

**A Study of the Social and Economic Impacts of
Industrial Tree Plantations in the
KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa**

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World Rainforest Movement

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FOREWORD

The historic contribution of industrial tree plantations to the economy of the province of Natal (prior to 1994) and now of KwaZulu-Natal, has been and continues to be substantial. Nonetheless this substantial contribution has also resulted in a host of damaging economic, social and environmental impacts affecting local communities, water resources and ecosystems. Since the late 19th and early 20th century the tree-growing sector has played an important role in the transformation of the agricultural sector in Natal and hastened the introduction of capitalist relations in the countryside. Imported tree species were however, not only introduced as a crop but were also intentionally introduced as landscape modifiers. These two processes, the hastening of rural capitalist relations and the intentional use of trees as landscape modifiers, provide important backdrops for any contemporary examination of the industrial tree-growing sector as they continue to shape and influence rural dynamics. Central to South Africa's history is the instrumental role of segregation and apartheid policies in determining the racial and spatial nature of South Africa's agrarian landscape. Land dispossession, forced removals, rural neglect, exploitative wages, child labour, gender discrimination, insecurity of tenure and so forth were key features of the context within which accumulation by white commercial farmers and white-owned corporate capital took place. As agrarian conditions changed and the prices for agricultural products waxed and waned during the 20th century more and more marginal lands were converted into industrial tree plantations, often accompanied by the now familiar forced removal of rural people.

The intentional introduction of non-indigenous trees also played a major role in the transformation of the natural landscape. Rich and diverse grasslands were soon replaced with a checkerboard of plantations and fields. This intentional transformation was closely followed by the rapid emergence of feral populations of exotic timber tree species. These spread rapidly, not only into indigenous grasslands and forests but also into riparian areas thus exacerbating the pressure on increasingly stressed water sources and associated ecosystems. Since the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, the industrial tree plantation sector has sought to survive by mimicking the empowerment programme of the new regime through small grower schemes argued to be providing essential services and addressing the dire economic and social conditions experienced by rural communities. In the industrial tree-growing sector the primary initiative has entailed two particular strategies. One has been the establishment of out-grower schemes promoted as social or corporate responsibility or as employment creation schemes. The other has attempted to bring on board a BEE (Black economic empowerment) component into the existing asset structure of the major industrial tree-growing companies. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that these programmes have remained 'green-washing' projects that have failed to ameliorate the ever-increasing list of negative social, economic and environmental impacts of the industrial timber plantation sector's activities. This report outlines these impacts by use of case study material and the voices of the affected communities from selected areas in KwaZulu-Natal.

Harald Witt

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“The sad fact is that much of the beauty of the Ixopo hills has gone, because the grass and bracken and the rolling hills and the rich farms have in large part given way to the endless plantations of gum and wattle and pine, and the titihoya does not cry there anymore” (Alan Paton; Toward the Mountain).



*Province of KwaZulu-Natal.
Location of the study area*

1. Introduction

This report highlights the social, cultural and economic impacts of industrial timber plantations (ITPs) and associated activities, on rural communities in the timber growing areas of South Africa (SA). Fieldwork was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, in the coastal zone including Richards Bay, up to Lake St. Lucia in the north, in one of the most heavily planted parts of the country. ITPs of alien eucalyptus and pine trees have expanded across the landscape since the first large-scale plantings by the State forestry department were made in the area in the 1950s. While factors such as high rainfall, and the deep soils found throughout this coastal zone provided conditions conducive to fast tree growth and prospects for profitable timber production, it was the apartheid government in the 1950s and 1960s that enabled the development of plantations.

The history of the plantation industry in South Africa can be compared with the development of plantations elsewhere in the South: For instance in Brazil, Aracruz Cellulose was developed under a military dictatorship; Indonesia's pulp boom was planned and put into operation during the Suharto regime. Cambodia, Thailand and Chile provide other examples of how state oppression has benefitted pulp/plantations companies.

In South Africa, the initial phase affected state-controlled land, from where communities were removed and relocated to other tribal areas by government decree. The 1980s witnessed a wave of new plantations led by timber companies with Sappi and Mondi taking the lead. This development took place mainly on land previously owned by white farmers, close to the rapidly growing Richards Bay industrial complex. Thanks to artificially low input costs, especially wages and land acquisition, as well as generous subsidisation by the government at that time, the local timber industry has grown into a major exporter of wood and wood derived products. Good road and rail infrastructure, harbour facilities and cheap energy have supported the establishment of modern wood chipping and pulping facilities at Richards Bay.

The case studies for this research were carried out in KwaZulu-Natal, the province with the second largest area under industrial tree plantations after Mpumalanga whose national share is 42% compared to 38% for KwaZulu-Natal. Another 11% is in the Eastern Cape. The most profound similarity linking these timbered provinces is that they have the poorest rural communities in the country. Where rural community planting of industrial plantations is involved, poverty alleviation and economic empowerment are often cited by both the government and the timber industry as justification for promoting the establishment of more woodlots on community land. The large scale removals by government that allowed the plantation sector to access land previously owned by poor people are politically no longer an option – therefore they have changed their strategy. The expansion of community plantings is the current industry strategy for increasing the area of timber plantations in South Africa.

