by the NGOs often plays into and depends on the persistence of national entities.

Coupled with the above constraints, the NGO involved in this study has a very bad name in local and provincial government, as well as in NGO circles. The organisation has consistently shunned other organisations in their immediate area and field of interest. The motive for this is closely tied to the competition for funding and the need to independently establish itself and its focus to secure funding. Local government officials, also acknowledge the 'difficulty' of the director, Pam. She has been involved in falsely implicating Makana councillors in taking bribes from local communities:

Nelly has worked with local farm communities for many years. She is deeply allied to representatives in the Port Elizabeth DLA and constantly encourages people to take advantage of new concessions to acquire land. According to Nelly, Pam does not appreciate competition. Pam phoned Nelly's contact in the DLA and reported that accusations of bribery had been leveled against Nelly by a group of farmers at a meeting she had attended. Nelly had apparently taken a R50 bribe from a number of farm worker families in order to investigate the possibility of getting them land. Nelly's contact phoned her immediately to report the accusation saying that it could not possibly be true. Nelly phoned Pam and asked her for the minutes of the meeting, and the details of both the accusations and the accusers. Pam could not provide either. Nelly concluded that

other people outside of the DLA and Agriculture getting involved in land issues threaten her.

Pam's research staff indicates that she is secretive with information. They are not privy to the financial status of the organisation. She only provides them with précis's of the reports she forwards to the overseas funders. Since its establishment in 1994 staff turnover has been very high.

### ***Immediate run up to the meeting***

I have already mentioned that I spoke to Tad on a number of occasions regarding the relocation of the residents. When I mentioned that I knew a number of the local stakeholders, he suggested that I set up a meeting to decide how best to take the project forward. Tad forwarded a list of proposed provincial delegates. I contacted them in conjunction with a number of local representatives in the council and agricultural office. I spoke with Victor and forwarded him the date and time of the meeting. When I received no reply as to whether he would be attending or not I contacted him at the office. Pam answered the phone and requested that I send a fax detailing the reason for the meeting so she could determine whether it was necessary for Victor to attend. Tad phoned me later that same day. Pam was not happy with the tone of my fax, and the fact that Tad had asked me to help him organise the meeting. She felt it was a little pre-mature and that it should be cancelled or postponed until her organisation had time to conduct a number of assessments. Tad was concerned about being stuck in the middle and did not want any hostility. Given that the other delegates had committed themselves, the meeting went ahead.

These events can best be interpreted as follows. The NGO is tasked with representing the needs of the farm occupiers. Their particular mandate is to prevent human rights abuses and mediate between farmers and farm workers. The idea that private individuals are concerned with the well being of resident communities and are prepared to translate this concern into action has the potential to encroach on the NGO's particular field of interest. The incident with Nelly outlined above would appear to support this hypothesis.

### ***The meeting***

The agenda was not formalised before the meeting took place. Tad proposed that a chair be elected on the day itself. Zweli was proposed and accepted as chair by the assembled delegates. He opened with the following words:

I would like to welcome you today to Kwa Mbotina<sup>11</sup>, the place of my ancestors and my birth. The pools you see here just below the lodge are sacred. It is here that Mbotina offered his gifts to the ancestors and was awarded agricultural success in return. I was born and grew up here. My parents are buried on Glenville.

Stunned silence followed, eyes firmly placed in shuffling paperwork, and Zweli just smiled. Ever the strategist, he had succeeded in elevating the meeting to another level. He had placed the discussion within the framework of indigenous rights and self-determination, and introduced a spiritual claim, rather than limiting the discourse to practical considerations. He had reminded everyone that the people were the focus, that the people had a deep abiding commitment to the landscape, and that the impersonal discourses of 'community', 'rural', 'sustainable' and 'time frames' should take cognisance in the context of real people with real, practical concerns.

The meeting quickly shifted to a more bureaucratic tone. Pam suggested that the meeting was perhaps a little premature. She felt that an agricultural and engineering, or carrying capacity assessment was necessary before the discussion could proceed or tasks could be assigned to the assembled delegates. Once Zweli had sketched the history of the project and Jan had outlined the proposed offer, the other delegates were invited to contribute. Being unfamiliar with the project their comments were superficial at best. They commented on the apparent sustainability of the project and the government's preference for on site developments. Tad set an agenda and tried to establish a way forward and secure approval for the project. Victor did not say anything. When Tad tried to include him in the discussion by drawing his attention to their previous meetings with Jan, he remained quiet, allowing Pam to speak for him. People seemed to dwell on the difficulties involved in the process, of bureaucratic red tape, the fact that the council did not really know what its mandate was, and that the process would take time. Residents were advised to re-build their damaged houses and wait. Tad tried to temper these negative sentiments by asking for suggestions as to how to 'take the process forward'. The resolution taken was that the assessments Pam had called for should be commissioned before Tad sought approval for the project and the release of the LRAD grants from the DLA and the housing subsidy from the local housing authority. Pam and Victor proposed that given their NGO's previous involvement with the community it should conduct the assessments and compile a report for the DLA. Tad requested that this be ready for the DLA's monthly meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November. At the time of writing (January 2003), the report had yet to be submitted. The community had not been approached.

