

# Inclusive local tourism development in South Africa: Evidence from Dullstroom

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## Abstract

Growing international debates surround the notion of inclusive tourism development. The objective in this paper is to examine the issues around inclusive tourism development in South Africa through a locality study. The analysis focuses on the small town of Dullstroom which has experienced considerable tourism growth over the past decades as a consequence of its rich tourism products of fly-fishing, agritourism and second homes tourism. Findings are reported from qualitative interviews with black (African) employees of tourism establishments in Dullstroom. The results reveal tourism development in Dullstroom provides a range of positive economic and social benefits for local residents and that this small town exhibits evidence of an inclusive trajectory of tourism development.

## Keywords

inclusive development, tourism, local government, local economic development, South Africa

## Introduction

The ‘inclusiveness’ of tourism development processes increasingly is an issue that is coming under close academic scrutiny. Debates about ‘inclusion’ and ‘inclusive economic growth’ clearly align with vibrant debates taking place for the past 15 years around the role of tourism in poverty reduction and about pro-poor tourism approaches to promoting local development in the global

South (see Ashley et al., 2001; Bolwell and Weinz, 2008; Hall, 2007; Rogerson, 2006, 2014a; Scheyvens, 2011; Truong, 2014). Examining tourism and inclusive growth in small island developing states Hampton and Jeyacheya (2013) argue that inclusive growth “is predicated upon broad-based growth

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across all sectors of an economy, is inclusive of low and middle-income groups, and has a distributional aspect aimed to reduce income inequality". Tourism as a vehicle for inclusive development is also investigated in Colca Valley, Peru in recent works by Bidwell (2011) and Rendon and Bidwell (2014).

Impetus is given to debates about inclusion by discussions and controversies surrounding the potential for tourism to contribute to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and latterly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which were ratified in September 2015 (Saarinen and Rogerson, 2014; Saarinen et al., 2013). Inclusion is embedded as one of the core principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Arguably, it is stressed that tourism development can be inclusive and assist towards poverty reduction only if a broad array of stakeholders contribute to the creation of opportunities as well as share the potential benefits from tourism. Recently, Scheyvens and Biddulph (2015) proposed the term 'inclusive tourism' "can be understood as the involvement of marginalised or less powerful groups in the production of tourism and the sharing of the benefits of tourism".

For interrogating notions of inclusive tourism development an instructive case study is South Africa for a number of reasons. The country's tourism industry remains still an under-acknowledged sector for its contributions to national development goals (Hanekom, 2015a). In addition, South Africa's tourism industry still carries the apartheid legacy of white domination of ownership of tourism products and of the limited involvement of Black communities in both tourism production as well as the consumption of tourism products (Rogerson and Visser, 2004). Since 1994 national government has been engaged in a number of policy initiatives designed to restructure the tourism economy and to expand the involvement of Black

communities as product owners and beneficiaries of tourism expansion. Issues of transformation, Black Economic Empowerment, and encouraging 'shared growth in tourism' have been high on national government's policy agenda (Department of Tourism, 2011). In addition to public sector initiatives, South Africa has been a leading innovator in aspects of the application of approaches of pro-poor tourism to private sector development (Rogerson, 2006). Finally, in respect of examining inclusive tourism South Africa is of compelling interest also because the tourism sector "is one of the main drivers of local economic development" (George, 2015: 4). In particular, in the country's remote and peripheral spaces local governments commonly prioritise tourism as a lever for stimulating local development (Nel and Rogerson, 2016; Rogerson, 2013, 2014b, 2015a).

In several recent pronouncements made by South Africa's Minister of Tourism during 2015 considerable attention is given to issues of inclusion in the tourism sector and national government's understanding of this concept. During March 2015 the Minister averred that "tourism is not only about the activity of tourism" rather "it is about inclusive economic growth and the better life that it creates for those most in need" (Hanekom, 2015b: 1). Furthermore, when addressing a major conference of tourism stakeholders in August 2015, the Minister proclaimed that amongst three key objectives of the country's tourism policy in future were *inter alia*, to stabilize the sector and ensure a turnaround with a strong growth trajectory, to create jobs and conditions for increased investment, and "very importantly we want to make the entire sector more inclusive and representative by bringing people who have been marginalized into the mainstream tourism economy" (Hanekom, 2015c: 2). In another statement the two core "strategic imperatives" for South African tourism were identified as greater sustainability and greater

inclusivity (Hanekom, 2015d: 1). Speaking to local government tourism representatives the Minister reflected at length on how to define success in tourism and argued that the extent to which it was a ‘force for good’ in South Africa required additional ways of measuring the impact of tourism beyond simply that of the numbers of tourist arrivals. Instead, it was stressed that “We will need to measure how inclusive this growth is, and how many more marginalised people and communities we are bringing into the mainstream” (Hanekom, 2015d: 1). In this respect an important role was identified for local governments – alongside other tiers of government in South Africa – in meeting the challenges of achieving inclusive growth through infrastructural improvements, support for SMMEs and enhancement of local skills (Hanekom, 2015d: 2).

