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Changing Livelihoods in Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa (2002–2016): Diminishing Employment and Expanding Social Protection

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Despite long-standing patterns of agrarian change in South and Southern Africa, rural locales remain home to millions of people, characterised by widespread poverty and vulnerability. This is evident in South Africa's former 'homelands', the site where this study examined changes in rural livelihoods over a 14-year period. Detailed survey data (collected in 2002 and 2016) from two villages in the Pondoland region of Eastern Cape province, and augmented by in-depth fieldwork, are analysed to explore the drivers of contemporary livelihood change. Key livelihood activities are examined, namely paid employment, social grant receipt, horticulture and livestock production, marine-resource and firewood harvesting. So too are changes within, and between, these diverse livelihood activities over time. Both monetised (income-earning) activities, and 'unremunerated' or unmonetised activities (for example, subsistence agriculture or marine-resource harvesting) are measured, aggregated and compared, in order to consider the drivers, consequences and prospective future trajectories of livelihood change.

Key findings for impoverished households in the villages are that waged work has decreased significantly, while expanding social welfare provision has prevented plunges into deeper poverty. Agriculture and marine-resource harvesting remain dynamic, albeit unevenly engaged in by villagers. Amid these larger patterns, local-level variations are evident, with discrepant employment and agricultural production patterns across villages. The role of the state is ambiguous, being both a restrictor and enabler of local livelihoods. As jobs and other livelihood opportunities diminish, the villagers express frustration with the state, but remain simultaneously heavily reliant on state fiscal transfers, through grants and public employment schemes. The findings speak not only to the dynamics of rural livelihoods in South Africa's former homelands; they also point to changes in rural dwellers' livelihoods, within contexts of agrarian change, rural

dispossession, inequality and receding prospects for employment, increasingly evident across the global south.

Keywords: livelihoods; rural; social protection; Pondoland; Eastern Cape; South Africa

Introduction

Livelihoods in the rural parts of South Africa's former 'homelands' have long been a topic of interest. Widespread poverty reflects the historical legacy of colonialism and apartheid, and the failure of the post-apartheid state to reverse it. Both a long tradition of inquiry and an array of development interventions (detailed later) have failed to fully address poverty and vulnerability. This failure of development in the former homelands partially stems from inadequate understandings of local contexts and livelihoods.¹

Livelihoods research is well suited to detailed understanding of this context; the manner in which rural dwellers diversify and combine activities, how they draw on assets and capabilities, and how households' survival strategies and social relations shape these choices all warrant attention.² Livelihood activities are multiple and interdependent and ought therefore not be viewed in isolation, but rather in terms of 'portfolios', where multiple activities relate to and complement each other, and where management of livelihood risks is an important aspect.³ Drivers of livelihood change straddle 'external' factors (such as food prices or labour market change), and internal factors (such as evolving aspirations and traditions), and are required to adequately understand livelihoods and the impacts their future prospects and development interventions.

A comprehensive understanding of livelihood dynamics benefits from combining of both deep ('intensive'), and broad ('extensive') inquiry. An intensive approach serves to illuminate the specificity of activities and contexts, and is complemented by extensive detailed survey data, to allow for the diversity of activities, their relative prevalence and, ideally, change over time to be considered. Others have identified the need for this combined approach.⁴ This article accordingly combines extended ethnographic study in the two villages (intermittently between 2001 and 2018) with two waves (2002 and 2016) of an in-depth survey of all households (273 in 2016), within the villages. The study thus contributes novel insights into processes of livelihood change in the former Transkei, a homeland area in what is now the Eastern Cape, and considers the wider and future implications of these changes.

A distinctive quality of the analysis is the focus on livelihood 'portfolios' and their change over time. For this exercise, significant household livelihood activities are aggregated (at village level) to show the relative importance of each, and compare the contributions of monetised (income-generating) and non-monetised (or unremunerated) activities. Although a substitution or 'shadow value' is attributed to non-monetised livelihood activities in this exercise, these are typically not marked by straightforward exchanges of cash. This aggregation at village level also

1 K. Jacobson, 'From Betterment to Bt Maize – Agricultural Development and the Introduction of Genetically Modified Maize to South African Smallholders' (PhD thesis, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, 2013); T. Kepe and D. Tessaro, 'Trading-Off: Rural Food Security and Land Rights in South Africa', *Land Use Policy*, 36 (2014), pp. 267–74.

2 I. Scoones, *Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development* (Rugby, Practical Action Publishing, 2015); L. de Haan, 'Livelihoods in Development', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 38, 1 (2017), pp. 22–38.

3 E. Francis, 'Rural Livelihoods, Institutions and Vulnerability in the North West Province, South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 3 (2002), pp. 531–50.

4 C. Masunungure and S.E. Shackleton, 'Exploring Long-Term Livelihood and Landscape Change in Two Semi-Arid Sites in Southern Africa: Drivers and Consequences for Social-Ecological Vulnerability', *Land*, 7, 2 (2017), p. 50; S. Shackleton and M. Luckert, 'Changing Livelihoods and Landscapes in the Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa: Past Influences and Future Trajectories', *Land*, 4, 4 (2015), pp. 1060–89.

illuminates the discrepancies between the activities that are most significant for villagers (namely, labour-market-derived incomes and welfare grant receipt), and those that typically garner the most research and policy attention – namely agriculture, ecosystem services, and natural resource use. Flora Hajdu argues that the seemingly disproportionate concern with the latter – natural resource use – seems primarily motivated by concerns over ecological degradation, rather than the dearth of local livelihood opportunities.⁵ A livelihoods approach, through examining all activities together, and situating them in the broader structural and political economy context, promises the insights needed to better understand, and ultimately advance rural development.

This article begins by describing the broader social, economic, and environmental context of the former homelands of the Eastern Cape, reviewing the literature on historical transformations and recent changes. After describing the survey- and interview-based research methods, and the focal research villages, the changing portfolios of livelihood activities between 2002 and 2016 are discussed. The methodology by which monetised and non-monetary activities are comparable, to enable an analysis of the changing value of activities, both over time and relative to each other, is presented. Following this, changes in each significant livelihood activity (namely, employment, collecting social grant and remittance incomes, horticultural and livestock production, marine-resource and firewood harvesting) are discussed separately. The concluding section deliberates on the main findings, and considers future trajectories for rural livelihoods and their wider implications.

Literature Review: Changing Livelihoods in Rural Eastern Cape

While there are commonalities between the former homelands of South Africa and other former settler colonial societies of Southern and Eastern Africa, the distinct historical, social and ecological context of the homelands warrants a brief introduction. The late-19th-century, mining-led industrialisation of South Africa led to the expansion of commodity relations, and monetisation drew rural African men into systems of migratory labour. Racialised dispossession intensified from the early 20th century onwards, and with it incrementally growing crises in agriculture within the ethnic enclave of the ‘Native reserves’ (later ‘homelands’).⁶ These areas have long been incorporated into the wider political economy of South Africa, and characterised by ‘de-agrarianisation’ – the social, occupational and economic shift away from agriculture. These dynamics continued unabated in the second half of the 20th century with the rise of apartheid and creation of nominally independent ethnic ‘homelands’.⁷ From the 1970s this legacy of racialised, structural underdevelopment became exacerbated by declines in the demand for the cheap, low-skilled African labour historically needed by the industrial economy.⁸

Enduring into the post-apartheid period, these dynamics have created an impoverished and unemployed rural population, neither engaged in significant agricultural production, nor able to make the transition to scant industrial employment.⁹ The mid 1990s advent of democracy left existing property relations, along with poverty, largely unchanged. The South African state has partially responded to poverty through the expansion of social protection,

5 F. Hajdu, ‘Local Worlds: Rural Livelihoods in Eastern Cape, South Africa’ (PhD thesis, Linköping University, 2006).

6 H. Wolpe, ‘Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid’, *Economy and Society*, 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425–56; C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, 2nd edition, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988).

7 L. Bank and G. Minkley, ‘Going Nowhere Slowly? Land, Livelihoods and Rural Development in the Eastern Cape’, *Social Dynamics*, 31,1 (2005), pp. 1–38.

8 A. Black and H. Gerwel, ‘Shifting the Growth Path to Achieve Employment Intensive Growth in South Africa’, *Development Southern Africa*, 31, 2 (2014), pp. 241–56.

9 D. Neves and A. du Toit, ‘Rural Livelihoods in South Africa: Complexity, Vulnerability and Differentiation’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13, 1 (2013), pp. 93–115.

including (albeit often uneven) public housing, education and health provisioning and the expansion of cash pensions and welfare grants paid to approximately a third of the population, mainly the impoverished elderly, caregivers of children and disabled.¹⁰ Meanwhile, rural South Africa remains bifurcated into the formerly ‘white’ countryside where commercial agriculture takes place and the communal areas of the former homelands marked by waning smallholder agriculture.

Previous studies of the communal areas of the rural Eastern Cape, relevant to understanding livelihoods, include seminal works examining the colonial period,¹¹ and changes following the colonial encounter.¹² Apartheid policies and interventions, including compulsory mid-century ‘betterment’ villagisation¹³ often adversely affected local livelihoods. Within the post-apartheid period the dynamism and ‘hybridity’ of rural livelihoods has been noted.¹⁴ Many contemporary studies have focused on specific livelihood activities, particularly on cultivation,¹⁵ including of cash crops such as marijuana,¹⁶ but also on livestock,¹⁷ forest resources¹⁸ and grasses.¹⁹ Apart from national labour force and census data, dedicated research into activities such as informal employment and self-employment in the region is uncommon. However, various failed interventions and schemes for employment creation and income generation have been examined (discussed below).

