

Commons constraints: Lessons for rangeland policy from communal areas of Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

Bennett, J.

Presented version deposited in CURVE March 2013

Original citation & hyperlink:

Bennett, J. (2011, April). *Commons constraints: Lessons for rangeland policy from communal areas of Eastern Cape Province, South Africa*. Paper presented at the IXth International Rangeland Congress, Rosario, Argentina.

<http://www.rangelandcongress.org/>

Copyright © and Moral Rights are retained by the author(s) and/ or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This item cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

This document is the author's post-print of the journal article. Some differences between the published version and this version may remain and you are advised to consult the published version if you wish to cite from it.

CURVE is the Institutional Repository for Coventry University

<http://curve.coventry.ac.uk/open>

Commons constraints: Lessons for rangeland policy from communal areas of Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

James Bennett, Department of Geography, Environment and Disaster Management, School of BES, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB, UK, E-mail: j.bennett@coventry.ac.uk.

Keywords: Rangelands, grazing, common property, policy.

Introduction

In many areas of the world rangelands are held and managed as common pool resources (CPRs) by local people and provide an important part of their livelihood strategies, often involving extensive grazing of livestock. However, the perpetuation of functioning common property regimes, which are both socially inclusive and effectively enforceable is increasingly being challenged by social and political drivers from both within and outside local CPR systems. In worst cases 'open access' scenarios may ensue, where unregulated resource access and use prevails, or there may be capture of the commons by elite groups. In South Africa the property regimes that exist in communal areas were fundamentally shaped by former colonial and apartheid policies of centralised social-political control but the post-1994 era has been characterised by an effective vacuum, both in terms of policy for governance and management of communal resources and our understanding of how these systems currently function. Addressing this knowledge gap will be critical in the development policies for the management of the commons at both the local and national level. Using empirical research findings from Eastern Cape Province, this paper analyses the types of property regime in place for the management of common pool grazing resources and the key axes of struggle in their operation.

Materials & Methods

Research was undertaken at six case study communities, encompassing the former homelands of Ciskei and Transkei. Primary data was collected through group interviews and semi-structured interviews administered to key informants at each settlement. This was augmented by participant observation and available secondary data.

Results & Discussion

The results suggest that recognisable common property regimes governing the access to and management of rangeland resources are largely absent in communal areas of Eastern Cape Province and a number of cross-cutting constraints to their operation were identified (Bennett et al., 2010). Availability of rangeland is critical, and differed considerably between communities. Inadequate grazing resources, particularly in the former Ciskei, make it difficult to define boundaries for communal grazing as livestock range over increasingly large areas when forage availability is low. Moreover, existing boundaries are largely arbitrary constructs of apartheid planning and are often disputed, which exacerbates difficulties in communal management and encourages 'open access' grazing. Fencing has been unable to provide an effective solution, as it is simply removed in most cases. A further, fundamental, constraint to the current ability of communities to engage in rangeland management appears to be the lack of local institutions with an explicit resource management remit. In their absence, there is little attempt at a community level to control how livestock graze or to manage 'key resource' areas as forage reserves. In the former Ciskei, for example, community-based civic structures such as Resident's Associations are now widespread but, despite ostensibly being responsible for all aspects of governance, appear to play no effective role in range management. In the former Transkei, issues of natural resource management are further complicated by the continued existence of traditional authorities such as chiefs and village headmen alongside emerging civic organisations of community governance. Whilst both sets of structures claim jurisdiction over land administration, neither seems to play an active role in the management of rangeland on a commons basis.

Conclusions

The common struggles identified in the management of communal rangelands provide important lessons for policy formulation at both the provincial and national level in South Africa. Firstly, community boundaries should be sufficiently flexible to facilitate access to adequate forage resources for stock. This runs counter to current government philosophy, which seems intent on entrenching historically constructed boundaries through the re-instatement of fencing. Furthermore, co-management of rangeland resources across boundaries by local communities is imperative if best use is to be made of them in the long term. This will only be possible if locally accountable institutions with an explicit resource management remit are established, not only within existing villages but across communities by 'nesting' within higher structures of local governance.

References

Bennett, J., Ainslie, A. and Davis, J. (2010). Fenced in: Common property struggles in the management of communal rangelands in central Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Land Use Policy* 27(2): 340-350.