Taken together, the above statements confirm that inclusive tourism growth in South Africa demands that greater benefits flow to local (black) communities that formerly have remained largely outside of the mainstream of the country’s tourism economy. In addition, for achieving inclusive local growth from tourism there is an expectation that local governments will be active agents of change as part of wider responsibilities for local economic development (LED) which are mandated by national government (Makgamatha, 2015; Rogerson, 2013; SALGA, 2013). The task in this paper is to examine through a local study the issues around inclusive tourism development in South Africa. More specifically, the analysis focuses on the small town of Dullstroom which has experienced considerable tourism growth over the past decades as a consequence of its rich assets for fly-fishing, agritourism as well as second homes tourism (Hoogendoorn, 2014; Hoogendoorn and Visser, 2010; Rogerson, 2002a; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2014). The examination of inclusive tourism in

Dullstroom is situated against the background of an overview of international scholarship and debates concerning tourism and local development. The analysis of Dullstroom draws from an analysis of tourism data extracted from the Global Insight local tourism base and importantly from a set of semi-structured interviews conducted during 2012 with 46 local community members employed in eight different tourism accommodation establishments. Full details of interviews and methodology are provided in Butler (2013).

### **Tourism and local economic development: International debates**

The study of tourism and its relationships with local economic development is beginning to generate a range of literature from a number of different perspectives and across a spectrum of different destinations from urban to remote rural areas. O’Sullivan and Jackson (2002) interpret local tourism development in relation to three distinct (and well-known) approaches to LED, namely the conventional approach stressing investment promotion and growth, the community economic development approach which targets promoting the ‘well-being’ of communities, and sustainable local economic development which includes notions of carrying capacity, balance and longer-term development. Kennell (2011) examines tourism policy development in the United Kingdom in terms of theories of local economic development. Distinctions are drawn between three modes of LED, namely orthodox LED with a stress on economic growth as outcome, community LED which is viewed as influential when tourism is part of attempts at urban and rural regeneration, and progressive LED in which organs of the state, private sector and the ‘third sector’ cooperate for the objectives of sustainable growth. An important aspect of

the progressive mode, according to Kennell (2011: 193), is support for local entrepreneurship. In Australia Ruhanen (2013) emphasizes the heightened responsibilities of local governments in tourism destination planning and management and how increasingly they are engaged as agents for facilitating or inhibiting sustainable tourism. From Scandinavia a significant component of research on tourism and local economic development is through the lens of innovation (Brouder, 2013; Hall and Williams, 2008; Williams, 2014). The local state is acknowledged to have a vital role "via its public policy settings especially in relation to regional and industry innovation systems" (Hall and Zapata Campos, 2014: 6). Using the experience of Italy Pedrana (2013) stresses the 'fundamental' interactions between territory and tourism and highlights that from a LED perspective institutions have to be aware of the need for well-organised sustainable programmes of interventions.

As a focus for local development tourism has been promoted often in "unlikely areas" or localities with limited potential for attracting visitors especially in several urban centres of the United Kingdom (Stobart and Ball, 1998). Shaw and Williams (2004: 262) point to the "extensive use of heritage attractions to reclaim and regenerate redundant industrial spaces" and argue that local authorities were especially attracted to such local development strategies "given the relatively high leverage from tourism investment". Stobart and Ball (1998: 236) assessed the British urban experience of the 1990s and concluded "the drive for tourism precipitates new team partnerships, spin offs into other realms of the local economy, and boosts the local policy machine in various ways that enhance the status and the strength of the local economy". Overall, within developed economies Jones and Munday (2001: 2) observe that tourism and leisure emerge "as a potential driver of regeneration in economically disadvantaged localities". The significance of

tourism for local development is highlighted with the restructuring of rural production systems to include the production of new spaces for leisure particularly in marginalized, peripheral regions of the global North (Hall et al., 2011; Saarinen, 2007).

Adjustment and restructuring associated with globalization often includes attempts by localities to widen their economic base to add tourism as agricultural employment declines (Hall et al., 2011: 29). Brouder (2012a: 334) considers that across much of Europe tourism is 'synonymous' with local development programmes in rural and peripheral areas. Often tourism supply is primarily by small firms and exhibits high seasonal variations in employment (Brouder, 2013: 11). Tourism is viewed as a way by which marginal localities can overcome their continuing stagnation or decline and be reinvented as 'post-productive' places (Brouder, 2012b; Saarinen, 2003, 2007). This said, tourism promotion is sometimes a last resort for many communities in rural and peripheral areas which have few resources to exploit other than capitalising on their distance from core areas "by selling the only thing that they may have of appeal to people in the core – the idea of 'wilderness'" (Brouder, 2013: 15). Muller and Jansson (2007) and Saarinen (2007, 2014) show that in many rural places tourism has been selected or emerged through externally driven processes as a major replacement activity to be promoted and developed through using the asset of pristine environments.