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- 10 J. Seekings and N. Nattrass, *Policy, Politics and Poverty in South Africa* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2015).
 - 11 J.M. Feely, *The Early Farmers of Transkei, Southern Africa, Before AD 1870*, Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology (Oxford, BAR, 1987); P. McAllister, ‘Rural Production, Land Use and Development Planning in Transkei: A Critique of the Transkei Agricultural Development Study’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 11, 2 (1992), pp. 200–22.
 - 12 M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London, Oxford University Press, 1936); W. Beinart, ‘Transkeian Smallholders and Agrarian Reform’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 11, 2 (1992), pp. 178–200; Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*.
 - 13 W. Beinart and C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890–1930* (London, James Currey, 1987); C. de Wet, *Moving Together, Drifting Apart: Betterment Planning and Villagisation in a South African Homeland* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1995); D.A. Fay, ‘“The Trust Is Over! We Want to Plough!”: Land, Livelihoods and Reverse Resettlement in South Africa’s Transkei’ (PhD thesis, Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2003).
 - 14 Hajdu, ‘Local Worlds’; Neves and du Toit, ‘Rural Livelihoods in South Africa’; A. du Toit and D. Neves, ‘The Government of Poverty and the Arts of Survival: Mobile and Recombinant Strategies at the Margins of the South African Economy’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41, 5 (2014), pp. 833–53.
 - 15 M. de la Hey, and W. Beinart, ‘Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields? A Case Study’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 4 (2016), pp. 753–70; Jacobson, ‘From Betterment to Bt Maize’; D. Blair, C.M. Shackleton and P.J. Mograbi, ‘Cropland Abandonment in South African Smallholder Communal Lands: Land Cover Change (1950–2010) and Farmer Perceptions of Contributing Factors’, *Land*, 7, 4 (2018), pp. 121–41; C.M. Shackleton, P.J. Mograbi, S. Drimie, D. Fay, P. Hebinck, M.T. Hoffman, K. Maciejewski and W. Twine, ‘Deactivation of Field Cultivation in Communal Areas of South Africa: Patterns, Drivers and Socio-Economic and Ecological Consequences’, *Land Use Policy*, 82 (2019), pp. 686–99; P. Hebinck, N. Mtati and C. Shackleton, ‘More Than Just Fields: Reframing Degradation in Landscapes and Livelihoods’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 61 (2018), pp. 323–34.
 - 16 T. Kepe, ‘*Cannabis Sativa* and Rural Livelihoods in South Africa: Politics of Cultivation, Trade and Value in Pondoland’, *Development Southern Africa*, 20, 5 (2003), pp. 605–15.
 - 17 A. Ainslie, 2005. ‘Farming Cattle, Cultivating Relationships: Cattle Ownership and Cultural Politics in Peddie District, Eastern Cape’, *Social Dynamics*, 31, 1 (2005), pp. 129–56.
 - 18 C. Shackleton and S. Shackleton, ‘The Importance of Non-Timber Forest Products in Rural Livelihood Security and as Safety Nets: A Review of Evidence from South Africa’, *South African Journal of Science*, 100, 11 (2004), pp. 658–64.
 - 19 T. Kepe, ‘Use, Control and Value of Craft Material – *Cyperus Textilis*: Perspectives from a Mpondo Village, South Africa’, *South African Geographical Journal*, 85, 2 (2003), pp. 152–7.

In terms of agrarian and rural transitions, the literature echoes the long-term shift away from a reliance on agriculture and land-based livelihoods²⁰ already noted. Yet conceptualisations of rural development in the former homelands are in many cases dominated by the notion of its primacy.²¹ Development planning is often sector based²² and overlooks the diverse ranges of household livelihoods activities. This has frequently led to failure of development interventions. Projects and programmes are often hamstrung by their paucity of local consultation and understanding of rural lives and livelihoods, simultaneously with a tendency to narrowly focus on local ‘mindsets’ for identifying both problems and solutions, ignoring wider structural contexts and determinants.²³ The result is a litany of failed agricultural interventions within the Eastern Cape – including the Massive Food Production Programme (MFPP);²⁴ the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, Eastern Cape (AsgiSA EC)²⁵ and the Siyazondla Homestead Food Production Programme.²⁶ Attempts at job creation, including tourism development interventions,²⁷ microfinance for self-employment and community-based work creation initiatives,²⁸ and the parastatal Magwa Tea plantation²⁹ suffer similar weaknesses.

In her doctoral thesis, Flora Hajdu reported on her 2002 survey of livelihoods activities and portfolios in all households in two villages – the data used as a baseline also in this article.³⁰ Hajdu analysed the relative importance of various livelihood activities at an aggregate household and village level, through imputing the monetary value of each, including non-monetised activities, and comparing their contributions to total livelihood portfolios. This analysis revealed that agriculture and natural resource use, as well as remittances from migrants, were of relatively minor value compared to local (formal- and informal-sector) employment and state welfare transfers. Local employment, although far from widely available or well paid, was in terms of value

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- 20 D.F. Bryceson, ‘Gender and Generational Patterns of African Deagrarianization: Evolving Labour and Land Allocation in Smallholder Peasant Household Farming, 1980–2015’, *World Development*, 113 (2019), pp. 60–72.
- 21 D. Neves, ‘Reconsidering Rural Development: Using Livelihood Analysis to Examine Rural Development in the Former Homelands of South Africa’, *PLAAS Research Report* no. 54 (Cape Town, Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, 2017).
- 22 R. Slater, ‘Differentiation and Diversification: Changing Livelihoods in Qwaqwa, South Africa, 1970–2000’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 3 (2002), pp. 599–614.
- 23 K. Jacobson, ‘The Massive Food Production Programme: A Case Study of Agricultural Policy Continuities and Changes’, in P. Hebinck and B. Cousins (eds), *In the Shadow of Policy: Everyday Practices in South African Land and Agrarian Reform* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2013); F. Hajdu, K. Jacobson, L. Salomonsson and E. Friman, ‘“But Tractors Can’t Fly”: A Transdisciplinary Analysis of Neoliberal Agricultural Development Interventions in South Africa’, *International Journal of Transdisciplinary Research*, 6, 1 (2012), pp. 24–51.
- 24 Jacobson, ‘The Massive Food Production Programme’; Z. Madyibi, ‘The Massive Food Production Programme: Does It Work?’, in Hebinck and Cousins (eds), *In the Shadow of Policy*, pp. 217–30; K. Fischer and F. Hajdu, ‘Does Raising Maize Yields Lead to Poverty Reduction? A Case Study of the Massive Food Production Programme in South Africa’, *Land Use Policy*, 46 (2015), 304–13.
- 25 Hajdu *et al.*, ‘But Tractors Can’t Fly’.
- 26 D. Fay, ‘Cultivators in Action, Siyazondla Inaction? Trends and Potentials in Homestead Cultivation’, in Hebinck and Cousins (eds), *In the Shadow of Policy*, pp. 247–62; H. de Klerk, ‘“Still Feeding Ourselves”: Everyday Practices of the Siyazondla Homestead Food Production Programme in Mhshshe’, in Hebinck and Cousins (eds), *In the Shadow of Policy*, pp. 231–46.
- 27 B. Cousins and T. Kepe, ‘Decentralisation when Land and Resource Rights are Deeply Contested: A Case Study of the Mkambati Eco-Tourism Project on the Wild Coast of South Africa’, *European Journal of Development Research*, 16, 1 (2004), pp. 41–54; Z.M. Ntshona and E. Lahiff, *Community-Based Eco-Tourism on the Wild Coast, South Africa: The Case of the Amadiba Trail* (Brighton, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2003).
- 28 Hajdu, ‘Local Worlds’.
- 29 T. Kepe, ‘Magwa Tea Venture in South Africa: Politics, Land and Economics’, *Social Dynamics*, 31, 1 (2005), pp. 261–79.
- 30 Hajdu, ‘Local Worlds’.

more significant than all natural-resource-based harvesting and use³¹ (also see [Table 2](#) and [Figure 1](#)). The detailed picture from 2002 was re-examined in the present study in 2016. The comparison of 2002 and 2016, revealing the most interesting changes, is detailed in the results section.

Data Collection

The data draw on surveys carried out in 2002 and 2016 of all households in two villages (a total of 273 households in 2016), complemented by in-depth interviews, extensive ethnographic fieldwork, and participant observation. Fieldwork was undertaken primarily by Flora Hajdu (from 2001 to 2014), and Stefan Granlund (from 2016 to 2018). The respective researchers forged deep contacts with the villages, each living in local households for several months. In between fieldwork periods, contact was maintained with villagers via phone, e-mail and social media.

The survey drew on in-depth knowledge of livelihood activities gleaned through observations and interviews. Fieldwork was conducted with the aid of socially adept, locally trusted, fluent English-speaking research assistants, some of whom worked in both surveys. The surveys were comparable, with a few minor amendments made in 2016, to ensure new activities were captured. The survey questionnaire included items on household composition, formal and informal employment, remittances, social grants, natural resource use, energy sources, assets, livestock and other agricultural activities, health, and perceptions of livelihood and food security. Survey data were validated through the in-depth qualitative interviews with villagers, and the participant observation during the cumulative 18 months spent in the village by the researchers. Activities and concurrent development initiatives in the area were followed and documented.

The survey results presented below were analysed through calculations presented as percentages of total households engaging in activities, with differences between 2002 and 2016 shown ([Tables 1](#) and [3, 4, 5, 6, 7](#)). The exception is the complex calculation of relative value of livelihoods (in [Table 2](#) and [Figure 2](#)) (to aid comprehensibility the calculation is explained adjacent to the table). Data interpretation was informed by the extended ethnographic fieldwork in the villages, ongoing dialogue with the research assistants, and cross-checked during research dissemination visits to the villages.³² In this article we report mainly on the survey, whereas in forthcoming articles we discuss the interview material in more detail.

The Two Villages: Changing Livelihoods, 2002–2016

The two case study villages, Cutwini and Manteku (marked in [Figure 1](#)), are located in Pondoland, a distinct area within the former Transkei, in the sub-tropical coastal strip alongside the Indian Ocean. They are part of the scenic Wild Coast, an area of high tourism potential (and concomitant livelihood-making opportunities). Yet the villages are relatively isolated, with poor infrastructure and limited services. Located in a ‘deep rural’ area the villages are relatively ethnically homogenous, demographically stable and socially cohesive communities.

Salient differences exist between the villages. Cutwini is more populous than Manteku (see [Table 1](#)) with larger grazing and agricultural lands; while Manteku is closer to neighbouring villages, its (unpaved) roads are more passable and traversed by a regular bus

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Findings were also presented and validated at a seminar with Eastern Cape-based policy makers and researchers in November 2018 at the Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council.

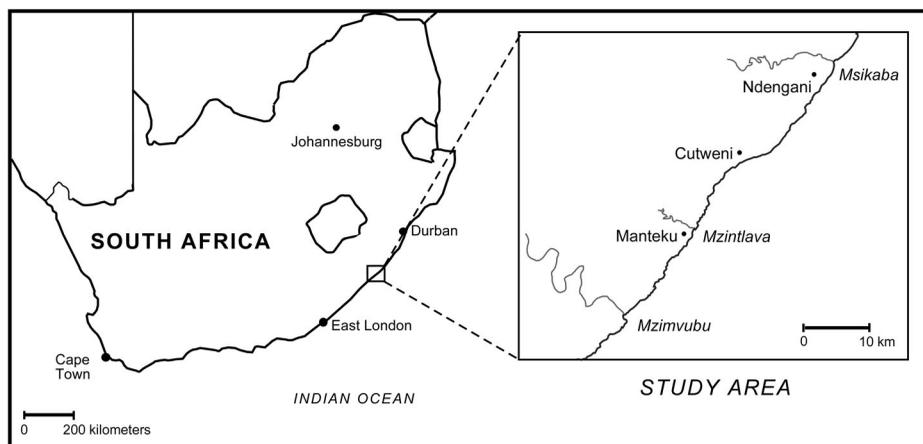


Figure 1. Map of South Africa with detail showing the location of the two case study villages, Cutwini and Manteku.

service. Manteku has easier access to the sea and estuaries, while from Cutwini the sea is less accessible, two to three kilometres beyond steep cliffs. Neither village had electricity prior to 2012. Water is collected from local springs (via communal water tanks in Manteku) and, for some, in household rainwater tanks.