This study has established that the lives and standards of living of local communities have not been improved by the plantation industry. The so-called empowerment deals and contracting

opportunities to the communities were not widely distributed, thus becoming a source of differentiation and social division. The social, cultural and economic lives of these communities have provided the focus for this research, the brief for which does not specifically include the environmental impacts of timber plantations. It is however clear that environmental considerations and impacts are over-arching issues, relevant to social, cultural and economic impacts. In typical rural community life in the area, it is difficult to separate social, cultural, economic and political issues from each other and the environment. A World Rainforest Movement (WRM) Bulletin, July 1998, article on the impacts of timber plantations in South Africa describes how cultural, social, economic and environmental issues are intricately linked to each other. The article states: “Cattle and goats are forced to overcrowd the few remaining natural springs and rivers – damaging river and stream banks – trampling and polluting springs and ponds, making this water unfit for human consumption” (WRM, 1998).

The loss of much of the region’s flora and fauna due to ITPs has social, cultural and economic implications for society in general. In 1990, W. R. Bainbridge of the then Natal Parks Board (the provincial government conservation agency) warned that the encroachment of industrial timber plantations would continue to further the:

- destruction of the natural environments, principally grasslands, in afforested areas (areas converted to plantations) , which is irreversible;
- invasion into natural areas by alien plants (plantation and weed species);
- associated losses of indigenous taxa (plant and animal species);
- reduction of species availability;
- irreversible change in present scenic values and possibly in environmental quality, and associated impacts on tourism and outdoor recreation; and
- a reduction in streamflow and water quality, with associated impacts on indigenous aquatic fauna (Bainbridge, 1990: 61 – 62).

As indicated above, it is difficult to separate economic, social and cultural issues in traditional rural communities, as they are inter-linked and affect one another. For instance, loss of grasslands means that the sustainability of the historic cattle economy of the Zulu community is undermined. Consequently, social relationships of production and reproduction (linking lobola – bride price – normally paid with cattle, labour, exchanges, wealth store and food security through tribute payment) are negatively affected. In general, the large-scale planting of timber monocultures in South Africa has also had other far-reaching effects on rural livelihood and lifestyle, for instance:

- Traditional pastoralists have been deprived of vast areas of grasslands wherever these timber plantations have been established.
- It has become more difficult for farmers to raise livestock for meat and milk or for sale, and to thatch houses, following the conversion of grasslands into timber plantations.
- Reeds and sedges needed for making mats or cords used for roofing or trays have disappeared after plantations have caused wetlands and watercourses to dry up.

- When workers are expelled from farms, they can no longer plant crops or raise chickens and poverty and malnutrition increases. “We cry because our children have no clothes and no shoes,” said one villager. “Life has been difficult since the trees came” (Interview, Sabokwe December 2004).
- People have been forced against their will to live in a new and threatening environment. In ITP growing areas, nearly all roads pass through plantations at some point. This unfamiliar landscape inspires fear of wild animals such as snakes, wild pigs, lions and other unknowns (inKosi Mbonambi, Sokhulu December 2004).
- Plantation fires have increasingly threatened the lives and livelihoods of rural inhabitants (Dobson 1990).
- Plantations close to people’s homes have increased safety and security concerns, women get raped and thieves dump their loot in the plantations:

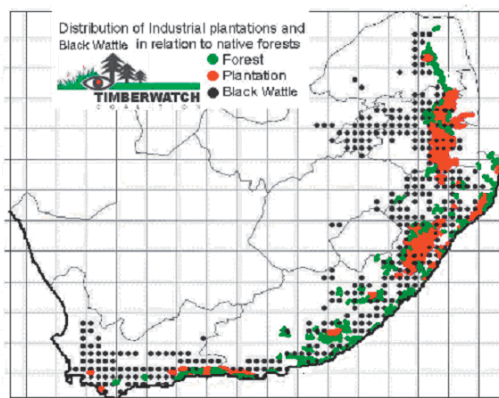
“As parents with girl children we worry a lot about the plantations. There are always strange men wandering around aimlessly and many sexual offenses have been reported. So they cannot go to fetch water or firewood anymore. Besides, these offences, the plantations are used by thieves and robbers to hide and to store their loot. When the police discover these things they come and harass us by searching our houses apartheid style. We are not safe here with these plantations” (Interview, 2005).

- Lack of land and the close proximity of plantations undermine the culture and identity of rural people. “You see we are locked here in the midst of plantations as you can see. We are like people who are in a prison. Whenever you get out of the house all you see are these eucalyptus plantations. They have robbed us of a sense of community and the typical rural environment to which we are accustomed which is characterised by diversity. When you think about talking to the ancestors, there are specific trees where we used to take a pot of brewed beer and our offering and then appease the spirits. You cannot do that under a gum tree. They erode our culture by denying us the opportunity to practice our culture and have a sense of environment that is not denied – by one tree of the same height, in lines giving a false sense of order, peace and tranquillity” (Interview, Chief Mbuyazi, Sabokwe 2005).

2. An Overview of the Timber Industry and its Associated Impacts

Industrial Timber Plantations

Earnings from agriculture and agri-industry in South Africa have generally faced decline recently, at a time when the Industrial Timber Plantation sector is growing and expanding into new markets and new products. Notwithstanding its receding fortunes, agriculture continues to outweigh the ITP sector in terms of its share of employment creation and job retention. The agriculture sector is also more broadly represented and spread in terms of the number of people that participate in it as producers, when compared to the over-concentrated ITP sector. For instance, the National Department of Agriculture (NDA) estimates that there are about 50 000 large industrial farmers and 240 000 small farmers in South Africa and an estimated 3 million farmers in the communal areas of the former homelands. In 1996, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) had 5 037 large farming units occupying 4.1m ha of land, compared to the Western Cape with 9 759 on 9.7m ha, and the Free State with 11 272 on 11.3m ha. Existing ITPs in South Africa cover more than 1 500 000 ha but most of this area is controlled by a handful of players.