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<sup>11</sup> Mbotina, now dead, was a farm worker in the 1930's. His children have moved onto other farms in Kenton and Alexandria. His homestead and garden was near the water. After every harvest he offered a portion of his crop to the river people or *abantu bomlambo* (see Bernard, 2001 & Hammond-Tooke, 1975) in the pool near his house. He received very good crop yields thereafter. His neighbours were encouraged and followed his example. The pool, situated above the game lodge was named after him and has been considered sacred by local residents ever since.

The nine community delegates did not add much to the proceedings. Uncle Zolani prepared a written submission on behalf of the community stating their desire for a speedy relocation and the provision of housing. Along with the other delegates they introduced themselves and the farms on which they live. Beyond that they remained silent, their eyes generally downcast and only really looked up when Zweli offered a translation of the proceedings. Sometime after the meeting Pam commented that she was concerned at the lack of community participation in the discussion. To expect the delegates to be at the forefront of the discussion is to ignore an historical experience which prevents such interaction. Five of the nine delegates were women. Given the presence of men they were unlikely to comment publicly. The four male delegates were well into their 60's and 70s. For almost their entire adult life they have lived under a farmer. Their reluctance to engage in the proceedings is understandable, given the fact that people are used to being 'told what to do'.

It is useful here to refer to Crehan's (1997: 34-5) discussion of hegemony. Hegemony is essentially fluid and dependent on both context and historical circumstance, and as such changes between generations and different historical contexts. She makes the important point that it is a 'power relation which must be produced and reproduced'. It is not simply about domination but acceptance of such domination. Hegemony refers to the relationship between groups or classes in a struggle. In reference to the relationship between farm workers, the state and farmers; farm workers may have resisted their subjugation, but given the historical realities of colonial conquest, paternalistic landowners and the Apartheid state, they were ultimately forced to accept their low status in the hierarchy. The demise of Apartheid and the passing of new laws and policies to provide farm workers with land and secure tenure do not erase the attitudes and practices of the past. Although the youth might be more willing to engage with landowners and government, older generations are still bound by a history which dictates that one accepts one's fate as decided by others. The offer of land has been made and accepted. As to the details of resettlement, people wait for the landowner and the assembled officials to decide.

### *After the meeting*

The community delegates found the whole event a little amusing. Although frustrated that things had not progressed any further, it was not unexpected they said. They suggested that this was the way things were and I should not worry. Brandes (1975: 9) suggests that the closeness of peasant society, and the existence of a shared set of morals promotes a trust of insiders whose behaviour you can control, and a mistrust of outsiders. Bailey (1989: 289) who goes so far as to say that outsiders are conceptualised as enemies, reinforces the above sentiment. The suspicion directed towards the NGO in particular would seem to coincide with this conclusion. The NGO and local government do not escape critique. Reputation might prevent a direct verbal assault but people are generally suspicious of the motives of both, hinting at corruption and a lack of commitment.

After the meeting the delegates relayed the events to the rest of the beneficiaries. The discussion was lively. Uncle Zolani recounted my frequent comments and requests for progress and a time frame for action. Nancy, whose grasp of English is far better than Uncle Zolani's, spoke about how Zweli and I countered the suggestion that people remain patient and wait for government to respond by drawing everyone's attention to the immediate concerns over housing and the approaching 2003 hunting season (starts in February). Tata April emphasised the importance of my role as mediator and suggested that I keep up the good work despite the apparent set backs of the meeting. There was still 'lots of work for me to do and I should keep going' he said. These comments represent the continued call for mediation. This suggests in line with Bailey (1971:304 & 1989: 289) that peasant communities will attempt to extend their moral community to certain outsiders who have the potential to convert the official relationship into a moral one thereby allowing for manipulation. The perceived need for mediation points to two things. Firstly an acceptance of dependency and a lack of willingness to engage with change directly, and secondly as a strategy to try and convert the situation to their advantage. Through me would come an in depth knowledge of the community and its concerns. I would give them a 'face' amid the impersonal bureaucratic discourse of 'sustainability', 'timeframes', 'outcomes', 'modernization' and 'commercialisation'.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have presented a close analysis of the planned relocation of the Glenville, Fonteinberg and Millsfontein residents to Nollspoort. The proposed development falls under the government's land tenure reform programme. A brief overview of the bureaucratic processes and requirements for the approval of such projects is given, before progressing to a discussion of the project itself. Since the move has yet to take place, I have had to concentrate on the dynamics involved in the pre-move context, especially the reactions of the beneficiaries of the project. These reactions reveal a difference of opinion with 7 out of the 17 families opting out of the scheme. The various reasons this difference of opinion are outlined. Opinions are divided. Rationales for acceptance and resistance also differ between individual people. Resistance is premised around the Salem Commonage land claim, personal economic and residential status and a fear of change. Acceptance centres on the restrictions encountered inside the reserve, the desire for government housing, and the prospect of land ownership. The only outcome of these two ideologies to date has been the employment of gossiping as a tool to reconstitute a unified community and position over the proposed development. The chapter ends with a detailed account of a stakeholder meeting held at Buffalo Lodge in October 2002. This account is used to reflect on many of the themes discussed in the larger study. These include a suspicion of outsiders; the perceived need for mediation and the persistence of an historical frame of reference which prevents direct engagement with the agents of change. The meeting also illustrates the difficulties and delays generated by a large number of stakeholders. The role of individual personalities is shown to be crucial in understanding the frustrating delays that accompany many of these tenure related projects.