An important distinction between the villages is that Cutwini was subject to the forced villagisation into nucleated, linear settlements of ‘betterment’ in the 1960s and 1970s. Plots are in close proximity and only about 0.3 hectares, often leaving only 0.2 hectares for a kitchen (food) garden around homesteads. Small plots are a constraint for those who wish to cultivate, in a context where field cultivation has increasingly been abandoned (discussed below). In 2002 many Cutwini-based informants expressed reluctance to move away or enlarge their gardens beyond their historical allocation. By 2016 more new households had been established in a similar grid-like pattern on 0.3-hectare sites. However, those who desired bigger gardens had in some cases selected plots at points in the grid where gardens could be expanded.

In Manteku, forced relocations occurred on a smaller scale, and were only dimly recalled by some of the elderly. Manteku’s scattered homesteads are located in a hillier terrain that is more difficult to cultivate. The soil is more fertile than the sandy soils of Cutwini, however, and many households had larger gardens in 2002 (up to half a hectare). Even if households had a plot large enough to make a kitchen garden, the proportion that were actually cultivating their plot had fallen by 10% in both villages by the time of the 2016 survey (Table 1).

Between 2002 and 2016, the number of households in both villages grew, by 19 per cent and 14 per cent in Cutwini and Manteku respectively (Table 1). Total population numbers, however, increased only slightly in Manteku and decreased in Cutwini. Moderate demographic growth reflects South Africa’s ‘demographic transition’ to lower fertility rates, universally associated with development, and the fact that the number of households still grew is due to ‘household unbundling’³³ to smaller average household sizes. Cutwini had a discernible tendency towards the earlier establishment of households by young people (possibly enabled by greater land availability), in contrast with the larger, multigenerational households commonly found elsewhere, including Manteku. Informants confirmed these

33 U. Pillay, ‘Urban Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Context, Evolution and Future Direction’, *Urban Forum*, 19 (2008), pp. 109–32.

Table 1. Basic data on households, livelihood activities and assets for Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016.

Household characteristics	Cutwini		Manteku	
	2002	2016	2002	2016
Population (total no. of persons)	944	918	588	608
No. of households (excluding empty/abandoned sites)	146	174	87	99
No. of households that have moved into village from outside the area since 2002	4 (2%) ^a		4 (4%)	
No. of households established by persons moving within the village since 2002	54 (31%)		30 (30%)	
No. of homestead sites abandoned since 2002	38 (26%)		30 (30%)	
No. of households with local employment (daily commuting possible)	103 (71%)	87 (50%)	40 (46%)	19 (19%)
No. of households having a kitchen (food) garden	138 (95%)	149 (86%)	61 (70%)	62 (63%)
No. of households owning water tank	2 (1%)	35 (20%)	2 (2%)	19 (19%)
No. of households owning television set	26 (11%)	100 (57%)	6 (7%)	42 (42%)
No. of households owning a cell phone	22 (15%)	154 (89%)	11 (13%)	83 (84%)

^aAll figures in brackets show the percentage of total households in the respective village and year.

dynamics, which are also reflected in the steeper drop in household size (from an average of 6.5 persons to 5.3 in Cutwini, compared to a drop from 6.8 to 6.1 in Manteku).

The table also reveals intra-village movement. Consistent with the demographic cycle of household formation and dissolution, some homestead sites were abandoned, and others newly established. Only two to four per cent of the households in 2016 migrated in to the village during the preceding 14 years, a comparatively low rate of mobility.

Ethnographic enquiry suggests changes over the past 14 years in housing, assets, diet, and lifestyles, which resonate with changes elsewhere across rural South Africa and the global south. One of the first priorities when villagers acquire resources is upgrading physical dwellings. Mud floors are replaced by cement, and thatched roofs by corrugated iron. While *rondavels* (circular huts) were very common in 2002, these have to a large extent been replaced by multi-room rectilinear homesteads. This has happened to a significant extent in both villages, but especially in Cutwini. Prioritising the house and homestead is notable also in how many households have acquired relatively expensive rainwater tanks (Table 1). In terms of assets, ownership of cellular (mobile) phones has increased most, with a rise of 600 per cent in Cutwini and 650 per cent in Manteku. Television ownership has also increased by several hundred per cent. Villagers also prioritise store-bought lounge furniture, now owned by 29 per cent/26 per cent (Cutwini/Manteku) of households (no data for 2002, but it was uncommon). In the course of 14 years, evenings spent sitting on mats around the fire or on wooden benches in non-electrified kitchens have been increasingly replaced by sitting on sofas watching television.

Marked changes in diets include increased consumption of meat, processed commercial snacks, sweets and carbonated soft drinks (soda) – all of which are comparatively expensive. A calculation exercise in 2016, with an average size/average income household showed 25 per cent of food expenditure was on processed snacks, sweets and soft drinks. Most households in 2016 relied on supermarket-purchased mealie meal (or *pap* – maize porridge) as the staple food, but with a clear shift in youth preferences away from home-produced *pap*. These changes are intertwined with increased exposure to the mass media, advertising, and urban-based and popular culture, evident among the younger generation.³⁴ Fundiswa,³⁵ a woman in her early forties, explained: ‘It’s our time now. We are educated, we don’t want that stuff, we want the stuff they have and eat in the cities. We don’t want to plough the fields’.³⁶ Youth

34 C. Jeske, ‘Are Cars the New Cows? Changing Wealth Goods and Moral Economies in South Africa’, *American Anthropologist*, 118, 3 (2016), pp. 483–94.

35 Pseudonyms are used.

36 Interview, April 2017.

disinclination to embrace an agrarian lifestyle or identity is echoed elsewhere in the literature as well, and discussed below.³⁷ These patterns of consumption require cash and are difficult to satisfy through own-use farming and livestock production.

In reply to a survey question as to whether life had become better or worse since 2002, 52 per cent and 55 per cent (Cutwini and Manteku respectively) answered 'better', 12 per cent/9 per cent 'the same', and a uniform 35 per cent 'worse'. This resonates with survey findings pointing to increasing intra-village social stratification. In interviews, informants reported that life has improved in terms of access to electricity, better-quality housing, more assets and the regular social grant income (for recipients). Food insecurity also dropped, with the majority of households reporting worrying about not having enough food to eat 'all the time' in 2002, but a majority claiming to only worry 'sometimes' or 'never' in 2016. Conversely, life was reported to be worse as vulnerability increased for households without jobs or social grants, as noted also by others.³⁸ Many households did not yet own televisions, refrigerators or lounge furniture (35 per cent/51 per cent of households respectively in Cutwini/Manteku in 2016), and were living in poor-quality (i.e. non-weatherproof) structures. The fact that 29 per cent/31 per cent of households (Cutwini/Manteku) 'sometimes' experienced not having any food in the house still points to food insecurity being an issue, despite dropping significantly.

However, it is conceptually difficult to draw precise conclusions about improvements exclusively from villagers' self-reports, as expressed needs often increase over time. What might have been aspirational in 2002 (for example, owning a television or a cellular phone, and consuming meat and soft drinks on special occasions) is increasingly viewed as a minimum social necessity – a shift unique neither to rural areas nor southern Africa.

Although perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable or comfortable existence have increased, they remain relatively modest. Amid a century-old pattern of urban migration from historically rural 'labour-sending' areas, the researchers also encountered a counter-narrative. Some young people eschewed urban migration and attempting to access all amenities of city life, instead intending to remain in the village, hoping to access sufficient income for food and clothing, and to build a homestead with furniture and TV, electricity and a water tank.

Over the past 14 years the villages have been the focus of several development interventions. Cutwini received several successive state- and donor-run agricultural development programmes. By 2009 most villagers had stopped cultivating their fields, relying on various development projects that typically ran for a year or two before folding. Project failings included sporadic communication with the villagers, and elementary errors such as the provision of tractors unable to cross a river to access fields.³⁹ By 2016 villagers were nominally 'renting' their fields to a new development project, which did not even engage them in harvesting, and had folded entirely by 2018. The project's reputed failings included omitting to conduct soil analysis and unexpectedly discovering soils to be sandy and salty; inadequate storage that led to rodents decimating the harvest; and logistical delays which saw the uncollected crop begin to rot before being transported. Local informants suggested that the project 'overspent on inputs', and it was claimed locally that the R11-million project (targeting the larger Lambasi area) sustained a R5 million loss.

Similarly, Manteku was identified for a Department of Land Affairs and Agriculture microfinance programme (2002–04), which ultimately funded no local activities and fuelled resentment. Subsequently a R670,000, EU-funded community (horticultural) nursery in

37 De la Hey and Beinart, 'Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields?'; Blair *et al.*, 'Cropland Abandonment'.

38 Neves and du Toit, 'Rural Livelihoods in South Africa'; Shackleton and Luckert, 'Changing Livelihoods and Landscapes'.

39 See Hajdu *et al.*, 'But Tractors Can't Fly'.

Manteku in 2005 soon fell into disuse due to lack of community ownership and little evident planning for project sustainability. Finally, both villages were included within a larger EU-funded community tourism initiative along the Wild Coast that promised many local jobs that never materialised.

These unsuccessful development projects made the inhabitants of both villages sceptical of development interventions, with resentment and a sense of being overlooked by the state more emphatically expressed in Manteku. Here local work opportunities decreased significantly, as public employment schemes largely bypassed the village. The fruitless projects also coincided with the state's increased enforcement of marine protection regulations with guards regularly patrolling the coast, and the demolition of (illegally built) holiday cottages in Manteku. The erstwhile owners of these cottages had been petty patrons and casual employers of Manteku residents, and their eviction caused local protests: armed guards ended up overseeing the demolition. The coast remains monitored from the air for illegal building, recurrently reminding Manteku residents of the state's role in restricting their livelihoods, while failing to provide alternatives.

Relative Value of Livelihood Activities: A Comparison between 2002 and 2016

While various studies have examined livelihood activities in the former homelands, scholars have less commonly attempted to establish the *relative* values of different livelihood activities. Hajdu argues, however, that such exercises are important in order to grasp why people prioritise specific activities over others.⁴⁰ In line with the broad livelihoods approach, in-depth understanding of livelihoods in relation to each other is key to grasping the potential for improvement and interventions. In this section, such a calculation is presented, whereby various livelihood activities are valued and aggregated at village level through a calculation that tallies up both monetised and non-monetary activities. Aggregating values at village level helps to look beyond the specificity of individual households in order to gain a larger perspective, showing that although there may be households with larger herds of cattle, or well-paying jobs, these cases are exceptions at the village level. The results of the calculations between 2002 and 2016 are compared for each village in [Table 2](#) and [Figure 1](#), as are the changes and the processes underlying them.

The calculations used to assess the relative importance of livelihood activities draw on a common metric for analysis, namely the imputed value of various livelihood activities aggregated at village level. The monetary value attributed to livelihood activities in this analysis should be understood first in broad and approximate order-of-magnitude terms, and, second, with the specific purpose of facilitating comparison of different livelihood activities. Although other important aspects of environmental resources – such as providing fresher produce and better nutrition than store-bought foods or providing food security also if money is lacking – are important, they are not readily ascribed a monetary value. If such values had been added to the calculation it is likely that they would have boosted the value component of natural-resource-based livelihood activities.