The areas where industrial timber plantations are established in South Africa tend also to be heavily infested by uncontrolled invasions of alien timber tree seedlings and other invasive weeds that emanate from formal timber plantations.

South Africa has developed one of the largest industrial timber estates in the world. The 1.5 million ha of plantations, together with the modern wood processing facilities currently contribute about 9.2% towards South Africa's manufacturing GDP and 2.2% to the country's total GDP (Natal

Witness 5 March 1999). In 2003, industry exports amounted to R4.8 billion, with a total investment of R21 billion. In 2002, the total industry turnover was R13.8 billion, providing claimed employment for 151 000 people (South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005). This figure ignores the fact that restructuring in the industry which favours out-sourcing and sub-contracting for services, took place, and has meant a major reduction in direct employment by the industry. Such figures have to be therefore viewed with suspicion, as they tend to be part of industry public relations spin.

Employment Trends in the Industry

South Africa has high levels of unemployment amongst its previously disadvantaged black communities. This is particularly the case in rural areas where the timber industry claims to be providing jobs both in the growing and the processing side of the industry. However, the trend in the last ten years has been large reductions in direct employment with contractors being employed for all non-core activities. This has proceeded to the extent that Sappi is now effectively just a management shell. The effects of this have been twofold: Firstly there has been a general lowering in wages paid to plantation labourers. But at the same time, the increasing numbers of small scale entrepreneurs from the black communities seeking to establish businesses to provide labour to the industry have constantly faced various frustrations for their efforts. The contracts are seasonal and the process of registering as a contractor and getting recognition is beyond the means of an average rural person. The Khula Development Committee – a Section 21 Community – discussed below – failed to have its contracting businesses recognised to provide services to the timber industry, and their bid for participation in the SiyaQhubeka empowerment consortium was overturned (Interview with M. Mkwanzani, January 2005).

Exaggerated Demand for Pulpwood

The expansion of the timber industry and its rapid encroachment onto communal land held under the Ingonyama Trust was the product of panic forestry encouraged by the South African Timber Growers' Association (SATGA). As discussed in the section on small growers below, expansion onto communal land was a purely economic response to a forecast increase in global demand for pulp and paper products. It was not an initiative to empower and enrich rural communities, as the industry would want believed. (The Ingonyama Trust was part of the colonial/apartheid land tenure system which placed African reserves¹ under the administration of traditional authorities. In KwaZulu-Natal the Zulu King was given custody over land held under the Ingonyama² Trust.) In 1989, in its 33rd annual congress report, SATGA warned about a looming

¹ Reserves are areas designated under colonial and apartheid tenure system for African habitation and use. These areas were notorious for being in the drier regions of the country with poor soils and their remoteness to urban centres, road/transport networks as well as major services.

² Ingonyama is the praise name of the Zulu monarchy.

timber supply crisis, encouraging massive planting of timber, arguing that hardwood (gum and wattle) was in short supply. SATGA suggested that the country must embark on a major drive to establish new plantations of which 80% should be in KZN. The demand for raw logs (roundwood) was expected to grow by 25% annually until 2000. It was expected that the growth would be 44% for Mpumalanga, 50% for KZN and 6 % for the Eastern Cape. Six months later, SATGA continued to advocate that more timber be planted, calculating that to meet the demand, 500 000 ha of timber had to be planted in the course of the next 20 years SATGA's Chairman suggested that:

... trees must be planted and if individual farmers are reluctant to plant them the companies must be expected to take the initiative ... intense competition between the major growers is pushing land prices up countrywide. In many cases good land prices have enabled cash strapped farmers to dispose of their properties and make a fresh start elsewhere, although the ripple effect of land purchasing is driving up the price of agricultural land (Natal Witness, 14 June, 1990).

KwaZulu-Natal's timber plantations cover over 600 000 ha and over half of South Africa's new plantations are in this province, much of it using only a single tree genus, Eucalyptus (Natal Witness, 5 July 2002). Research by the Natal Agriculture Union (NAU, 1996) calculated an 82% reduction in stream flow over a 20 year period where grasslands were replaced with pine trees in the small catchment areas in the Southern Drakensberg. In South Africa alien industrial tree plantations cover almost 5 times the area (1,52 million ha) covered by indigenous forests (330 000 ha).

Table 1 - Industrial Timber Plantations, 1991/92 – 2001/02

	<i>1991/1992</i>	<i>1994/1995</i>	<i>1996/1997</i>	<i>2001/2002</i>
Plantation area (ha)	1 301 309	1 365 939	1 518 138	1 532 200
Addition to planted area (ha)	26 602	17 134	7 757	2 690
Number of processing plants	203	169	148	182
Timber products as % of GDP	2.2	1.5	1.5	1.6
Exports of timber products as % of total exports	3.34	3.80	3.28	3.8

This expansion of ITPs has been opposed by some communities. From the beginning there was a general awareness of their negative impacts and they were met with various levels of resistance by people in the affected areas. In October 1989 concerned residents of Himeville and

Underberg staged a peaceful demonstration protesting against new plantations in the district but the official at the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) snubbed the demonstration. The media did not give the demonstration any significant coverage.

Pulp and Paper Mills

In southern Africa, Sappi has five timber product mills (Ngodwana, Tukela, Saiccor, Cape Kraft and the Usutu Mill in Swaziland). The Tukela and Saiccor mills are in KwaZulu-Natal, as are those of Mondi at Merebank (Durban) and Richards Bay. This concentration of four major mills is due to the close proximity of shipping facilities for product exports.