Across the peripheral regions of developed countries tourism promotion continues to be widespread albeit "with a more considered approach than previously" (Brouder, 2012a: 333). Nevertheless, whilst tourism has undoubted potential some analysts caution against the 'monocrop' of tourism in poor or remote localities (Brouder, 2012b). An increasing trend is to endorse tourism as a "desirable diversifier" for local and regional economies, not least because one positive externality of tourism

growth is its role in increasing the supply of local services as well as the less obvious social contribution of tourism to expanding local leisure spaces (Brouder, 2012b; Hall et al., 2011; Saarinen, 2014). Attention is centred now upon tourism as one element for local and regional revival and its intersection with other (non-tourism) sectoral development initiatives (Saarinen, 2003, 2007). The potential for peripheral localities to realise and maximise opportunities from tourism is constrained in practice by the fact that much critical decision making for tourism development is exogenous and beyond the control of communities which rely on external policy decisions made by governments or private investors as well as urban consumer preferences (Brouder, 2013). Arguably, as observed by Brouder (2012b: 335), what local communities can control are “the endogenous aspects of the tourism system” which places a premium upon building local social capital in marginal areas. Accordingly, in marginal localities engaged in tourism promotion an imperative exists for them to be both outward-looking in respect of sourcing custom and investment and inward-looking in terms of activating local social capital and making the locality attractive for tourists (Brouder, 2013).

The importance of investigating tourism and local economic development is not confined to advanced economies. Not surprisingly, in the context of international debates around the MDGs an important stream of scholarship emerged around tourism and local development in the global South where importance is attached to tourism’s pro-poor credentials and potential impacts for local poverty reduction (Goodwin, 2008; Rogerson, 2006; Scheyvens, 2011). Critical observers point out that pro-poor tourism approaches can be both empowering and exploitative (King and Dinkoksung, 2014). The significance of enhancing local sourcing and of the need to build local supply chains

is a recurrent theme in many writings that address tourism and local development from a pro-poor tourism perspective (Ashley, 2006; International Tourism Partnership, 2004). The catalytic role of tourism in creating partnerships between local stakeholders is another issue that is foregrounded (Ashley, 2006; Kimbu, 2012). In different parts of the global South the critical nature of improved understanding of the roles of local actors, especially of local governments, in promoting tourism-led local development is highlighted (Rogerson, 2005; Silver 2002). In common with other economic sectors the expansion of tourism depends, however, not only on local assets in the natural and cultural environment but crucially also upon “the supply and provision of the necessary service infrastructure” (Kimbu, 2012: 7). Amongst the best-documented in the global South are the locality experiences around tourism-led local development and the making of post-productivist landscapes in South Africa (Binns and Nel, 2002; Donaldson and Marais, 2012; Gardyne et al., 2005; Gibb and Nel, 2007; Irvine et al., 2015; Lourens, 2007; Nel and Rogerson, 2005; Ntonzina and Binza, 2011; Ramukumba, 2012; Ramukumba et al., 2012; Rogerson, 2002b, 2007, 2013, 2014c; van der Merwe, 2014).

Arguably, the most distinctive feature of debates around tourism and local development impacts in the global South relates to tourism’s potential to be a lead sector for pro-poor development (Hall and Zapata Campos, 2014; Mitchell and Ashley, 2010; Rogerson, 2012a). Several international development organisations led by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) advocate the role of tourism in poverty reduction and towards attaining UN MDGs (Saarinen et al., 2013). The World Bank highlights the transformative role that tourism potentially can play in local economies and societies of sub-Saharan Africa (Christie et al., 2013). In particular, it identifies tourism can empower women, young people and

marginalized populations and is an attractive vehicle for poverty alleviation. Across recent international policy and academic discourse powerful themes are thus of analysing pro-poor tourism and the tourism-poverty reduction nexus (Ashley, 2006; Ashley et al., 2001; Mitchell and Ashley, 2010; Rogerson, 2014a; Scheyvens, 2011). In the global South Mitchell (2010: 3) argues that there is “mounting empirical evidence (which) shows that tourism can transfer significant benefits to local economies and communities around tourist destinations”. Spenceley and Meyer (2012: 299) stress that:

Rich cultural and natural assets exist in some of the poorest regions of the world, and they offer great potential for travel itineraries. Tourism can provide one possible mechanism to re-distribute from the rich to the poor. As tourists travel to impoverished regions of the world for a variety of reasons, they spend money on travel, accommodation, excursions, food, drinks and shopping. In many tourism destinations, the poor have the potential to capture some of this spending through employment and, probably, most importantly through providing goods and/or services that the tourism sector and tourists need.

From the perspective of pro-poor tourism, the consumption of tourists can be harnessed to serve the poor by ‘unlocking opportunities’ for them “at all levels and scales of operation” in tourism (Ashley et al., 2001: 3). Mitchell and Ashley (2010) identify three critical pathways by which the benefits of tourism can be transferred to the poor: direct effects; secondary effects; and, dynamic effects. Essentially, the direct effects involve labour and non-labour income in which the former refers to individual earnings whilst the latter relates to community income. In addition, the direct effects include non-financial elements such as improved infrastructures benefitting other livelihoods at the local scale. The secondary effects of tourism for the poor are

based on indirect earnings from non-tourism sectors but which are linked to tourist activities. Local agricultural products sold to tourism businesses represent one example of such effects (Lacher and Nepal, 2010; Rogerson, 2012b). Further, the so-called induced impacts, such as tourism workers’ consumption based on their earnings in local economies can represent secondary effects to the poor (depending on the target of income spending). Finally, the dynamic effects are important pathways to poverty reduction based on long-term (positive) changes in the socio-economic, cultural and physical environment created by tourism development; the most significant is perhaps the improvements which can occur in the business environment affecting private sector investment (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010).