The easiest calculation was aggregating social grants, since the value of each is known and surveyed. In terms of employment,⁴¹ the survey data captured how many

40 Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

41 We differentiate between local employment (to which it is possible to commute while residing in the village) and labour migration (with daily residency away from the village).

people engaged in what employment, within each household, which together with the average approximate income for each occupation was used to compute the size of employment income, at village level. Wages were based on labour-market-indexed approximations of common occupations (discussed in greater detail in the next section). The ‘employment’ category includes informal self-employment (for example, taxi driving, running small shops and other personal or community services) and temporary jobs in public employment schemes.

In the case of urban labour migrants, part of their earnings is used to subsist elsewhere. Hence, a set of criteria was devised for estimating each labour migrant’s approximate monthly contribution. Estimates are contingent on the migrant’s occupation, relationship to the household (for example, household head, son etc.) and other incomes present in the household. They also take into account that remittances can be intermittent, for example to cover school fees, Christmas gifts, or house repairs.

The question of how to assign value to natural resources is widely debated, with attempts to assign strictly monetary values criticised for several different reasons.⁴² In rural Eastern Cape, Charlie Shackleton and Sheona Shackleton estimated the use of each resource and indexed it to the local sale prices, but arrived at seemingly very high estimates of the direct-use values, for example, arguing that firewood has a use value of over R3000 per household annually.⁴³ In these villages however, local trade in firewood is very limited and households unable to collect firewood typically substitute it with paraffin or liquid petroleum gas (LPG), which in 2004 cost approximately R500 a year.⁴⁴ Douglas Sheil and Sven Wunder similarly warn of the difficulties in ascribing values to natural resources (and point out that they come to radically different results).⁴⁵ Instead, they stress the importance of understanding resource users’ motives, and their weighting of costs and benefits when choosing between options. In this article, substitution values are used, i.e. the value of the commodity villagers indicated they would (or do) substitute a given natural resource with – for example, firewood was routinely substituted with paraffin in 2002, but was eclipsed by electricity in 2016.

Similarly, the imputed value of agricultural products and marine-resource revenues used the sale price of the proportion of crops/livestock/fish etc. actually sold. The value accorded to such products that were consumed was the market price of the food (or animal feed) it substituted for. The article relies on the survey and interviews for this supporting data, for example, frequency of fishing, average number of fish caught, how often fish are consumed or sold (and if sold, how much is earned; if eaten, the value of a comparable comestible). Figures could differ between the two villages, for example, in Manteku fish were readily sold to tourists, earning more income than in isolated Cutwini, where villagers were more inclined to consume the fish themselves. The converse was true of crayfish, as by 2016 a registered buyer with a refrigerated truck was procuring directly from Cutwini’s villagers. These complexities were factored into the calculations.

The exception to the above approach is cattle: while the ‘meat value’ of cattle slaughtered in the village was tallied, the total estimated market value of cattle in the village (divided by 12 months) is indicated in [Table 2](#) (bottom row), instead of simply including a value for

42 T. Kepe, ‘Beyond the Numbers: Understanding the Value of Vegetation to Rural Livelihoods in Africa’, *Geoforum*, 39, 2 pp. 958–68; D. Sheil and S. Wunder, ‘The Value of Tropical Forest to Local Communities: Complications, Caveats, and Cautions’, *Conservation Ecology*, 6, 2 (2002).

43 Shackleton and Shackleton, ‘The Importance of Non-Timber Forest Products’.

44 Hajdu, ‘Local Worlds’.

45 Sheil and Wunder, ‘The Value of Tropical Forest’.

cattle sold, the reason being that cattle are assets more comparable to capital goods or encumbered bank savings. Cattle ownership is surrounded by social norms that preclude casual cash sales (as several have noted).⁴⁶ No households surveyed engaged in cattle sales with any regularity.⁴⁷ Instead, cattle were mainly kept for ceremonial slaughter and bridewealth, and as investments only liquidated (i.e. sold) in response to major shocks, or to fund significant household projects (such as house building).

Table 2 thus shows the aggregated village averages for different livelihood activities in 2002 and 2016 (to show changes, 2002 figures are provided with inflation-adjusted figures in brackets). The percent increase/decrease in each category was calculated based on the inflation-adjusted figures. The table data are presented as pie charts in Figure 2, showing the share of total village livelihoods that each activity accounts for. Each type of livelihood activity will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show several significant changes in the relative value of various livelihood activities between 2002 and 2016. A key source of livelihoods in the villages in 2002 consisted of (usually poorly paid) waged local employment at the tea plantation or in other local formal- or informal-sector employment. Even though these jobs made a small contribution to household-level livelihoods, their aggregate value at village level is notable. The value of local employment waned in both villages to 2016, with a decline of 30 per cent and 53 per cent in Cutwini and Manteku respectively, representing a significant real decline. In Cutwini much of this related specifically to the declining employment possibilities at the parastatal Magwa Tea's nearby plantation, while Manteku showed stronger evidence of out-migration, which increased by 68 per cent. Receipt of social grants increased in both villages by over 250 per cent, with state cash transfers effectively coming to 'substitute' for declines in local employment.

Cultivation waned in importance in both villages, but more so in Manteku where field cultivation was abandoned entirely (discussed in the next section). Livestock declined in importance by 20 per cent in Cutwini, but increased slightly in Manteku, due to a sharp local rise in goat production, suited to local grazing conditions. In contrast to most other natural-resource-based livelihood activities, use of marine resources increased in value sharply in both villages. This includes shore angling (with fishing rods), and crayfish and mussel collection, which in total accounted for 3–4 per cent of total livelihood sources in 2002. By 2016, the total contribution of marine-resource use to local livelihoods had increased by approximately 200 per cent, due to increased marketing opportunities, and (in Cutwini) improved angling equipment (discussed later).

Firewood had a comparatively low value in both villages, but became scarcer in Manteku and was to a larger extent substituted by electricity in Cutwini by 2016. The values between 2002 and 2016 are however not directly comparable, since they are based on different substitution values (that is, paraffin in 2002 and electricity in 2016, as discussed above).

In total, the aggregate average village total of the imputed value of livelihood activities increased by 20 per cent in Manteku and 28 per cent in Cutwini. However, this is to a large extent due to the wider receipt of social grants, which obscures the waning of many other livelihood opportunities, particularly local employment. The estimated total value of cattle (the bottom row in Table 2) increased by more than 50 per cent, indicating accumulated wealth, however the percentage of households owning cattle simultaneously dropped (see

46 Cf. J. Ferguson, 'The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho', *Man*, 20, 4 (1985), pp. 647–74; L. Bank, 'Of Livestock and Deadstock: Entrepreneurship and Tradition on the South African Highveld', in D.F. Bryceon and V. Jamal (eds), *Farewell to Farms: De-Agrarianisation and Employment in Africa* (Aldershot, Ashgate, African Studies Research Centre Series, 1997), pp. 185–202.

47 This may well be different in other areas or neighbouring villages.

Table 2. Relative importance of various livelihood activities in Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016 (total village averages).

Type of livelihood activity	Cutwini			Manteku		
	2002 R/month /household (adjusted to 2016 inflation) ^a	2016 R/month /household	2002–2016 ^b percentage change	2002 R/month /household (adjusted to 2016 inflation) ^a	2016 R/month /household	2002–2016 ^b percentage change
No. of households	146	174		87	99	
Local employment	730 (1,570)	1,101	-30	768 (1652)	769	-53
Remittances from labour migrants	87 (187)	188	+0.5	87 (187)	315	+68
Social grants	189 (406)	52 persons	+286	19 persons	32 persons	+255
Cultivation	59 (127)	1,568	-29	213 (458)	1,624	-49
Livestock, pig and poultry production	115 (247)	90	-20	71 (153)	78	+6
Marine-resource harvesting	35 (75)	198	+217	73 (157)	167	+146
Firewood collection	30 (65)	238	-12	65 (140)	344	+45
Average total income/month	1,233 (2652)	3,399	+28	1,287 (2769)	3,336	+20
Total village value of cattle/12 months^c	799 (1718)	2,681	+56	307 (660)	1,159	+76

Each livelihood activity contributes on average the indicated amount of rand/month to the total household income. For comparisons, the 2002 figures are adjusted to 2016 inflation (in brackets) and the percent increase/decrease for each village indicated. The total value of cattle in the villages has been averaged in the same way for comparison. All values are in South African rand.

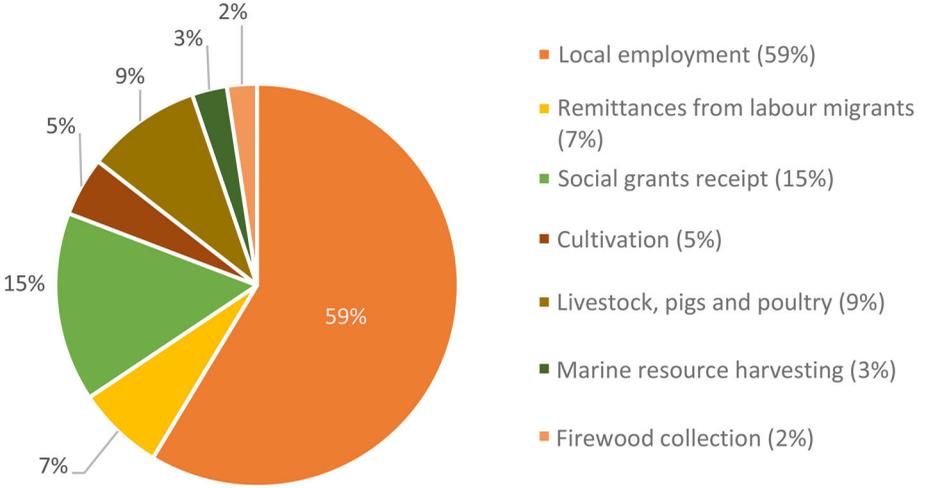
^aInflation was calculated using the webpage South African Inflation (<https://inflationcalc.co.za/>) which uses consumer price index data from Stats SA, the national statistical service of South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za/>). The inflation was calculated for the dates 15 April 2002 and 15 April 2016, approximately in the middle of data collection in both years.

^bPercentage increase/decrease was calculated using the figures from 2002 that have been adjusted to inflation. For example, for calculating employment in Cutwini: 1570-1101 = 469 > 469/1570 = 0.298 = -30%.