Those who defend the timber plantation industry's expansion emphasise its contribution to the economy. Industry propagandists take pride in this contribution to the national economy and by the same token, its claimed contribution to social and economic livelihoods of the working class and peasant communities. Such positive analysis as given below is commonplace in the industry's magazines and journals:

The South African forest products industry is a significant player for the country's economy, contributing 14.4% to manufacturing GDP and 2.7% to national GDP. As a major net exporter of goods, the industry continues to generate foreign exchange of approximately US\$1 billion per annum on a sustainable basis. Since its inception, and particularly during the last three decades, the industry has experienced remarkable growth, continuously outstripping the performance of the manufacturing sector domestically and the pulp and paper industry worldwide. While world production of paper and board has grown by an average annual rate of 3% since 1970, the South African industry has achieved an average growth rate of 4.7% per annum (Asia Paper Markets, no date).

The Industry also estimates direct employment in the pulp and sawmill sector to be around 15 000 in addition to which an estimated 60 000 plantation workers and transport contractors are considered to be employed directly by the industry for the growing and supply of the fibre raw materials. However in recent years, direct employment in the timber plantation sector has declined owing to a shift to contract labour and outsourcing – arguably necessitated by the need to be more competitive due to globalisation. According to Dinga Mncube, CEO of Sappi, these job losses have led to “opportunities for new, small and medium enterprises to develop, especially those owned by historically disadvantaged persons” (Interview, Dinga Mncube – CEO Sappi, November 2000). For the industry, as represented by Mncube, spin is everything. Any criticism of the fact that Sappi has laid off thousands of workers is dismissed. Instead Mncube sees this unemployment as an opportunity!

From 1996 onwards, the industry adopted a strong export focus dominated by the five largest manufacturers of pulp and paper products: Sappi, Mondi, Nampak, Kimberley-Clark and Unicell.

These five groups combined produce almost 99% of national pulp, paper and board production. The value of paper and pulp produced in South Africa in 2001 was in excess of R12 billion. Paper production was 85% of capacity. The high capital intensity of the industry makes it imperative that timber-growing operations occur close to mills. South Africa's pulp and paper exports make a significant contribution to the local economy. Most notable is dissolving pulp, used in the manufacture of viscose fibre, from the Sappi Saiccor mill which is the world's single largest producer of dissolving pulp, with an annual capacity of 600,000 tons (Asia Paper Markets, no date).

A recent proposal to construct a eucalyptus bleached chemical, thermal and mechanical pulp mill (BCTPM) with the capacity to produce 300 000 tons a year at Richards Bay is the subject of controversy. NCT Forestry Co-operative, together with Swedish forestry giant Sodra Cell, embarked on this as a joint venture. In choosing South Africa, Sodra mentioned that South Africa has "investor friendly policies, (strategic) location to major shipping destinations, the availability of eucalyptus forests and its long-term relationship with NCT" (Witness, 30 March 2004). Sodra deliberately neglected to mention that South Africa has less stringent environment laws than the developed world, and which are also very weakly implemented and monitored because of a lack of capacity and resources. The social impacts of the industry emanating from pollution and other environmental as well as operational hazards are discussed below. Subsequently Sodra Cell withdrew from the Pulp United project, apparently in response to a local oversupply of timber in Sweden resulting from forests and timber plantations being uprooted during a severe storm early in 2005.

Pollution from plantations

Timber plantations are responsible for soil and water pollution by insecticides, herbicides and other chemical contaminants used in plantations including fuel and engine oil spilt from vehicles and chain saws. Plantation trees also change soil pH and all plantation tree species used by the industry in SA invade river-courses, forests, grasslands and wetlands, necessitating the use of more polluting chemicals and fuels for their eradication. Mechanical de-stumping of old timber plantation lands is an extremely energy-intensive activity and the equipment used adds to the pollution of soils. Plantation workers are seldom provided with adequate safety equipment and are exposed to the fumes from spraying pesticides and heavy plantation vehicles. Saw mills too can cause pollution of soil, air and water in numerous ways.

Pollution from Pulp and Paper Mills

Pulp and paper mills cause pollution of water, air, and soil, with a wide range of severe negative impacts, ranging from effects on human health to effects on aquatic organisms in rivers and marine environments that become polluted as a result of effluent outfalls. Soil contamination that accumulates over time can affect biodiversity above ground as well as microorganisms in the soil. The pulp and paper industry is one of the largest and most polluting industries in the world; it is reportedly the third most polluting industry in North America.

Apart from the direct effects of pollution from timber processing mills, there is the question of how their emissions contribute to the build-up of atmospheric carbon that is the chief cause of the greenhouse effect, and subsequent global climate change. It is not just the mills' emissions, but those of the entire paper-production process that need to be accounted for – from when natural vegetation or crops are cleared to make way for ITPs till when paper or packaging is finally burned, dumped or recycled. This is sometimes referred to as 'from the cradle to the grave' or 'full life-cycle' accounting.

Wood Chip Production and Exportation

Wood chipping plants are located at Richards Bay and Durban. The Mondi owned SilvaCel mill at Richards Bay has the capacity for over two million tons of hardwood (eucalyptus and wattle) chips per year. 98% are exported to Japan and are used there in the production of pulp and paper products. The construction of the SilvaCel plant was completed in 1992 and it was upgraded in 2001 in order to double production. Also situated in Richards Bay are CTC, capacity 2,4 million tonnes p.a., and ShinCel, 0,5 million tonnes p.a.