COMMONS CONSTRAINTS: LESSONS FOR RANGELAND POLICY FROM COMMUNAL AREAS OF EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

Dr James Bennett, Department of Geography, Environment and Disaster Management, Faculty of BES, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB. UK. E-mail: j.bennett@coventry.ac.uk

BACKGROUND

In many areas of the world rangelands are held and managed as common pool resources by local people and provide an important part of their livelihood strategies. However, the perpetuation of functioning common property regimes (CPRs), which are both socially inclusive and effectively enforceable is increasingly being challenged by social and political drivers from both within and outside local commons systems. In worst cases 'open access' scenarios may ensue, where unregulated resource access and use prevails, or there may be capture of the commons by elite groups (Ostrom et al. 1999). In South Africa the property regimes that exist in communal areas have been fundamentally shaped by former colonial and apartheid policies of centralised social-political control (Bennett and Barrett 2007). However, the post-1994 era has been characterised by an effective vacuum, both in terms of policy for the governance and management of communal resources and our understanding of how these systems currently function (Bennett et al. 2010). Addressing this knowledge gap will be critical in the development of policies for the management of the commons at both the local and national level. Using empirical findings from Eastern Cape Province, this research analyses the types of property regime in place and how effective these are in the management of communal grazing resources, drawing on best practice to inform policy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research was undertaken from 2006-2010 at six case study villages in the former homelands of Ciskei and Transkei in Eastern Cape Province (Figure 1).

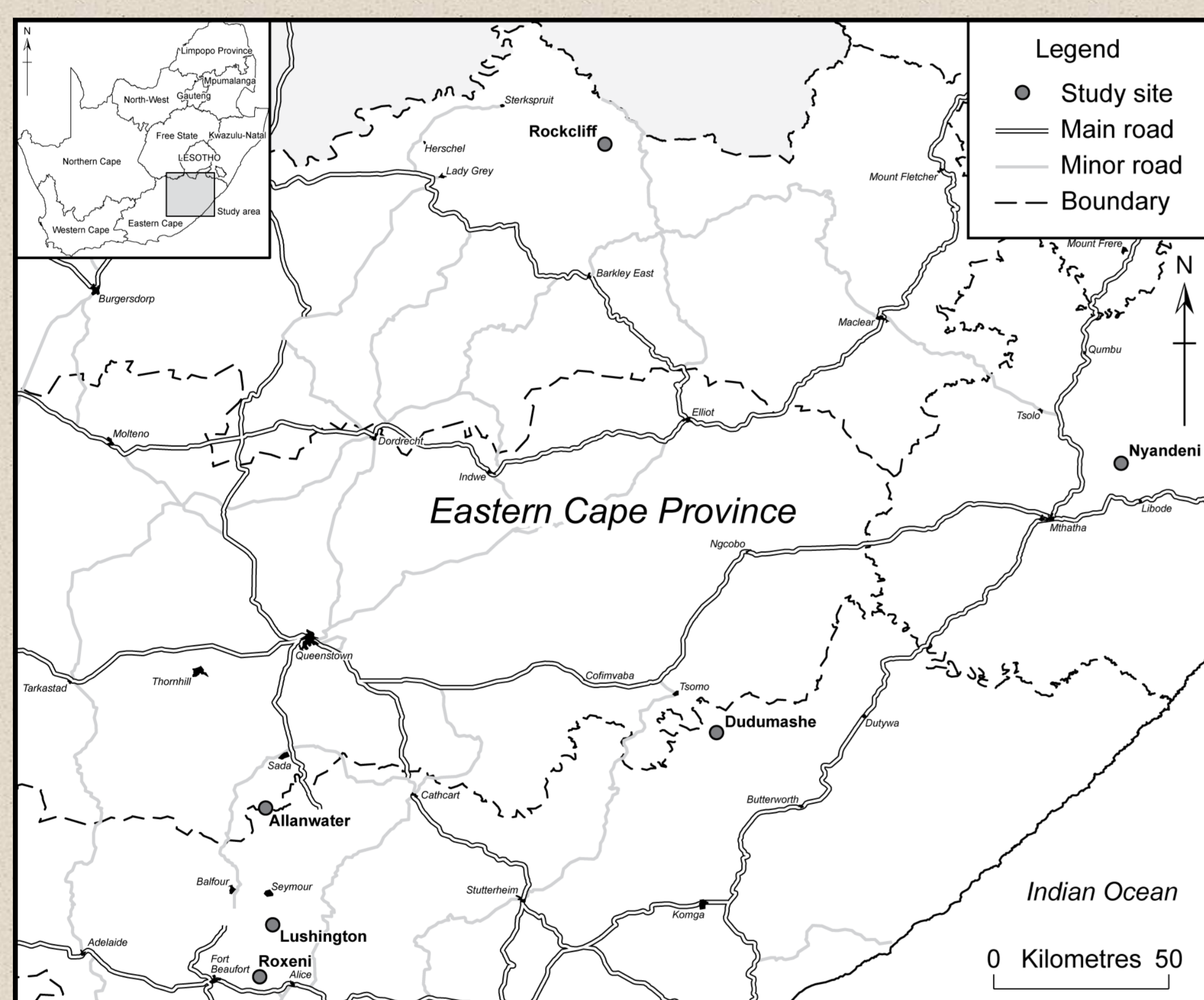


Figure 1: Location of study sites in Eastern Cape Province

Primary data were collected through group interviews and semi-structured interviews administered to key informants at each settlement. This work was augmented by transect walks, participant observation and available secondary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The key findings from the villages in each former homeland area are summarised in Table 1. The rangelands and their associated governance systems have many similarities in both the former Ciskei and Transkei regions and several common constraints to effective rangeland management are apparent: -