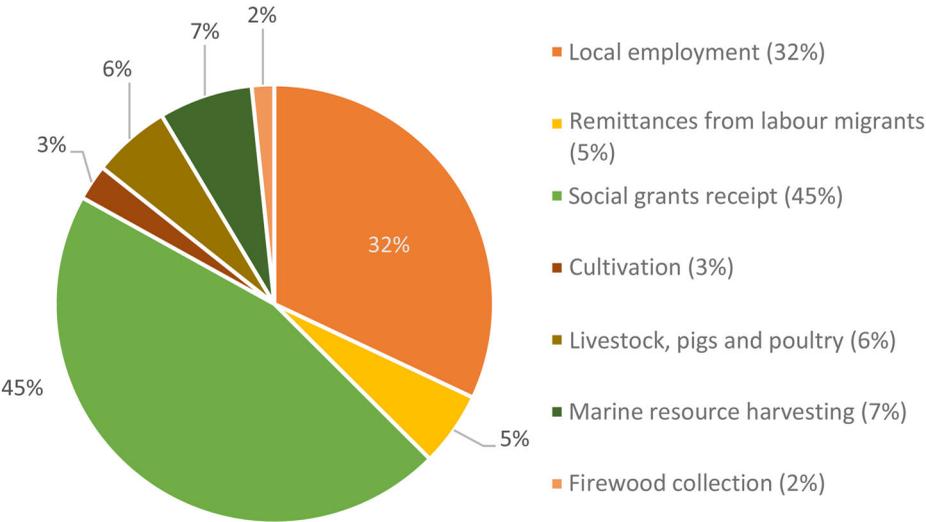
^cTotal value of cattle in the village was calculated on the basis of all the cattle being sold on the market. Cattle are included in the livestock calculation only based on their meat value. This is further discussed in the text.

Table 6). For example, in Cutwini 30 per cent of cattle are owned by only 2 per cent (three households). This points to increased village-level social differentiation, with a few households holding better-paying (usually formal-sector) employment and larger herds of cattle, whereas most other households have neither employment nor cattle.

The pie charts in Figure 2 show that the relative value of livelihoods sources has changed significantly, with local employment the most important contributor at village level in 2002, eclipsed by social grants by 2016. Even when the value of migrant remittances is added to the local employment earnings, social grants retain their primacy. Natural-resource-based

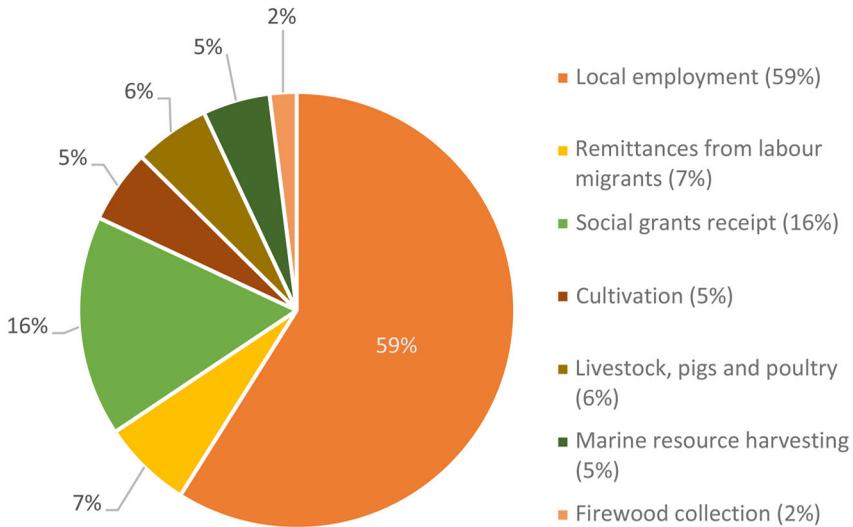


Cutwini 2002

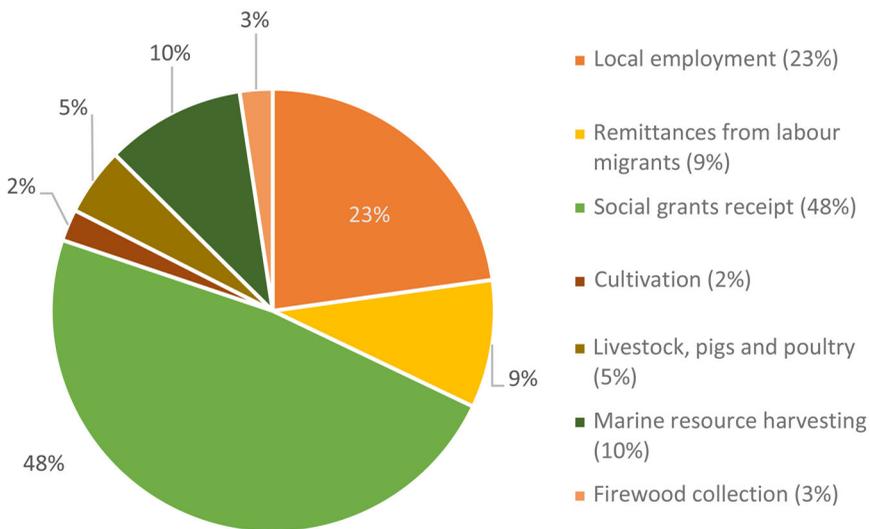


Cutwini 2016

Figure 2. Charts showing the share of different livelihood activities in the total village-level livelihood portfolio (Cutwini and Manteku, 2002 and 2016).



Manteku 2002



Manteku 2016

Figure 2. Continued.

livelihood activities changed little relative to other sources of livelihood making, with the exception of marine-resource use increasing in value, due to improved equipment, prices and marketing opportunities.

The results of this analysis show the trend of declining cultivation and employment and increased reliance on social grants observed elsewhere to be true also for these villages, with developments, however, being worse in Manteku.⁴⁸ Sheona Shackleton and Marty Luckert, presenting a survey of 170 households from two villages in Eastern

48 For example, Neves and du Toit, 'Rural Livelihoods in South Africa'.

Cape in 2011–12, make similar calculations of income and arrive at similar figures for remittances, cultivation, livestock, and natural resources (even if the precise composition of natural resources appears unclear).⁴⁹ A significant difference between that work and the present study is the higher contribution of local employment in Cutwini and Manteku, although it is unclear if they have included poverty relief and public works in local employment (as we have in the current study). In their findings, dependence on social grants is even higher than in our case. Manteku, where half of local jobs were lost and not replaced by other employment, is more similar to the villages presented by Shackleton and Luckert, suggesting that it might be Cutwini that is the outlier, especially in terms of access to (however erratic) local employment at the Magwa Tea plantation.

A reflection of the uneven-livelihoods-related development is that Manteku had also fallen behind Cutwini in terms of housing quality and asset ownership (Table 1). In the project feedback discussions held in 2018, Manteku's villagers were unsurprised at hearing about the negative trend at village level since 2002 and described their reliance on child support grants and pensions: '[a]ll we have here is the child grant, if you have a secondary school child you send the money there [to where the child is lodging] and you are left here drinking water', a woman said during the discussions. Even comparatively educated young people such as the research assistants have little realistic prospect of securing anything other than short-term piece work. Despair and disappointment with the government was voiced, including criticism of the eviction of the cottage owners and the litany of failed development projects, detailed above.

After this discussion of how livelihood activities have changed relative to each other in the two villages, the following section looks closely at how each specific livelihood activity changed between 2002 to 2016, and considers the potential future trajectories of each.

Changes in the Major Livelihood Activities, 2002–2016

This section presents in-depth discussion, including changes over time, of each type of livelihood activity, including local and migrant employment, social grant receipt, cultivation (horticulture), livestock (including poultry) production, marine-resource harvesting and firewood collection.

Local Employment

As mentioned above, attaining employment locally is a key aspiration in the villages, which is why it is here analysed distinctively from migrant work (outside the village).⁵⁰ A discernible group of village youth do not express plans for urban migration. Instead, they articulate a desire to remain in the village, but they do want to improve their lives and establish independent households. However, both matrimony and building a homestead are seen as impossible in the absence of wage income.

Local employment is divided into four sub-categories (see Table 3): public-sector employment; formal-sector employment; public employment schemes; and informal-sector employment (including self-employment). This disaggregation is helpful as the earnings, employment conditions, and security associated with each differs significantly.⁵¹

49 Shackleton and Luckert, 'Changing Livelihoods and Landscapes'.

50 'Local employment' is defined as work in the village, or to which it is possible to commute daily.

51 Note that 'formal-sector employment' refers to private-sector formal employment. While public-sector employment is almost invariably 'formal', it is associated with superior earnings, employment conditions and security. Hence the two are helpfully distinguished here.

In each household surveyed, everyone who reported working was categorised in terms of type of employment and earnings estimated based on locally informed estimates of average salaries (the survey did not elicit salary data, but the earnings of common occupations are knowable).⁵² An aggregated chart of local employment is presented in Table 3.⁵³ The table reveals quite different trajectories of local employment in the two villages.

In Cutwini, public-sector employment increased slightly, and wages appear higher than in the past. This is mainly due to the expansion of employment attached to local schools, particularly as assistant teachers, and in the school feeding programme. The number of Ntsubane State Forest employees locally resident declined from 2002 to 2016. However, the most striking decline in formal employment was due to job losses at the Magwa Tea plantation, wracked by widely reported mismanagement.⁵⁴ Many employees had left by 2016 due to low and erratically paid wages (which had however improved again by 2018). Public employment schemes also increased in the village, with several projects (including road repair) locally based between 2002 and 2016.

Larger shifts in employment reflect how some (especially with comparatively higher levels of education) secured more remunerative jobs, while unskilled jobs such as at the tea plantation disappeared, leaving many households bereft of any wage income. The expansion of social grants (primarily Child Support Grant) partially substituted for this, and trickled into the local economy, sustaining some retail, transport and building services.⁵⁵ The number of villagers engaged in informal work increased in Cutwini, earning incomes on average higher than for formal employment, and double the size of incomes from public employment schemes. Informal employment is thus a comparatively important activity in Cutwini.

Manteku had different patterns of local employment, with no increase in public-sector employment, mainly due to local state forest and nature conservation offices closing. Formal employment opportunities waned as a road building project ceased, and the (illegal) holiday cottages that previously hired locals were demolished by the state. Furthermore, the expansion of various public employment schemes (which improved conditions in Cutwini) appear to largely bypass Manteku – a common local complaint. Informal-sector activities also appeared particularly constrained by the stagnation of other employment and incomes in Manteku (even if remaining notable relative to other categories).

Comparing the two village totals, employment-derived incomes in Cutwini amounted, cumulatively, to approximately R107,000 per month in 2002, while the equivalent sum in Manteku was R67,000 per month (which had higher incomes per household). While the two villages were similar in terms of local employment incomes in 2002, by 2016 they diverged. Local employment earnings increased to R191,000 per month for Cutwini, but rose only marginally in Manteku to R76,000 per month, a reduction in real earnings after inflation (see Table 3). There has been a decrease in both villages in terms of people in local employment – from 0.63 persons working per household to 0.51 in Cutwini and, more dramatically, from 0.59 to 0.33 in Manteku.

52 In the vast majority of cases, unadjusted 2002 data are used, however, in a few specific cases adjustments were made in order to retrospectively improve 2002 salary data. Teachers' salaries specifically were systematically under-reported in 2002, and adjusted upwards after additional enquiries and documentary confirmation.