NCT previously exported woodchips from a plant in Cato Ridge out of Durban. This chip production factory was moved to Richards Bay. NCT owns the only wood chip export facility in Durban, which began operating in August 2004, and has a capacity of 360 000 tonnes p.a. The R80 million Durban facility, called NCT Durban Wood Chips, was built to service NCT members in the southern half of KZN. NCT is a 74% shareholder in CTC and a 45% shareholder in ShinCel.

At the beginning of 2004 there was an application to build a 800 000 tonne capacity chipping plant at Richards Bay by a company called Quickstep 161 (Pty) Ltd, also known as The Richards Bay Woodchipping Company (Pty) Ltd. According to information provided by consultants involved in the environmental impact process, wood was to be sourced mainly from small growers in northern KZN, the area where Sappi is most active in promoting industrial timber plantations in the form of woodlots on community land.

The main local impacts arising from woodchipping activities are noise and dust. To overcome some of the effects of these impacts, recent designs are for enclosed mills, such as that in Durban that was enclosed owing to pressure from neighbouring businesses who demanded protection from dust arising from the chip stockpiles. It is also known that sawdust from certain hardwoods is carcinogenic, and workers in chipping mills would need to be protected.

The Timber Industry and its Public Image

The timber industry has invested millions of Rands in trying to create a positive and almost criticism-proof public image, in order to downplay public concern about its violations of environmental, social, economic and cultural rights. Using its money, the industry has hired buyable

academics, environmental specialists and champions of industrial development to sing praise to the activities of the timber industry establishment. The then Director of Conservation at the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, Keith Cooper welcomed this development saying:

We are encouraged by recent steps being taken by some of the large timber companies such as Sappi, Mondi, NTE and HL&H in appointing ecologists and conservation officers to their staff. The compilation by these companies of policy statements and Codes of Practice relating to environmental issues is also greatly welcome (Cooper, 1990: 48-49).

Recently, Sappi and Mondi have rolled out bursaries and scholarships to people from rural communities in the name of corporate social responsibility and duty to the nation. However, true to the saying, 'he who pays the piper calls the tune', these bursaries and scholarships are in fields that seek to secure advantage and add value to the industrial timber plantation sector. The bursaries and scholarships are concentrated at tertiary level (in the field of science, technology and forestry). The selection process and requirement secludes rural poor communities who come from poorly resourced schools and as such are not tailor-made to benefit children of communities affected by the daily activities of this sector. This indirectly perpetuates the marginalisation of rural and remote communities.

The industry has also launched a number of activities and projects in the name of corporate social responsibility. In these programmes the company's agenda is clearly to position itself as champion of the people's development ahead of government at any level. As one old man from Sokhulu area (an area dominated by Sappi plantations and woodlots) who was interviewed at KwaMbonambi said, "look we do not know government, we know ... we owe this development and lifestyle to them, I say long live Sappi!" (Interview, 13 December 2000, KwaMbonambi). The industry is taking advantage of the lack of government activities in rural development to assume the role of the benevolent developer so as to entice the communities to see those opposing the expansion of these industrial tree plantations as agitators and opponents of development.

The industry's approach gets more subtle and complicated as pressure against its activity mounts. Mondi has links with the Farmers Support Group (FSG) a rural development and farmer assistance agency based at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, while Sappi has worked with Lima (a rural development agency engaging with communities on land-use alternatives) to promote industrial timber production on its behalf. A Sappi official recently claimed that Sappi dissociated themselves with Lima after criticism that its links with this development agency was calculated to influence the promotion of industrial timber plantations in rural communities – as opposed to other land use activities. The trick is simple: instead of these agencies developing an alternative to timber production in rural areas and other forms of employment creation they become accountable to the Sappi-Mondi agenda. Through these relationships, the timber plantation industry is able to access every level of rural community life, without necessarily being accountable and directly responsible for the results of their policy initiatives.

Loss of Land and 'Forced' Migrant Labour Regimes

The early development of timber plantations by government went hand in hand with the demarcation of conservation areas in parts of northern KZN. Together with the establishment of military missile range on the coast next to St Lucia, these activities caused large-scale population removals since the 1960s – most of it undocumented and the affected households unknown (SPP, 1983: 248). In conservation and development planning, and particularly in the forestry sector, projects:

... were implemented with little or no regard for the people already living there ... the people of the area were not, by and large, seen as part of the total ecology of the area, with, moreover, prior claim to its resources, but as problems, obstacles which could be and frequently were moved elsewhere ... (SPP, 1983: 243).

The apartheid regime treated African peoples' interests as negotiable and transferable, cheaply satisfiable and not necessarily worthy of much consideration. At worst African interests were ignored and at the very best they were treated to sub-standard services. Once in a while they would be provided with services simply for purposes of patronage. It is not surprising that the industrial timber industry sought to patronise these rural communities at a time when its activities were drawing criticism from many sectors of the society. This is an approach that the industry brought from the apartheid era. After all, its rise to economic might is owed to the brutal means and excesses of this political phase in South African history.

Land in the areas suitable for timber plantations is usually suitable for other agricultural purposes too. In the past this has led to competition for land between farmers and timber plantation growers. In the early 1980s this led to inflation of land prices which made timber less attractive economically. The demand for land led to the displacement of commercial farmers as well as of African communities from land that was coveted for timber growing. The plight of the Ncube clan in Dukuduku, the people around Lake Bhangazi on the St Lucia Eastern Shores, and many other communities in northern KZN, is testimony to the insensitivity of the timber industry in its displacement of local communities. In the 1960s and 1970s the South African government moved people off other apartheid-designated state land to grow pines and other exotic plantation trees. Timber companies followed suit and took over company or privately owned farmland displacing the communities that had lived and worked on that land for generations.