The imperative of promoting and maximising the benefits of tourism for local communities is a vital policy and research issue (Ashley et al., 2001; Goodwin, 2008; Goodwin and Bah, 2013). This said, the poor confront multiple barriers to expanding their participation in the economies of growing tourism destinations, most importantly lack of capital, education and business skills (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). The economic impact of tourism on local areas is constrained by the frequent occurrence of high levels of external leakage in respect of the “the failure of tourist spending to remain in the destination economy” (Sandbrook, 2010: 125). Actual levels of leakage are associated with the presence/absence of local capacity to furnish necessary skills, food and other supplies which are demanded by tourism enterprises (Scheyvens, 2011). Often the inability to link local economic activities to tourism is a consequence of the fact that destinations are usually “unable to supply the tourism industry with the goods it needs to sustain itself at a competitive price” (Lacher and Nepal, 2010: 82). Certain development practitioners, however, assert that much can be done to boost linkages which can become



a potential productive focus for policy-makers (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). The establishment and consolidation of local economic linkages is viewed necessary for maximising tourism's potential for achieving broadly based patterns of economic and social development or inclusive growth (Scheyvens, 2011). Enhanced prospects for local economic development are the potential outcome of successful linkage development (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2010).

### Dullstroom – An emerging rural tourism destination

The South African case study of Dullstroom is situated in Mpumalanga province and since

2000 it has been administered as part of the Emakhazeni Local Municipality. This small town of 5000 inhabitants is approximately two and a half hours drive from the country's economic heartland, Gauteng province, and its major city of Johannesburg (Figure 1). In examining Dullstroom through the lens of inclusive tourism this section sketches the historical emergence of Dullstroom as a tourism destination. Using local level data it provides also a picture of the key dimensions of the local tourism economy over the period 2001–2012. The following section addresses debates around inclusive tourism development in this locality.

For tourism development the Dullstroom area offers some of the finest and most scenic

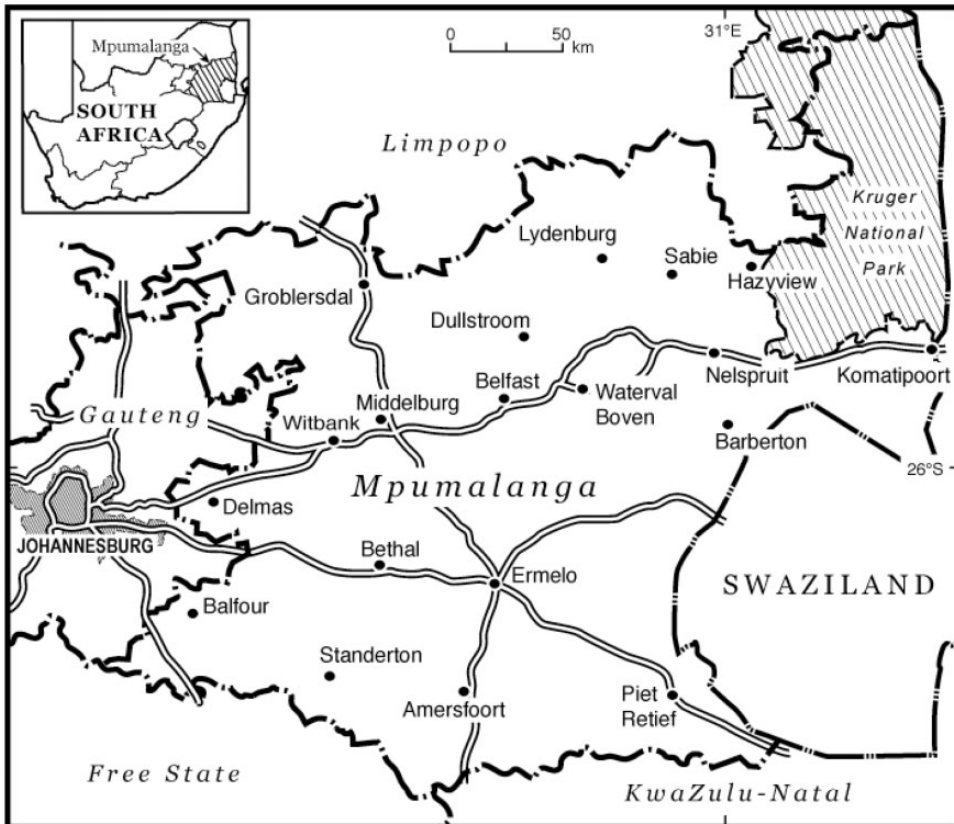


Figure 1. The location of Dullstroom.

trout fishing venues in South Africa with numerous rivers in the area dammed at intervals to provide year round fishing opportunities. Beyond flyfishing the town's tourism assets also include the natural beauty, flora and fauna of South Africa's 'Highlands', opportunities for birdwatching and a range of farm-based agritourism activities (Hoogendoorn, 2014; Rogerson, 2002a; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2014). This cluster of tourism products within the area and its surrounds adds value to the core tourism asset of trout flyfishing. In addition, as a tourism destination Dullstroom benefits from geography as the town is a convenient stop-over point for local and international tourists heading to the country's iconic big five game reserves, most importantly Kruger National Park which is approximately two hours drive from the town (de Beer et al., 2014).