53 More detailed tables on local employment are available as supplemental material online only, via the JSAS website, and can be accessed at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2020.1773721>.

54 R. Hartle, 'Magwa Tea Estate Fights to Stay Afloat', *Daily Dispatch*, East London, 16 May 2016, available at <https://www.dispatchlive.co.za/news/2016-05-16-magwa-tea-estate-fights-to-stay-afloat/>, retrieved 17 May 2016. See also Kepe, 'Magwa Tea Venture'.

55 In 2002 the villages were at the beginning of the application process for Child Support Grant: a few households had received it for a month or two before the 2002 survey was completed, while others had not yet received it.

Table 3. Comparison of local employment in different categories in Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016.

Local employment by type	Approx. total income R/month (no. of persons in this employment)				Comments
	Cutwini		Manteku		
	2002	2016	2002	2016	
Public-sector employment^a	40,000 (10)	83,000 (13)	14,000 (8)	30,100 (6)	State, including school employees (incl. Low-skilled/part-time support staff)
Formal-sector employment	31,500 (51)	33,000 (10)	17,600 (18)	15,300 (5)	Tea plantation workers, daily commuters to town, employed drivers etc.
Public employment schemes	11,600 (18)	25,240 (41)	8,700 (12)	10,700 (13)	Coast Care, home-based care, and road building schemes etc.
Informal employment (for others or self-employment)	23,500 (13)	50,250 (25)	26,500 (13)	20,000 (9)	Local shops, taxi owners and drivers, tourism, sewing, building houses, child care etc.
Total for village	106,600 (92)	191,490 (89)	66,800 (51)	76,100 (33)	Fewer jobs, especially in Manteku
Average by number of households R/month/household (Working persons /household)	730 (0.63)	1,101 (0.51)	768 (0.59)	769 (0.33)	Income per household has decreased if adjusted for inflation, but jobs per household have decreased more

The table shows the number of persons involved in each employment category and an approximated monthly village total income in each employment category. The village totals and averages are set out in the bottom two rows.

^aPublic-sector employers usually receive relatively generous employment benefits and often have high levels of (consumer) debt deducted from their salary. This leads to under-reporting and makes it difficult to accurately record their earnings.

Also, jobs per household have decreased more than income per household, i.e. more persons are unemployed in 2016, and it is likely that inequality has increased.

The two villages have thus had quite different trajectories of employment in the intervening 14 years. Cutwini has experienced increased social differentiation, where households with secure employment are relatively better off, while others increasingly have no or precarious employment and/or are reliant on social grants. Manteku effectively experienced a shift in reliance from employment to social grants, with two out of three households reporting no employment-derived earners whatsoever (including public employment schemes or informal economic activities) by 2016. This precipitous decline was readily described by village residents in interviews. It is also reflected in patterns of increased out-migration, discussed in the next section.

Remittances from Labour Migrants

Table 2 reveals the average monetary sums that labour migrants contribute to their rural households in both years.⁵⁶ While the 2002 sum happens to be the same for both villages (R87), it has been averaged from different numbers of households, which potentially obscures significant differences between villages. Cutwini's remittances were sent by 30 labour migrants in 2002 and came to a higher sum per month per migrant than for Manteku, where 19 migrants sent remittances. Approximately 20 per cent of households, in both villages, received urban remittances. By 2016, both villages saw an increase in migration, with a third of households reporting an out-migrating member sending money. The sums remitted decreased significantly in Cutwini by 2016, from the inflation-adjusted sum R910/month/migrant to R629/month, but increased in Manteku from R856/month to R975/month. This probably reflects households in Cutwini having access to some local incomes, with those in Manteku more dependent on remittances. The percentage of (non-disabled) working-age adults who claimed in the survey to be unemployed remained steady at approximate 65 per cent in Manteku between 2002 and 2016. Some of the villagers who lost their jobs in the intervening years left to seek work in urban areas. Several men in Manteku were recruited into a specific construction company in Durban, owned by a former cottage owner.

Manteku appears characterised by patterns of long-term, male (often household head) migration, including into the male-dominated construction sector. This is redolent of apartheid and colonial-era patterns of formal male labour migration unaccompanied by family members, which historically facilitated, and necessitated, reinvestment in rural households. In contrast, Cutwini more closely typifies post-apartheid patterns of informal, contingent and oscillating migration, including of youth and women. Cutwini's migrants appear less likely to invest in establishing independent rural homesteads. These subtle dynamics occur against patterns of urbanisation, wherein remittances remain part of larger, complex household livelihood strategies, shaped by contextual, gendered and generational dynamics that can only be glimpsed here. The research suggests the complex interaction between waning rural employment opportunities and urban migration, where also social grants have become key resources to rural households and have reduced the pressure on urban kin to provide for rural families while struggling to survive on the periphery of the urban economy.

56 In the 2002 survey, households were only asked if they were receiving money from migrants and, in the calculations presented in Hajdu, 'Local Worlds', the full amounts of migrant worker salaries (then reported as ranging between R1,000 and R2,500) were included. Here, however, we have chosen to include only the sum likely to be remitted to the rural household every month (acknowledging that such sums can often be intermittent or seasonal, or in response to a specific demand, and can depend on the relationship between the migrant and the household). The amount remitted in 2002 was discussed both at the time (and retrieved from field notes) as well as in 2016–18 with local informants.

Table 4. Changes in social grants received between 2002 and 2016 (no. of households in receipt, and as percentage of households).

Name of grant	Cutwini		Manteku	
	2002	2016	2002	2016
Older Person's Grant	39 (27%)	66 (38%)	20 (23%)	37 (37%)
Child Support Grant	0	116 (67%)	0	73 (74%)
Disability Grant	4 (3%)	16 (9%)	6 (7%)	6 (6%)
Foster Child Grant	0	15 (9%)	0	4 (4%)
Care Dependency Grant	0	2 (1%)	0	2 (2%)

The table shows the absolute number of households and, in brackets, the percentage of total households receiving grants in each village. The three grants showing 0% in 2002 had not yet reached the villages at that time.

Social Grants

As discussed above, the most significant change in livelihood portfolios within the villages since 2002 has been the expansion of social grants. The percentage of households receiving a welfare grant has increased from approximately 30 per cent to over 85 per cent in both villages. In Table 4 the grant receipt (disaggregated by grant type) is shown as absolute numbers of households receiving it, and as a percentage of the total number of households for each village. Most notable is the increase in Child Support Grant, available locally since 2002.⁵⁷ There has also been increased uptake of the old-age pension due to easier application procedures, and a lowering of the age eligibility threshold for men. Some increases are evident for Disability Grant (adults with a temporary or permanent disability) and the small numbers of households securing Care Dependency Grant (for disabled children) and Foster Child Grant.

Expanded social grant receipt prevented many households from sinking deeper in poverty and deprivation between 2002 and 2016. Analysis of the household survey showed significantly fewer respondents reporting worries about food insecurity (compared to 2002), and the qualitative analysis points to improved social and relational aspects such as increased sense of dignity and positive effects on gender relations (such as women's autonomy, bargaining and decision-making power).⁵⁸ As grant recipient women are often resource providers, South Africa is experiencing 'reversed dependencies' in many households.⁵⁹ Regular grant income enables recipients to take on greater responsibility for others, and people may cluster around grant recipients as a response to vulnerability.⁶⁰

Table 4 shows that amid de-agrarianisation and dwindling formal employment, social grants represent a major resource for many households. Michelle Williams (2018) characterises this as a 'post-wage existence' and argues that the role of the state as dispenser of grants (and to a lesser extent public employment schemes) is likely to continue to be crucial to the survival of rural populations under present economic and structural conditions.⁶¹

57 As mentioned, only a few households had applied for and started receiving the Child Support Grant when the 2002 survey was completed. We show it as 0 per cent in the table, however, since it would otherwise give a false picture of how many households were eligible for the grant in 2002.

58 S. Granlund and T. Hochfeld, "'That Child Support Grant Gives Me Powers' – Exploring Social and Relational Aspects of Cash Transfers in South Africa in Times of Livelihood Change", *Journal of Development Studies*, 56 (6), 1230–44.

59 E. Bähre, 'Liberation and Redistribution: Social Grants, Commercial Insurance, and Religious Riches in South Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 53, 2 (2011), pp. 371–92; J. Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2015); Granlund and Hochfeld, 'That Child Support Grant Gives Me Powers'.

60 Bähre, 'Liberation and Redistribution'.

61 M. Williams, 'Women in Rural South Africa: A Post-Wage Existence and the Role of the State', *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 37, 1 (2018), pp. 392–410.

Table 5. Cultivation of gardens and fields in Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016 (no. of households, and as percentage of households).

Type and location of cultivation	Cutwini		Manteku	
	2002	2016	2002	2016
Households cultivating a garden	138 (95%)	149 (86%)	61 (70%)	62 (62%)
Households cultivating a field	91 (62%)	3 (2%)	58 (67%)	5 (5%)
Average number of different crops + fruit trees	4 + 2	4 + 3	5 + 1	3 + 1
Households growing more than 75% of their own maize and/or vegetable consumption ^a	2%	0.5/0%	5%	0/0%
Households not growing any of their own maize and/or vegetable consumption	9%	33/38%	10%	35/41%

^aIn 2002 the data recorded cultivation of maize and vegetables together, while in 2016 maize was recorded separately from vegetables: these are described in the table as ‘maize/vegetables.’

Cultivation

The dwindling value of cultivation in livelihood portfolios as shown in Table 2 is also reflected in Table 5, which shows cultivation-related data. Table 5 reveals that most households abandoned their fields between 2002 and 2016 and that ‘own produce’ as a proportion of staple food and vegetable consumption dwindled. It also shows, however, that smaller-scale homestead or kitchen gardening has not decreased significantly, with crop diversity remaining stable in Cutwini (albeit declining in Manteku). These findings are consistent with other findings on continuation, or even ‘intensification’, of small homestead plots,⁶² while extensive field cultivation, particularly of staple cereal crops, has declined.⁶³ As noted earlier, field and garden agricultural production in the Eastern Cape is a well-researched topic, with key works noting declining cultivation,⁶⁴ and drawing continued interest.⁶⁵

Regarding the sharp decline in field cultivation of staple crops, villagers offer varied and complex explanations for this, echoing those discussed by Matthew de la Hey and William Beinart, who examined a neighbouring village.⁶⁶ Environmental challenges to horticulture in Cutwini and Manteku include bush pigs, monkeys and moles (none of which are much deterred by fencing), and untended livestock, due to near-universal school enrolment. The sub-tropical weather is unpredictable, with dry spells and heavy rains leading to waterlogging, and the coastal soils are sandy and saline.