Communities that were uprooted from their traditional areas had to move to nearby towns, some as far away as Pietermaritzburg, Durban and Johannesburg, to seek alternative livelihoods. It is difficult to quantify the impact of the activities of this industry on land dispossession, as the task of tracing the victims is extremely difficult. The timber industry, like the sugar and agriculture sector in general, presided over a process of displacement that came to shape the economic, social and political division of labour in the province. The displaced people who lost their subsistence

livelihoods had to try to survive by seeking employment in the timber and farming sectors where they had to contend with abnormally low wages. The squatter settlements around the urban centres are enough evidence of the destabilisation of traditional rural lifestyle and economy by the expansion of large scale industrialised timber and sugarcane plantations. From an environmental perspective, this disruption of previously stable communities had severe implications for adjacent protected natural areas such as the Dukuduku forest and the Mfolozi Swamps, where slash and burn subsistence agriculture and informal housing have caused major ecological damage. The timber and sugar industries have not been averse to exploiting this situation and there are now substantial plantations within the Dukuduku Forest area.

At a regional level the issue of critical thresholds for agricultural activities is important. KwaZulu-Natal has the second largest number of land claims after Mpumalanga and many of these claims fall in plantation and conservation land. Countrywide there are 103 claims in respect of conservation and plantation areas, distributed as follows:

Table 2 - The distribution of land claims since 1994

Mpumalanga	46
KwaZulu-Natal	27
Limpopo Province	8
Western Cape	6
Eastern Cape	5
North West Province	4
Northern Cape	4
Free State	3
Gauteng	0

Source: Response to a question put to the Minister of Land Affairs, National Council of the Provinces, Internal Question paper No.01-2002.

The claims in KwaZulu-Natal demonstrate the close linkage there is between apartheid forced removals and the expansion of the industrial timber industry. Many of the sites of claims are in the areas that were affected by removals that were meant to clear land earmarked for the expansion of the timber industry. Displaced communities have suffered in many ways: from the loss of their original land and the improvements they had made on that land, to disruption of traditional life and family disintegration. These losses may not necessarily be listed in terms of valuable structures and property, but also include their social attachment to, and investment in the area. Another loss experienced is in respect of their cultural sites as well as all the memories and events taking place in their lives on that land. These kinds of assets cannot be quantified or a monetary value put on them, and cannot be compensated for, even with replacement land. Upon displacement, these communities had to seek refuge and find room in already over-crowded tribal areas occupied by other groups. Negotiating for space to live, and being accepted in these areas is also not a conflict free process. For instance when around 500 families were removed from the Eastern Shores to make way for state timber plantations they took different routes, some going to Mfolozi, kaJobe, and KwaMthethwa and others to Dukuduku. Further north near Sodwana Bay, the Bhangazi (discussed below) were also displaced to create room for pine plantations. One challenge they had to deal with was that of xenophobia. The established tribes in the areas into which they moved resisted their settlement, justifiably fearing loss of land and grazing to the newcomers.

Table 3 - Details of KwaZulu Natal Land Claims

Name of claim	Agency/ management body	Area
Settled claims		
St Lucia Eastern shores	GSLWP (claim settled)	Hlabisa
Mbila	GSLWP (claim settled)	Ubombo
Portion of Ndumu (Mbangweni)	Peace Parks Foundation	
(claim settled)	Ingwavuma	
Nazareth	Financial compensation	Dundee
Mabaso	Ubombo	
Outstanding claims		
Lower Links (Jobe)	GSLWP	North coast
St Lucia Western shores	GSLWP	North coast
Lower links (Mnqobakazi)	GSLWP	North coast
Mkhuze Game Reserve	GSLWP	North coast
Coastal Forest Reserve	GSLWP	Mozambique border
Thembe Elephant Park	Peace Parks Foundation	North coast
Ndumo Game Reserve	Peace Parks Foundation	North coast
Hluhluwe Game Reserve	Ezemvelo	North coast
Mfolozi Game Reserve	Ezemvelo	North coast
Ithala Game Reserve	Ezemvelo	Zululand
Cathedral Peak	Ezemvelo	Drakensberg
Swamp (near Bulwer)	Ezemvelo	Bulwer
Pitela	Ezemvelo	Bulwer
Impenjane	Ezemvelo	South coast
Mbumbazi	Ezemvelo	South coast
Vernon Crookes	Ezemvelo	South coast
Lions River	Ezemvelo	Midlands
False Bay Nature Reserve	Ezemvelo	North coast
Ngome State Forest	DWAF	Zululand
Dukuduku	DWAF	North coast
Phinda and Portion of Lower Mkhuze Links	State and private	North coast
Mapelane Nature Reserve	Ezemvelo	North coast

Source: Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA).

Agriculture and Food Self-sufficiency in Timber Plantation Areas

People residing in rural communities are still largely dependent on land-based economic activities for their livelihood, and produce a sizeable portion of the food they consume. The average rural household accesses its livelihood from multiple and combined activities – in which subsistence agriculture at various levels is still important. As argued by Deborah Bryceson (2000), many families have experienced a reduction in the contribution of agriculture to their livelihoods. The tendency has moved towards selling their labour, depending on remittances from old age pensions, grants and other welfare packages, brewing alcohol for sale and a host of other sources of income. Indeed, Bryceson's central argument and observation that there is a tendency to move towards the disappearing of the peasantry, captured in a book with the title, *Disappearing Peasantries: Rural Labour in Africa, Asian and Latin America* (2000) is quite accurate.