The historical development of tourism in Dullstroom has been examined elsewhere and only the salient points are highlighted here (Rogerson, 2002a). Until the mid-1960s the tourism potential of Dullstroom was undeveloped. During the 1960s trout fishing began to gain in popularity and was given impetus by the municipality constructing and stocking the municipal dam with a total of 17,000 fingerlings of both rainbow and brown trout. The local economy of trout fishing was further augmented by private sector initiatives establishing trout farms. With improved road access to cities such as Johannesburg and Pretoria the tourism resources of this area opened up in response to the recreational demands of domestic tourism (Rogerson, 2015b). Dullstroom became part of 'the pleasure periphery' of South Africa's economic heartland. Small scale local entrepreneurs led the movement to elevate the popularity of Dullstroom as a tourism destination. Indeed, it was only in the mid-1980s that the first significant new external private investment occurred into the area with the

building of an upmarket lodge which opened in 1988. The profile of the area as a weekend retreat from South Africa's major urban centres was boosted in that year by the country's major newspaper choosing the clock behind the wall of the local inn as the hiding place for R1 million in its 'Finders Keepers' competition. This landmark event put Dullstroom onto the tourism map of South Africa and generated added flows of new private sector investors and second home owners into the town. By far the most important new investment was the construction of a second luxury tourism lodge, Walkersons, which opened in 1993.

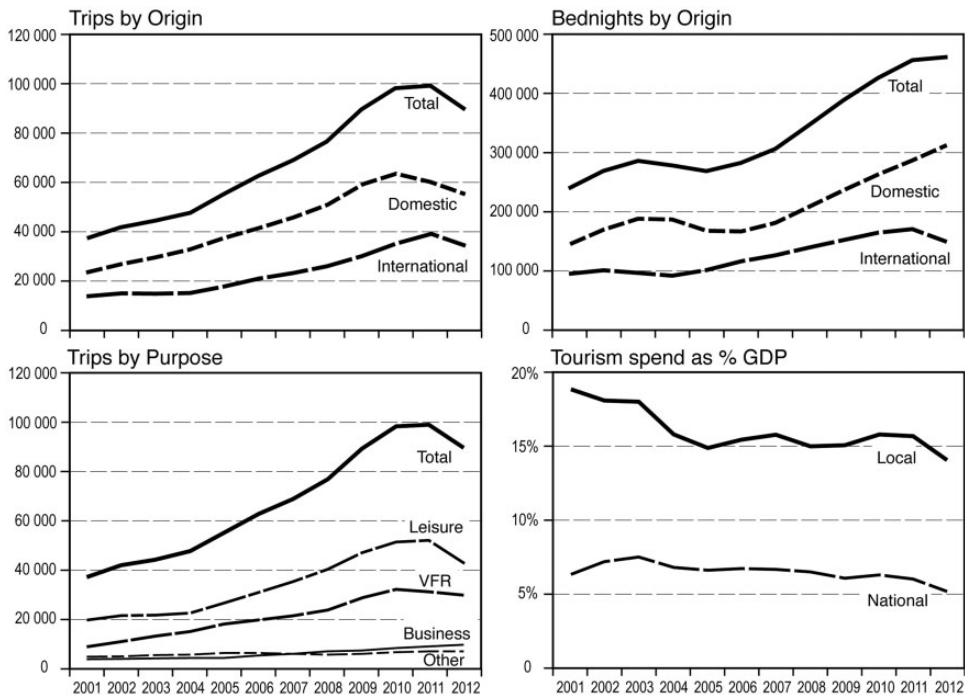
With 1994 democratic transition, another stream of private investments took place in new tourism-linked businesses in Dullstroom, mainly bars, restaurants and shops and conference centres. Further expansion occurred in the popularity of Dullstroom as a second homes tourism destination (Hoogendoorn and Visser, 2010) and for timeshare properties (Pandy and Rogerson, 2014). Another boost for the Dullstroom tourism economy derived from the establishment and planning of a tourism route, the Highlands Meander, as part of the Maputo Development Corridor Spatial Development Initiative (Crush and Rogerson, 2001; Rogerson, 2002a). Although this route tourism initiative achieved some success in the early 2000s in expanding the flow of tourists to Dullstroom, it was open to criticism for its lack of pro-poor focus and the limited involvement and linkages of successful businesses with local black communities. It was demonstrated that the benefits of local tourism expansion from the Highlands Meander route tourism initiative were only marginally inclusive as prime beneficiaries were the groups of established white South African entrepreneurs, an outcome that perpetuated the marginalization of local (black) communities from the tourism economy (Rogerson, 2002a).