The larger structural and economic context also disincentivises local cultivation. South Africa’s capital-intensive, mechanised large-scale commercial maize farmers (farm sizes of several thousand hectares are common, compared to the 0.5 to 3 hectares of smallholders) produce maize at a scale and cost unattainable by smallholders.⁶⁷ The attempts of local agricultural development projects at ‘modernising’ smallholder cultivation through mechanisation and inputs (for example, high-yield seed and fertiliser) can paradoxically depress the profitability of local cultivation, due to difficulties in marketing surpluses and

62 M. Andrew and R.C. Fox, “‘Undercultivation’ and Intensification in the Transkei: A Case Study of Historical Changes in the Use of Arable Land in Nomp, Shixini’, *Development Southern Africa*, 21, 4 (2004), pp. 687–706.

63 Blair *et al.*, ‘Cropland Abandonment’.

64 Beinart, ‘Transkeian Smallholders and Agrarian Reform’.

65 Shackleton *et al.*, ‘Deactivation of Field Cultivation’; Blair *et al.*, ‘Cropland Abandonment’; Hebinck *et al.*, ‘More Than Just Fields’.

66 De la Hey and Beinart, ‘Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields?’

67 Hajdu *et al.*, ‘But Tractors Can’t Fly’.

higher risks of crop failure with seeds unsuited to local conditions.⁶⁸ Locally improved access to rural small towns, and increased disbursement of social grants not in cash but electronically, including in supermarkets, have made mass-produced foods cheaper and easier to access. For small-scale village farmers, field cultivation is thus a high-risk, low-profit activity, with the same commodities obtainable in supermarket chains. It is worth noting here that even agricultural development programmes with large budgets, machinery and modern inputs have repeatedly failed to make any profit in Cutwini, as explained above.

The large-scale abandonment of field cultivation is often attributed to socio-cultural issues as well, with young people reportedly aspiring to ‘real’ (i.e. waged) work; even if their sole income is informal ‘piece jobs’, they remain disinclined to engage in cultivation.⁶⁹ The older generation often lamented youth aversion or apathy to farming, sometimes ascribing it to social grant receipt, despite the substantial challenges involved in farming. Sizwe, a married man in his forties, accounted for his generation’s reluctance to engage in farming in terms of their sense of freedom from what had previously been a compulsion for survival:

We’ve been planting most of our lives and we regard that as a hard work. ... We’ve been planting out of need, and now if you have money, you feel like you are free from planting, and you can just buy ... anything you want!⁷⁰

However, Sizwe also reflected on the next generation:

Maybe they will plant because they have not had an opportunity to use the soil, because they grew up when their parents were not planting. Maybe they want to know what it feels like to go and harvest your own crops from your own garden. [...] Yes... the next generation will plant. They will feel it is fun.⁷¹

Scholars are however uncertain about the future possibilities of a revival of field cultivation. Sheona Shackleton and Paul Hebinck argue that declines in smallholder farming are not linear and that there is significant variation across individuals as well as time and space, which would allow for a rise in the future.⁷² However, Charlie Shackleton *et al.* are pessimistic about prospects for the ‘reactivation’ of smallholder field cultivation, especially with the intervening loss of knowledge and skills.⁷³ De la Hey and Beinart note that any revival of smallholder cultivation is undercut by the dissipation of social arrangements that historically facilitated production (for example, communal work parties, and school-aged children herding livestock), and by household labour shortages, amid adult out-migration.⁷⁴

It is important to point out that small-scale cultivation in fields in the former homelands may not be a worthwhile activity in most places. The question should perhaps be why people hang on to cultivation rather than why they abandon it. The above quotation about how it feels to harvest your own vegetables points to some of the ambivalence in relation to cultivation. Accounts concerning farming are often intertwined with sentiment and narratives of belonging and attachment to rural homes. Urban migrants can spend decades investing in

68 Jacobson, ‘From Betterment to Bt Maize’; Hajdu *et al.*, ‘But Tractors Can’t Fly’; Fischer and Hajdu, ‘Does Raising Maize Yields Lead to Poverty Reduction?’

69 De la Hey and Beinart, ‘Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields?’

70 Interview, November 2018.

71 *Ibid.*

72 S. Shackleton and P. Hebinck, ‘Through the “Thick and Thin” of Farming on the Wild Coast, South Africa’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 61 (2018), pp. 277–89.

73 Shackleton *et al.*, ‘Deactivation of Field Cultivation’.

74 De la Hey and Beinart, ‘Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields?’

their rural home (for example, house building, constructing fences, and acquiring livestock), planning to return and engage in agricultural production. Others have noted how the potent rural ‘landscape of home’, including place-based ties of ancestral belonging, continues to have strong cultural and social resonances for many.⁷⁵ Research reveals that rural landscapes increasingly represent a consumptive rather than productive space, with the former ‘agrarian lifestyle’ eclipsed by ‘rural lifestyles’.⁷⁶ Agrarian cultures and imaginaries however endure despite the disengagement from day-to-day agricultural activities.⁷⁷ The rational abandonment by many villagers of marginal field production may therefore have negative consequences for cultural reproduction, identity and belonging.

Even if small-scale production of maize and extensive field crops is increasingly unfeasible, there remains a place for higher-value (vegetables and fruit) horticultural production, particularly for own consumption and local resale. Significantly, when global food prices spiked in 2008, kitchen garden cultivation again became sensible, which is probably the reason that Table 5 shows that homestead gardening has not decreased notably. Informants explain how some villagers took the opportunity to diversify incomes through growing a larger variety of crops for sale. Sino, an unmarried man in his thirties explained: ‘a few people plant like serious planting, like the whole garden will be spinach and cabbage ... and they sell to us [other villagers]’.⁷⁸

Calculating inputs and local sale prices for a household cultivating a 0.5-hectare garden in 2016 showed that a good harvest could earn a successful producer up to R10,000 annually. Such a sum is a noteworthy income – almost comparable in value to receiving an old-age state pension – even if the labour invested would be substantial. When enquiring why more villages did not therefore cultivate and sell vegetables, the discussion often turned to the familiar litany of environmental constraints on farming generally. Local conditions could also differ significantly across even a single village. We recorded reports of the occupiers of new homestead sites finding their enthusiasm for horticultural production dashed by waterlogged, sandy, or mole-infested soils. The opportunity to earn income from cultivation thus requires the convergence of labour, capital, skills and favourable locations and soils.

In relation to intermittent local narratives concerning social grants disincentivising large-scale farming, the converse appeared true of kitchen gardening activities. In a forthcoming article, the authors report on a regression analysis of the survey data, revealing a correlation between receiving Child Support Grant and investments in agricultural production, such as the acquisition of small hand-worked ploughs/cultivators for easier gardening, and a marked increase in crop diversity.⁷⁹ The positive effects of social grant receipt on garden cultivation has also been found by others.⁸⁰

Looking to the future, while it is unlikely that cultivation will be a primary or even significant source of livelihood making for most households, food price pressures may offer opportunities to supplement (or conserve) household income through more intensive horticultural cultivation in home gardens. While previous, externally funded, large-scale agricultural development interventions have repeatedly proved ineffectual,⁸¹ there remains

75 V.A. Masterson, ‘Sense of Place and Culture in the Landscape of Home: Understanding Social-Ecological Dynamics on the Wild Coast, South Africa’ (PhD thesis, Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2016); Hebinck *et al.*, ‘More Than Just Fields’.

76 Hebinck *et al.*, ‘More Than Just Fields’.

77 Shackleton *et al.*, ‘Deactivation of Field Cultivation’.

78 Interview, March 2016.

79 F. Hajdu, S. Granlund, D. Neves, T. Hochfeld, F. Amuakwa-Mensah and E. Sandström, ‘Cash Transfers for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods? Examining the Long-Term Productive Effects of the Child Support Grant in South Africa’, *World Development Perspectives* (2020), available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2020.100227>, retrieved 5 July 2020.

80 Fay, ‘Cultivators in Action, Siyazondla Inaction?’; Jacobson, ‘From Betterment to Bt Maize’.

81 Cf. Fischer and Hajdu, ‘Does Raising Maize Yields Lead to Poverty Reduction?’; de la Hey and Beinart, ‘Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields?’

Table 6. Changes in animal ownership in Cutwini and Manteku between 2002 and 2016.

Animal type	Cutwini			Manteku		
	2002 Percentage of total 146 households owning	2016 Total number	2016 Percentage of total 174 households owning	2002 Percentage of total 86 households owning	2016 Total number	2016 Percentage of total 99 households owning
Cow	43	622	33	30	162	28
Horse	12	21	8	6	4	1
Donkey	0	5	1	3	0	0
Sheep	35	296	24	0	35	4
Goat	32	373	32	17	277	46
Pig	49	28	10	51	36	10
Chicken	64	611	55	78	339	50
Duck	5	73	5	0	3	1
Goose	0	41	3	3	7	1

The table shows the percentage of total households that owned certain types of animal in both 2002 and 2016; however, total numbers of animals were only recorded in 2016.

scope for modest, focused interventions, judiciously tailored to villagers' needs and capabilities. Village-level production seems unlikely to become competitive with the agro-industrially produced staples and cereals (such as maize) readily obtainable in supermarkets. In contrast, the own production of fresh produce (fruits and vegetables) is already of value – both pecuniary and nutritional – to some village farmers.

Livestock and Poultry Production

In [Table 2](#) and [Figure 2](#), livestock production was sustained and did not decline to the same extent as cultivation, suggesting that it remained a worthwhile activity. Yet there are marked variations between the villages, and livestock types. In [Table 6](#), animal ownership expressed as a percentage of households for both villages and years is presented, and total numbers of each animal type given for 2016.⁸² It shows cattle, chickens, and goats to be the most common animals in both villages in terms of both absolute numbers and percentage of households that own them. In Cutwini, sheep and horse ownership is also notable. The data show households' cattle ownership to have declined in both villages, with the caveat that this disguises an almost constant total number of cattle (as estimated in 2002 by informants, but not recorded for each household). Instead, cattle ownership appears more concentrated in fewer (and better-off) households. Slaughtering of cattle for ceremonial purposes has reportedly declined since 2002, both due to fewer funerals as the AIDS pandemic has been brought under control with antiretroviral drugs, and due to a move away from traditions that require slaughtering, especially reported in Cutwini. Milking, which happened on a limited scale in 2002 and was used for making sour-milk has all but ceased completely in both villages as reported by informants. Cattle are used also for other purposes, such as ploughing, even if the value of this has also declined as people have abandoned field cultivation (and agricultural development projects provided with tractors in Cutwini). For the few who have larger gardens, cattle are still a significant resource for animal traction.

⁸² Definitive livestock figures were not recorded in 2002.

Cutwini's better endowment of grazing is reflected in the higher proportions of households that own cattle and sheep. No sheep ownership was recorded in Manteku in 2002, and only a few households had acquired them by 2016. Instead, goat production increased sharply – and goats are better suited to the thick bush and steep topography. Andile, an unmarried man in his twenties, proffered further explanations for now preferring goats, especially for ceremonial slaughter: 'a goat makes a lot of noise when slaughtered – we believe they are connecting with the ancestors'.⁸³

Pig numbers declined sharply in both villages due to an outbreak of classical swine fever, which prompted disease control through government culling in 2005. The local pigs were asymptomatic, however, which along with poor communication with the villagers and unmet promises of compensation fuelled local resentment and deterred people from acquiring pigs again. Declines in poultry keeping are difficult to account for, but may represent the vicissitudes of poultry production and diseases.