Traditionally, crop farming among the Zulu communities has depended on specific ecological conditions. Some areas were exclusively cattle farming zones, while others combined crops, cattle, and other domestic animals. These communities maintained a satisfactory level of food self-sufficiency. They grew what they needed and bought additional commodities only when necessary, as during times of drought. This is fast becoming a thing of the past. Land alienation and deliberate proletarianisation of Africans have played a part in this. The expansion of the timber industry and the growing of industrial timber monocultures led to the further erosion of food self-sufficiency. As land for maize, sorghum, millet and other food crops traditionally grown in the rural sphere became scarce people increasingly depended on bought food.

Increasingly, land is being planted to non-food industrial crops. Traditional agriculture involved rotational planting with land fallowing, which allowed for recuperation of the soil. With the greater part of the land planted to timber trees for a period of not less than twenty years, such soil rejuvenation techniques cannot be applied. Many people find themselves forced to buy more processed foods as a result. People in Khula village, where people were allocated residential stands, must travel long distances to Monzi where plots of land designated for agricultural use are situated. This kind of land use specification failed to take into account the multiplicity of activities that people, especially women, have to handle, and that make it difficult to deal with long distances to their food gardens. As a result, growing of crops suffers, as people prefer to hang on to other livelihood strategies.

Poverty and Health Impacts

The enduring legacy of rural under-development and the scourge of poverty are serious problems in rural areas of South Africa. It is more pronounced in KwaZulu-Natal and one of the nightmares in these areas is the lack of government planning for poverty eradication. Communities face higher levels of unemployment, under-capitalisation, HIV/AIDS, high infant mortality rates, and malnutrition. These factors make rural people more vulnerable to losing their land to timber

companies. The timber industry promises to address these problems as part of its corporate social responsibility to these communities. People that contract with the timber giants to grow timber are promised improved standards of living through income and employment creation. It is on these issues that the economic impacts of the industry will be assessed.

Employment and Income

As discussed in the section on Agriculture and Food Self-sufficiency (above), households that have access to a variety of livelihood entitlements are better able to sustain themselves. Rural conditions make it impossible for a household to survive on only one form of economic activity. Given that many activities can be defined as subsistence in nature, households try many different little things to command a certain level of livelihood, albeit below the poverty line. The South African Timber Growers' Association (SATGA), which organises individual timber growers, acknowledged that the expansion of big timber business into rural areas had led to opposition from established farming communities and a negative image for plantations. According to the South African Cane Growers' Association's calculations, there are more employment opportunities for rural people in sugar cane than in timber. Sugar cane provides one job for each 5 ha, while timber plantations employ only one for each 18 ha (The Mercury, 3 October 1996).

The timber industry claims to offer higher average wages than other agricultural sectors where people are employed directly and not contracted. Contract workers get minimal wages as contractors exploit their workers to increase their own profit margins. The people employed by Umbonambi Forestry Services who contract for planting eucalyptus in the SiyaQhubeka KwaMbonambi plantation earn an average of R22 a day worked, compared to R48 for their supervisor, and they are only paid for the days that they work. This is below the minimum wage legislated by government (Interview, Miniyenkosi Mkhwanazi December 2005). The implication is that if for any reason such as illness they cannot make it to work, they are not paid. The number of days that they work during a month depends on the amount of work available from the contractor. During the season when trees are not being planted there is no work and they are not compensated. When the contractor's vehicle is out of order or when the supervisor does not come to work, the contract workers cannot do any work and therefore will not be paid. Contract workers in this sector do not have union representation.

The timber industry benefits substantially from sub-contracting as it is relieved of the responsibility of paying for non-productive labour. Nor does it have to suffer bad publicity or time-consuming negotiations when workers go out on strike. Most of the employment needs of the timber companies are sourced out to contractors who are not always obliged to offer fringe benefits associated with permanent employment. Many of these contractors prefer to use immigrants who are prepared to work for lower wages and cannot belong to a labour union.

Water Availability and Access Concerns

The National Water Act (No 34 of 1998) declared timber plantations a major stream flow reduction activity and introduced a new form of licensing for both new and existing plantations, replacing the permit system introduced in 1996. The timber plantation industry raised concerns about a number of items in the Act including:

- The separation of water use rights from property rights;
- The issuing of water licenses for a maximum period of 40 years;
- The classification of forestry as the only declared stream flow reduction activity;
- The almost unlimited power granted to the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry to control all aspects of water; and
- The prescriptive nature of the Act and almost total reliance on administrative mechanisms to manage and allocate water to the exclusion of any market driven mechanism.

The objections and concerns raised by the industry are not surprising given the general arrogance and denialism with which it responds to all issues that pertain to the negative impacts from its activities.

The issue of water is one that deserves special attention in terms of its social, cultural and economic impacts on local communities. The impact of timber monocultures on water is usually addressed from an environmental point of view while its social impact is neglected. Historically, until the late 1980s this could be ascribed to the fact that the social impacts of plantations especially affect rural poor black people and (with exceptions) the largely white body of environmental activists were concerned with green issues and not people impacts. However, things have changed with the rise of the environmental justice movement during the early 1990s, which now dwarfs the traditional conservation movement in terms of numbers of activists. The timber industry has been fairly labeled as the ‘chief water thief’. In KZN, thirsty timber plantations are often situated high up in the water catchments, short-changing downstream water users. According to Boet Fourie, a former Natal Agricultural Union (NAU) president, these exotic trees are like a “giant water pumps, which suck up ground water before it reaches the rivers” (The Mercury 3 October 1996). A study carried out in the Drakensberg indicated that over a period of 20 years, grasslands converted to plantations suffered a staggering 82% reduction in stream flows. (Witness, 4 March 1998) The impact of water flow reduction is particularly crucial in the dry season. South Africa is already a water scarce country, without the implications of supporting a water wasting industry.