A recent analysis of the differential performance of municipalities impacted by the Maputo Development Corridor revealed that Emakhazeni continues to show a relatively poor record and is underperforming as indexed by a basket of socio-economic indicators (Khoza and Willemse, 2013). With local rates of unemployment estimated as 30 per cent the importance of tourism for labour absorption and for improving living standards of the local Black community is highlighted by local government (Emakhazeni Local Municipality, 2011). In the most recent Integrated Development Plan issued by Emakhazeni Local Municipality tourism is recognised as one of the area’s major economic development thrusts (Emakhazeni Local Municipality, 2011). Nevertheless, in terms of maximising the significant local development potential of tourism it is

observed “there are certain constraints that needs (sic) to be addressed in order to ensure an enabling environment is created to foster tourism development” (Emakhazeni Local Municipality, 2011: 184). Arguably, the most important identified constraints relate to standard of tourism product and services, signage and infrastructural issues.

The performance of the Dullstroom tourism economy can be gauged from the available Global Insight data for the Emakhazeni Local Municipality within which the small town of Dullstroom is the overwhelming core for tourism activities. Figure 2 provides trend data on trips and bednights by origin, trips by purpose and tourism spend as a contributor to local GDP. Several points can be observed. First, between 2001 and 2012 the number of total tourism trips has more than doubled with a peak in 2010 the year of



**Figure 2.** Emakhazeni local municipality: tourism trends 2001–2012 (Source: based on unpublished Global Insight data).

South Africa's hosting of the FIFA Soccer World Cup. Since 2010 there has been a decline in both domestic and international visitors which parallels national trends of a downturn in South Africa's tourism economy. Second, in terms of origin of visitors there is a consistent pattern of domestic tourists representing 62 percent of trips with international visitors around 38 percent. The largest share of international visitors is of high spending long haul arrivals rather than regional tourists from sub-Saharan Africa. Three, in terms of bednights (paid and unpaid) the trend has been for domestic share to expand and reaching more than two-thirds by 2012. Four, in terms of purpose of travel, the importance of leisure travel is clearly apparent as it represents almost half of tourism trips. This high proportion of leisure travel is unusual as for South Africa as a whole the category of VFR (visiting friends and relatives) travel represents nearly two-thirds of all purpose of trips (Rogerson, 2015c, 2015d). Finally, in relation to local GDP, the contribution of tourism is around 15 percent, much higher than the national estimated share contributed by tourism, which ranks the Emakhazeni Local Municipality as one of South Africa's most tourism-dependent local economies (Rogerson, 2013)

### **A case of inclusive tourism development?**

This section summarises the findings from the qualitative interviews with 46 (Black) employees of tourism establishments in Dullstroom. The results reveal that tourism development in Dullstroom provides a range of positive economic and social benefits particularly for residents living in Sakhelwe, the (black) township located approximately 2 km away from the town centre (Butler, 2013). Economically, many respondents had gained long-term positions that offered reliable salaries and provided

notable improvements in living standards. Interviewees reported that tourism employment enabled them to purchase vehicles, furniture and even small properties – outcomes that they believed to be highly unlikely elsewhere. However, the social benefits initiated by tourism development were wider in scope and perhaps, of greater significance to the inhabitants of Sakhelwe. Based on the emphasis placed on these themes by interviewees in the study, these benefits included capacity building, empowerment (including the specific empowerment of Black women) and feelings of security regarding the long-term futures of their families. Arguably, these three sets of benefits can be viewed as contributing towards a trajectory of inclusive tourism development in the town.

Job creation fostered by tourism development in Dullstroom was not simply a case of a greater *quantity* of jobs that paid reasonably well (in comparison to other local low-skilled jobs) but an increased access to a higher *quality* jobs too (Butler, 2013). Here, by 'higher quality' positions, we identified jobs that not only offered economic stability but opportunities to develop either within or outside of the tourism sector in the long-term. Due to their lengthy time of employment with just one employer, many had been rewarded with promotions, increased responsibilities and even access to formal qualifications. These positions promoted a sense of control amongst local community members as they believed that they could, to some extent, now help shape the futures of their families and their own personal ambitions. Interviewees also argued that tourism employment meant that they were less vulnerable to retrenchment – a fear they had often experienced in other employment sectors. Moreover, several community members no longer identified their positions simply as *jobs* but *careers* instead, that were reified by personal development trajectories from unskilled and

poorly educated workers to semi- or fully skilled employees that occasionally included formal education qualifications.

Interviews conducted with employees demonstrated that capacity building was one of the key benefits instigated by tourism development in Dullstroom (Butler, 2013). Indeed, a number of narratives relating to evidence of capacity building amongst local community residents emerged. These narratives included the informal development of new skills that were either tourism-specific (customer management and communication, food preparation, and serving) or more broader in nature that were relevant to a number of employment sectors (computer literacy skills, supervisory capabilities, health and safety awareness). Leadership skills and even staff recruitment responsibilities were also reported by some as they had progressed to levels of greater power and control.