Overall, livestock production declined somewhat, but mainly it shifted in various ways and adapted to new realities and local variations. The significance of meat from own-livestock production is more than just its contribution of meat value to livelihoods: it is nutritionally a significant source of high-quality animal protein and (especially in relation to large livestock) underpins important local processes of sharing and social reciprocity.

Marine-Resource Harvesting

As indicated in relation to [Figure 2](#), the value of marine-resource use increased sharply in the villages between 2002 and 2016, in contrast to other natural-resource-based activities. In Cutwini, this was due to a legitimate daily buyer in crayfish season. In response, many young men and several women began diving for crayfish. In Manteku, with no such buyer, crayfish collecting remained low and prices erratic. The contribution of fishing to local livelihoods increased in value in both villages, but for different reasons. In Cutwini angling equipment improved when inexpensive manufactured angling gear became available in town: 'before, we used to make fishing rods with sticks from the forest ... now they all have fancy rods from town and hooks and all those things', Sizwe explained.⁸⁴ In Manteku, on the other hand, beneficent middle-class holiday cottage owners passed old fishing gear down to villagers back in 2002, before the government demolition of their holiday cottages. This angling equipment eventually wore out or broke and Manteku's villagers, with generally less monetary income than in Cutwini, were less able to replace it. In Manteku, fishing was also boosted by electrification, as it was now possible to stockpile and refrigerate sufficient fish to warrant a weekly sales trip into town.

From [Table 7](#) it is evident that there has been no major increase in the proportion of families engaged in marine-resource use, but, rather, those already engaged increased the frequency of their harvesting. Those reporting to utilise marine resources 'very often' increased sharply, especially for crayfish and mussel collecting, along with fishing. Marine-resource harvesting is a 'fall-back' strategy for several of the able-bodied and unemployed. In Manteku villagers pointed out, during discussion, the connection between the declining job opportunities and increased marine-resource use. A caveat is that the majority of households in Cutwini do not harvest any marine resources, a pattern equally true of angling in Manteku. Finally, in addition to boosting

⁸³ Interview, November 2018.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Table 7. Marine-resource use in Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016 (as percentages of households in each village).

Resource use	Village	Very often		Often		Seldom		Never		Households using resource as percentage of total households	
		2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016
Fishing	Cutwini	2	12	18	14	3	3	77	71	23	29
	Manteku	12	16	37	29	3	2	48	52	52	47
Crayfish collection	Cutwini	5	9	20	11	0	2	75	78	25	22
	Manteku	3	21	36	32	14	1	47	44	53	54
Mussel collection	Cutwini	0	15	22	13	8	2	70	69	30	30
	Manteku	5	18	56	39	5	3	34	39	66	60

Frequency of resource use is indicated in four categories: very often, often, seldom, and never. The final columns for 2002 and 2016 show the percentage of total households per year and village that use each resource (i.e. the sum of the first three categories).

local incomes, marine resources undoubtedly contribute significantly to the nutrition of those who are able to eat them.

Firewood Collection

Collecting firewood contributed a steady two per cent of livelihood resources in 2002, even with increasing use of paraffin and bottled LPG. By 2016, households frequently used electricity for cooking. However, firewood was still an important energy source, because of the cost of electricity (and appliances), and preference for preparing some traditional (slow-cooked) dishes over an open fire. As discussed above (see [Table 2](#)), the value of firewood as a resource was higher in Manteku, due to it being scarcer and to a greater proportion of households using it more frequently. Research assistants elaborated that within larger households and among older, more traditionally minded, household heads, firewood was frequently used in Manteku. Smaller households, with younger household heads (especially in Cutwini) were more inclined to cook with electricity.

Conclusion: Changing Rural Livelihoods and Future Trajectories

This study drew on a broad livelihoods perspective to examine rural livelihoods and livelihood change in detail, within two rural villages in a former homeland of South Africa. The study quantified key activities, gauged their relative value contribution to livelihoods, and discerned patterns of change over time. To do so, detailed household surveys carried out in 2002 and 2016 were combined with in-depth ethnographic fieldwork and interviews. Here, the findings are used to think about prospective, future livelihood trajectories.

To recapitulate, in 2002 local employment (albeit often poorly paid and erratic) was the most important activity supporting local livelihoods in both villages. By 2016, there were fewer but better-remunerated jobs, which contributed to local processes of social differentiation and, probably, to rising local income inequality. While many villagers felt that their living conditions had improved in 2016 compared to 2002, a large group felt their lives had become worse – 35 per cent of households in both villages. Income and asset data lend plausibility to this self-assessment. The loss of employment opportunities was (partially) blamed by local villagers on the actions of the state, even if indirectly, such as through the demolition of (illegal) cottages and more stringent enforcement of marine protection regulations. Perceptions, and grievances were, furthermore, often specific. In the case of Cutwini, it was the failure and loss of secure employment at the adjacent parastatal tea plantation, whereas in Manteku a paucity of public employment schemes (compared to nearby villages) was cited. These need to be understood against a succession of (often high-profile) failed development projects, which were readily regarded as failures of the post-apartheid state to deliver on its social contract and electoral promises.

Between 2002 and 2016, social grant receipts rose by over 250 per cent to become the single most important resource underpinning livelihoods within the villages. Amid declining local employment, social grants have effectively prevented many rural households from descent into deeper destitution and impoverishment. Yet they are insufficient to significantly improve or elevate villagers' standard of living. After all, social transfers for specific groups (i.e. youth, disabled and elderly) were never intended to be the sole or main household income. The state, as viewed locally, thus occupies an ambiguous place. It is seen as restricting and curtailing livelihood opportunities, but simultaneously provides social transfers (and employment schemes) essential to local survival and livelihoods.

The changes in natural-resource-based activities underscore how households continue to engage in gainful activities, and rationally adapt or abandon those that are not. For example, households abandoned extensive field production of low-value crops, but some increased

higher-value horticulture production for own use or sale. Detailed enquiry suggests that the households that continue to engage in cultivation enjoy better conditions for production (for example, resources for inputs, favourable sites, fertile land, sound fences, and available household labour). In much the same way, marine-resource harvesting intensified when marketing opportunities emerged, as did goat keeping in Manteku when local grazing proved suitable. While the relative value of livelihoods calculations presented in [Table 2](#) and [Figure 2](#) show that natural-resource-based livelihoods contribute a limited quantum to total livelihoods relative to local employment and social grants, it is important to remember that these money-based calculations do not consider food security dimensions or potentially superior nutritional quality of own-production food. This is in addition to other values, such as the multifunctional values of cattle for example, for ploughing, and the cultural and landscape values of sustained agrarian practices.

Livelihoods-informed research offers substantial contributions to understanding the former homeland rural areas. Several previous studies have examined the decline of agricultural production and focused on the task of directly remedying this, but often at the expense of meaningfully considering other local employment opportunities (including the ‘non-farm’ informal sector). This is a focus at odds with the reality in the focal research context, where the trickling decline in the minor contribution of cultivation to local livelihoods from 5 per cent (2002) to 2–3 per cent (2016) of total value of livelihood activities is dwarfed by the plummet in local employment from 60 per cent to 23–32 per cent, and the upswing in welfare transfers from 15–17 per cent to 46–49 per cent ([Figure 2](#)). Even with successful efforts for agricultural development, it remains unlikely that ‘reinvigorated’ cultivation can readily make a substantive impact on local livelihoods. Hence, there is a need for further in-depth study, to map to what extent the results of the present study hold true on a wider scale.

What then are the likely future livelihood trajectories for these villages, and others in former homelands? Examining the former QwaQwa homeland, Rachel Slater described how the many households face pathways of decline and impoverishment with only a few able to engage in accumulation.⁸⁵ Long-term decline or stasis is also a likely future for many households in the focal villages, especially in the light of declining employment and in the absence of substantial changes in policy, structural and economic conditions. Consistent with national patterns, social differentiation and income inequality appear to be rising.⁸⁶ The ‘left-behind’ households are therefore likely to remain poor, despite improvements in assets and access to services. In the face of socio-economic injustice, redistributive efforts predicated on social justice have expanded during the last decades, most notably in the form of social grants from the state.⁸⁷ While the ameliorative aspects of social grants are significant, they only extend to some (that is, the elderly, children and people living with disabilities), crucially excluding able-bodied adults. Unsurprisingly, Shackleton and Luckert report young men living alone to be the least food secure.⁸⁸ Nothing in the results suggests that the large group of unemployed can look forward to a future pathway of increased access to worthwhile livelihood activities locally.

Social grant and pension income undoubtedly generate modest local multiplier effects for some services, such as trade and horticultural production, yet these are small

85 Slater, ‘Differentiation and Diversification’.

86 S. Schotte, R. Zizzamia and M. Leibbrandt, ‘Social Stratification, Life Chances and Vulnerability to Poverty in South Africa’, *SALDRU Working Paper* no. 208 (University of Cape Town, Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, 2017).

87 T. Hochfeld, ‘Cash Care and Social Justice: A Study of the Child Support Grant’ (PhD thesis, Wits University, 2015).

88 Shackleton and Luckert, ‘Changing Livelihoods and Landscapes’.

and insufficient to compensate for the dearth of substantive livelihood-making opportunities. Natural-resource-based activities are crucial, but simultaneously limited in their impact on livelihoods. They are also patterned by variable agro-ecological conditions and subject not only to the threat of overexploitation, but also to competition from outsiders, including larger markets and industrial production systems. However, there may be scope for specialisation, in horticulture, livestock, poultry production, fishing and marine-resource harvesting. Evidence shows how specialisation is already under way where there is profitability and a market, suggesting that future interventions aiming to enhance natural-resource-based activities need strategies closely aligned to local village-level conditions and realities. Interventions ought to ensure that efforts are either focused on enhancing local food security, or on producing a marketable product. Previous research has shown that adaptation to local conditions and insufficient attention to marketing is a recurrent weakness of agricultural⁸⁹ and income-generation projects.⁹⁰

Despite their relative remoteness, processes of change and contingency loom over both villages. They are likely to be markedly affected by the major changes brought by the current (2019) building of the new coastal N2 highway. To the northeast of the villages, in Xolobeni, plans for destructive strip-mining by a transnational firm are not only potentially detrimental to local communities, but violently contested. Each of these developments offers the promise of the new employment opportunities so urgently needed, yet also carries within it the real prospect of the local communities' further exclusion and marginalisation. Thus, these villages are likely to remain sites of livelihood change, and may well constitute an interesting and useful case for follow-up in another decade hence.

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89 Jacobson, 'The Massive Food Production Programme'; Fischer and Hajdu, 'Does Raising Maize Yields Lead to Poverty Reduction?'; Hajdu *et al.*, 'But Tractors Can't Fly'.

90 Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

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