- **Availability of grazing land:** At most sites the amount of rangeland is limited relative to the number of livestock leading to high stocking rates and heavy pressure on forage resources.
- **Fencing:** In the absence of active herding of stock by owners, fencing is the only mechanism by which livestock movements can be controlled. Where it is absent enforcement of grazing boundaries is virtually impossible.
- **Institutions:** Although institutions (civil society or traditional) of land access and control are in place at all sites, most do not play an active role in the collective management of commons resources such as rangeland. This makes it almost impossible to enact and enforce community-level grazing management decisions within most of the villages.

Table 1: Key features of villages in each area

FEATURE	HOMELAND AREA	
	Ciskei (3 sites)	Transkei (3 sites)
Site history	Mixture of colonial planning (1 site) and transferred commercial farms (2 sites).	All sites established under colonial rule with subsequent 'betterment' planning imposed.
Livelihood basis	Ranges from essentially cash-income based to dependent largely on agriculture.	Largely agrarian in all cases.
Institutions	Civil society structures in the form of Residents' Associations (RAs) and Communal Property Associations (CPAs).	Traditional leadership (Chiefs, Headmen and associated committees) in place at all sites.
Rangeland area	Generally relatively small ranging from 1200-2000 ha.	Extensive ranging in extent from 2000-6000 ha.
Rangeland boundaries	Not strictly enforced due to absence of fencing (2 sites) but clearly defined through fencing at 1 site.	Relatively well-defined by perimeter fencing at 2 sites, but limited enforcement at 1 site.
Rangeland user group	Poorly defined due to encroachment on resource by outsiders at 2 sites but well established through membership of a CPA at 1 site.	Generally clearly identified at 2 sites but with some encroachment on rangeland by outsiders, nonetheless. Poorly defined at 1 site.
Rangeland management system	Ranges from open access grazing (2 sites) to functioning common property regime at 1 site, including attempts at rotational resting of range.	Open access prevails at 1 site but 'minimum' common property regime involving defined boundaries and user group but no internal management, at other 2 sites.
Range condition	Highly variable, ranging from very poor at 2 sites to good at former commercial farm where CPR has been maintained.	Ranges from poor to very poor at most sites.

The generality of these constraints suggest that functioning common property regimes are largely absent in communal areas of Eastern Cape. In many cases this has resulted in limited or no management of local rangeland resources and poor resource quality. Nevertheless, where appropriate local conditions exist, CPRs can and do still operate. One of the case study sites, Allanwater, a former commercial farm, provides an example of where an effective CPR is in place. Key to this is has been the post-apartheid formation of a Communal Property Association (CPA). This gives secure user rights over rangeland to all farmers at the village, who then take collective responsibility for maintaining fenced rangeland boundaries with neighbouring communities and the resting of rangeland camps to ensure continuity of forage. Moreover, rangeland at Allanwater is in the best condition of any of the six study sites and this translates into good livestock production, with wool yields averaging 4kg/animal, a figure comparable with commercial systems.

CONCLUSION

Rebuilding sustainable CPR systems within Eastern Cape Province will not be straightforward or indeed feasible in all cases given the historical inequalities and limitations that afflict many former homeland areas. However, empirical evidence suggests that collective management that both maintains resource integrity and animal production is still possible in communal areas. A key part of this will be the development of institutions with a specific commons management remit, which are locally driven and are able to embed collective rights over the commons at the community level. This has implications for current efforts at land reform in South Africa, and suggests that land redistribution must be complemented by concerted efforts at tenure reform that actively support the emergence of community-based institutions of collective resource management.

REFERENCES

- Bennett, J. and Barrett, H.R. 2007. Rangeland as a common property resource: contrasting insights from communal areas of central Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Human Ecology* 35(1), 97-112.
- Bennett, J. Ainslie, A. and Davis, J. 2010. Fenced in: Common property struggles in the management of communal rangelands in central Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Land Use Policy* 27(2), 340-350.
- Ostrom, E.; Burger, J.; Field, C.B.; Norgaard, R.B. and Policansky, D. 1999. Revisiting the commons: Local lessons, Global Challenges. *Science* 284, 278-282.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research was supported by two Applied Research Fellowships from Coventry University and a small grant (SRG 08/10) from the Royal Geographical Society. I acknowledge the support of colleagues from South Africa and Australia in the collection of the data.