In most scenarios it was observed that locals had started in positions without any formal training, clearly defined skillsets, or matric-level (high school grade 12) qualifications. As a consequence, many respondents believed themselves to be highly vulnerable in terms of employability before gaining jobs in the tourism industry. Although the majority of interviewees were born and raised in Sakhelwe, a small minority revealed that they had arrived from nearby towns or villages and sought employment in Dullstroom. This was primarily because they perceived it to be a location that could provide jobs that were both sustainable and economically rewarding. Several respondents suggested that they had been previously employed in a number of short-term positions in other sectors, such as security guards or factory workers. However, these jobs were often poorly paid and susceptible to being withdrawn at short notice. Based upon these experiences, most argued that tourism employment provided local residents with

a spectrum of economic and social benefits; and although many acknowledged that their positions rarely included high salaries or fringe benefits in the beginning, the stability provided was significant.

It was disclosed that most employees' competencies and skills were acquired through informal, in-house, training schemes offered by employers. Indeed, several interviewees working for smaller tourism businesses in Dullstroom, reported that their employers had put them through intensive in-house training schemes that enhanced their capabilities considerably (Butler, 2013). Whilst they often suggested that although these initial periods were often difficult and stressful due to their lack of prior experience, they were invaluable experiences that now enabled them to perform effectively in the tourism sector. One female respondent reported that the owner of a local restaurant had invested a great deal of her time teaching her food preparation skills, food hygiene practices and how to meticulously follow complicated recipes. Although this interviewee acknowledged that she still had no 'official' certificates, these experiences of informal training had provided her with skills that would ensure that she could find work elsewhere should the need arise. Similar views were echoed by other employees and not only reiterated the value of informal skills development but dispelled the myth, to some extent, that tourism sector positions in a developing world context are inherently low-skilled, low-paid and seasonal in nature (Butler, 2013).

Although the majority of respondents revealed that most training or skills development had been fostered informally formal qualifications were additionally acquired on occasion by some. Formal qualifications included the completion of matric-level subjects amongst those that left school early, and university diplomas, guiding certificates, first aid certificates and

computer literacy courses by those that had completed school with some qualifications. Moreover, all of those that had encountered formal training pointed out that full financial assistance had been provided by their employer. Whilst most courses were short-term in nature and relatively low in cost, two respondents had been provided with the funds to pursue tertiary qualifications at universities in Johannesburg. In addition, three interviewees suggested that they had been identified to undertake tertiary qualifications in the near future by their employers. Once again, they reported that they would receive the funding to acquire formal qualifications that included diplomas in accounting, IT, and a national certificate in water care (water treatment). Nonetheless, the potential for capacity building was identified as a central theme in many conversations. Indeed, many local employees relayed stories of both tangible and intangible skill development that had been initiated through employment in tourism.

Tourism employment additionally provided a distinctive range of benefits that included new linguistic capabilities and even literacy skills (Butler, 2013). Over the course of a number of years, a handful of interviewees reported that they had learned to read and write at a more competent level in both English and Afrikaans. These improvements, they argued, also increased their potential to find work elsewhere should they face unemployment in the future. Thus, capacity building opportunities fostered by tourism employment were wide in scope and highly valued by community members who had benefited from them. Indeed, many respondents frequently spoke of their good fortune to be employed in positions that not only provided long-term, stable incomes but important skills that they believed few other employment sectors could provide. Overall, the local importance of employment in Dullstroom's tourism sector is certainly demonstrated via the

positive experiences of many local community members interviewed in this study. The respondents revealed that these positions had the potential to offer genuine capacity building opportunities and that economic gains were not necessarily the most important benefit. Moreover, some identified – for the first time in their lives – they were now embarking on *careers* as opposed to a succession of limited, short-term employment opportunities. Indeed, this realisation perhaps fostered an even greater social impact; that of local community empowerment through tourism development.

Overall this study provides a number of important perspectives on empowerment from marginalised or disadvantaged groups, particularly of black women within the community. Black females from Sakhelwe made up the bulk of employees in Dullstroom's tourism sector and it was evident that many of these women had been empowered in a number of ways. Empowerment, of course, may be realised through the notion of capacity building and this study has already highlighted a series of outcomes relating to the acquisition of new skills and qualifications. However, empowerment may be achieved in other ways too. Indeed, empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept that may include economic, social, political and psychological factors (Nyapaune and Poudel, 2011; Scheyvens, 1999, 2011).