In spite of the difficulties and delays, the benefits of relocation outweigh the uncertain prospects of continued resistance. The dangers of eviction have been avoided through the proposed donation of land. Although not a vast tract of land, residence at Nollspoort provides security of tenure, the prospect of better quality housing, freedom from the restrictions of life inside the reserve and closer proximity to the main road, the pension point and the school. Continued resistance might result in eviction and relocation to the urban areas. Since the project has the approval of the majority of the adult residents it will in all likelihood go ahead. The Commonage claim will in all likelihood not be anywhere near being settled in the immediate future. And despite the fact that four of the household heads are long-term occupiers, their decision against relocation might well jeopardise their residential rights.

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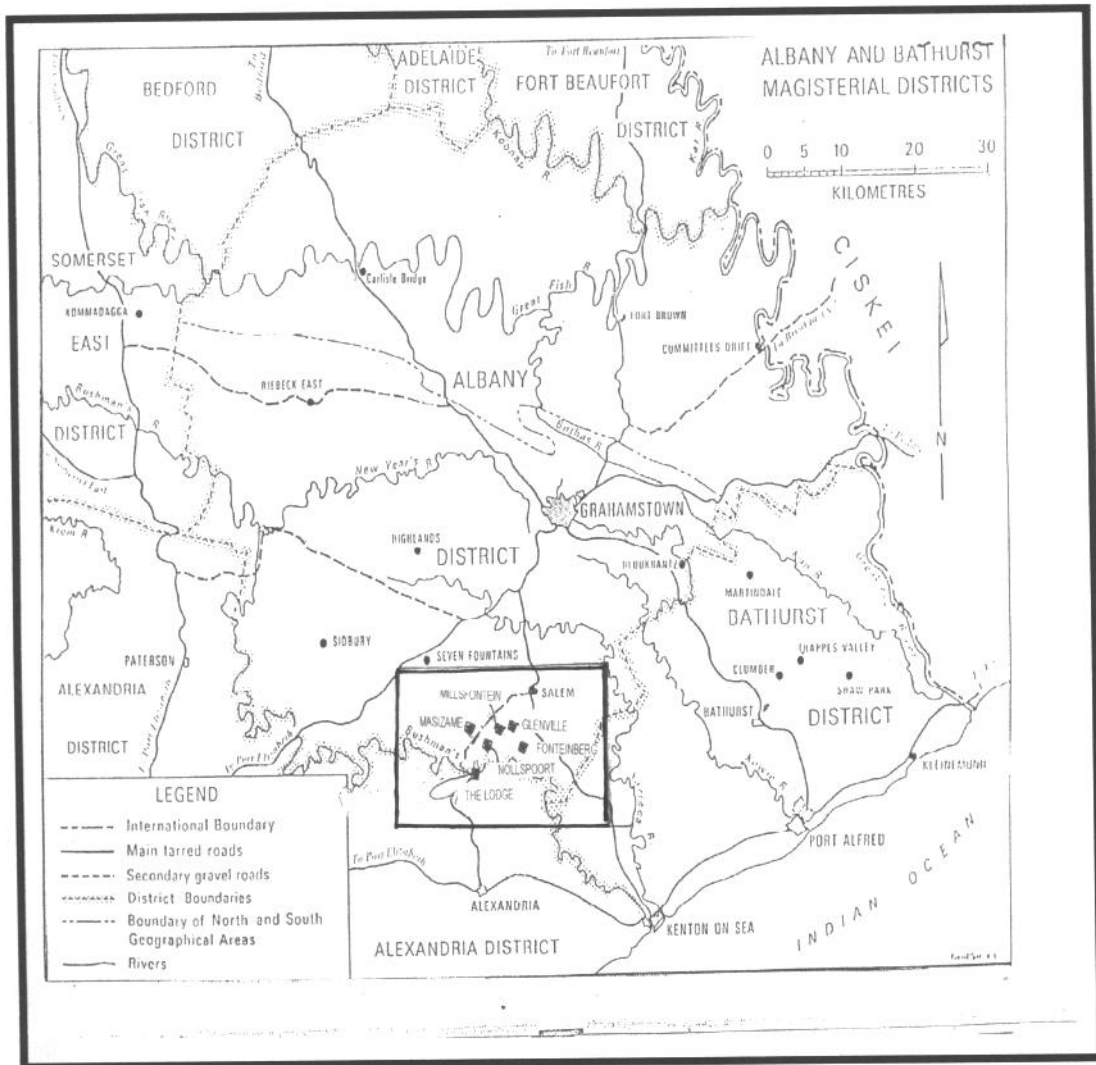
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**Map 1: Map of field site between Grahamstown and Alexandria**