The findings suggest that empowerment was evident in several distinctive ways in the Dullstroom local community. Local respondents argued that their stable incomes provided them opportunities to purchase their own homes or land plots in Sakhelwe, as well as cars and various other material possessions. This economic empowerment also enabled them to provide access for their children to local schools as they could now afford to pay school fees, supply uniforms and provide the costs of transport if they were enrolled in schools outside of Sakhelwe. Many respondents suggested

that they had 'peace of mind' that they could provide for their families (including extended families on occasion) and 'live without debt'. The theme of employment enabling employees' children to access education was prominent and cited by many as one, if not *the*, most significant outcome of attaining a stable position in Dullstroom's tourism sector. From the perspective of social empowerment, community members described the increasing value other locals had placed on tourism development and the positive impacts it had fostered. Some argued that crime was relatively low in the area due to a heightened sense of awareness that rises could deter potential tourism growth. As a consequence, several respondents believed that the community had become more cohesive – and safer – as a result. Indeed, one of the strongest concerns amongst locals from Sakhelwe was that 'outsiders' (those moving into the community from other areas) may not share a similar ethos. Although this concern revealed that local community members genuinely cared about the welfare of the town and its reputation as a safe setting for tourism development, it additionally revealed the feelings of resistance that non-locals reported they had experienced when attempting to gain access to the tourism sector in Dullstroom.

An additional example of social empowerment concerned the development of positive relationships between black and white community members. Due to the lengthy immersion of many employees in a single workplace, strong bonds of friendship had been forged between employers and employees, particularly in businesses that staffed few in number. Through the trust and support provided to them through their employers, barriers of mistrust and suspicion had been deconstructed over time. Some interviewees reported that, on occasion, they invited white community members to their homes in the township – a scenario they believed to be still rare in the

post-apartheid South African context. Trust was also formed via the distribution of decision-making powers to employees that included supervisory roles and the freedom to appoint new members of staff without the input of supervisors or managers. This had proved to be an invaluable process for many, as it meant that they could provide employment entrance opportunities for husbands, siblings, friends and even children. They argued that this process fostered two particular advantages. First, employees could pass on the numerous benefits of empowerment to other family members or friends, effectively creating a positive knock-on effect throughout the community. Second, by recruiting family members in particular, employees reified their commitment to local businesses and believed that this encouraged further hope of promotion or development in the long-term.

As previously noted, several employees were sponsored to undertake qualifications or gain new skills that were financially supported by their respective employers too, and this also helped create closer relationships. These opportunities confirmed their belief that white business owners were not just concerned with personal profit but the development of their lives also. These processes led to strong evidence of psychological empowerment. Tourism positions provided many respondents with a great deal of self-esteem, as they could provide for families and had gained positions that held a degree of respect (particularly amongst those that had been given supervisory roles). From the perspective of black females in particular, psychological empowerment through tourism employment revealed a profound array of positive impacts on their lives. A number of female workers interviewed in this study reported that they had no formal education or training. Moreover, many were found to be single mothers or in relationships in which the majority of their families were unemployed. Tourism employment provided



many women from Sakhelwe with a high degree of control over their personal lives and the lives of their families. Overall, it was disclosed that employment in the tourism sector provided opportunities for empowerment in myriad ways and was found to provide not only positions that were secure and financially rewarding but gateways to attaining greater control over their lives and the pursuit of ambitions that were perhaps impossible, if it were not for their current jobs in Dullstroom.

## Conclusion

This article seeks to contribute to the emerging international tourism scholarship and debates about inclusive tourism. Arguably inclusivity is an essential ingredient for the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations particularly in the environment of the global South. Although the term 'inclusive tourism development' remains contested amongst its essential elements must be the greater participation of marginalised communities in tourism production and sharing the benefits of tourism expansion. In achieving the goals of inclusivity there are important roles for national and local levels of government as well as the private sector.

With its high levels of unemployment in South Africa any sources of new employment opportunities are to be welcomed especially in the country's non-metropolitan and rural areas. Dullstroom is a small town which has been shown as economically dependent upon tourism. This study reveals that whilst many jobs in tourism are low-skilled and low-paying the observations from employees reveal that the significant majority of these jobs were permanent full-time positions that in several scenarios had been held for more than a decade. Moreover, this research highlights the growth potential that several local residents were afforded in their places of work through tourism employment. Although

many employees had started at low levels, some had progressed to become supervisors or now were in possession of skills sets that meant that they could undertake more demanding positions. As a result, a number of these employees earned salaries that provided long-term stability and a distinctive rise in quality of life. From a different perspective, it was argued that the regular incomes fostered through employment in tourism afforded a financial platform for the pursuit of qualifications or ambitions that were completely unrelated to the tourism sector.

The research revealed evidence of tourism as a vehicle for economic and social empowerment of marginalised communities in Dullstroom, in particular of black women. The majority of tourism employees in Dullstroom are black females who had often started with either basic qualifications or none at all. However, these women had been empowered through the distribution of new skills and qualifications that enabled them to feel empowered economically, socially and psychologically. Most argued that they had now become self-sufficient and no longer relied upon family hand-outs or money supplied to them by their husbands. Moreover, these livelihoods included the strengthening of community ties and empowered them with the skills and confidence levels to develop and grow beyond traditional male spheres of influence. Others argued that tourism employment was a stepping stone towards new ventures including the hope of owning their own businesses. Here, skills and qualifications that had been acquired through tourism equipped them with the competencies and business acumen to eventually operate their own enterprises. Thus, it can be concluded that in the case of Dullstroom an inclusive trajectory of tourism development has benefited and improved the lives of a significant share of local community members.

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