In rural community areas, especially in the study area, the loss of surface water has severely negative implications for people’s ability to survive. Plantations cause small springs, streams and ponds to disappear, and this forces people to move into ecologically sensitive marginal areas to find water for their livestock and vegetable gardening. Crops like bananas and amadumbis (*Colocasia* sp.) require permanently moist soils, as do reeds and sedges used extensively for weaving sleeping mats and baskets. In Sabokwe village the water shortage problem is a theme that cropped up in

many interviews. The most articulate view about water availability in relation to the timber industry came from one of the senior women in Sabokwe, Mrs Ziqubu (April, 2005) who argued:

The thing is that we compete for water with these plantations. They use up a lot of water. I remember when we go here in 1996, the stream close to our garden was running perennially because the eucalyptus trees were not here. This piece of land from here to the road up there was grassland. The company feared that we would plant our crops and build our houses on that land so they quickly planted it to trees. Since then, water has become scarcer. The stream is drying up. The land, which we had to drain because it was swampy, has become very dry. We used to dig very small wells to water the reclaimed land. Now we have to dig deeper and we get the water from far away. Water for drinking has also equally become scarce. We also have to fetch water for our cattle, chickens and goats, besides the water for domestic consumption. This makes the work for women even harder. We have a co-operative garden run by women from this community which we fenced with assistance from the Department of Agriculture, yet we face big problems with watering it. We fetch water in buckets on our heads – and the women's garden project involves very old women. This is not a way to live and do business. The problem of water is as crucial as the access to land itself. You may get land, but without water there is very little one can do with the land. So we are here in the middle of a desert created by the plantation industry. To think that they do not even assist with drilling of boreholes, construction of windmills or other such water technology. This is why I said earlier that we are left to pay for the costs of these unconsidered impacts of the industry.

The question of water and timber plantations is a very important one in a country like South Africa, where water is scarce and also very important for rural communities which were allocated land in the areas they were because the land was not good enough for European agriculture and settlement.

Gender Issues

Women and men are affected differently by various activities in the industrial timber plantations sector. A number of factors result in greater pressure on women from timber plantations. These factors should be read in the context of the culturally and historically defined division of labour among women and men in a patriarchal society, complicated by colonial economic policies. It is much easier for men to leave their community to search for jobs. For women this is made difficult by the caring roles that tie them to children and old people requiring their attention. For those that decide to remain, the issue of access to land and the capacity to determine what should be done on it also affects men and women differently. While there are many women involved in timber out-growing (woodlots), they do not reap the same benefits as men. Table 5 below indicates that 75 per

cent of the growers are female. The weakness in these figures is that they do not indicate which women grow trees on male-owned plots. Table 5 indicates that in all of the seven study areas, women either own or run the majority of the projects. However, Table 5 below shows that much of the land planted to trees is owned and/or controlled by male members of the community. An interesting observation from the gendered distribution of growers is that while there are more women growers, the men's plots have a bigger average size. Women growers average approximately 1.43ha/grower, while men have an average of 4.92ha/grower. This is a factor rising from the gender-biased distribution of and access to land. Men generally receive preference in the allocation of community land.

Table 4 - Gender and Geographical Distribution of Growers

Area	Female Growers	Male Growers
Biyela	109	33
Hlabisa	661	195
KwaMbonambi	367	172
Mbazwana	528	105
Mfekayi	344	124
Nkandla	89	31
Sokhulu	302	133
Total	2407	793

Source: Karumbidza, 2001.

3. Research and Field Work Findings: Case Studies

a) The SiyaQhubeka Consortium

Industry Commitment to Black Empowerment and Community Benefits

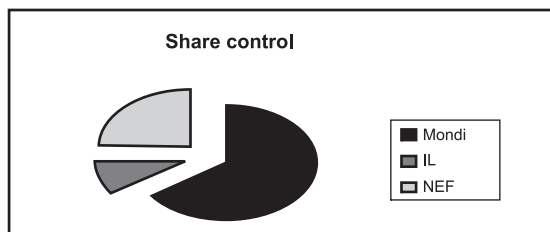
South Africa's transition to a democratic state in 1994 was accompanied by an economic transformation process that emphasised privatisation of parastatals including the privatisation of state timber plantations managed by the South African Forestry Company Limited (SAFCOL). In the name of black economic empowerment policy initiatives, DWAF made plans for the devolution of these state forests to rural communities, promising for the first time to allow them to own shares in the multi-million Rand timber industry. However, the process soon became very complicated involving high power bids, punctuated by political interference. Poor rural communities, which lacked the sophistication and the money to compete in these open market processes, were sidelined. As a matter of policy, people working for SAFCOL were not allowed to form companies and bid, which led to retrenchments without alternatives for securing livelihoods. With the poor rural communities excluded and SAFCOL workers barred from forming their own companies to compete in the bids, the devolution process failed to benefit the people who had contributed to the development of the industry.

Generally, SAFCOL did not attract much interest from the international investment portfolios as investors snubbed the timber industry as broadly unattractive and not priority area of investment. The reasons for this included, among other things, the wrong perceptions that timber plantations faced a strict regulatory regime, coupled with the cost of land rentals, an impending land tax, increased water tariffs, costly labour legislation and a lack of competition policy assurances. As a result of the low profile of the timber industry, only five bidders were short-listed for all the SAFCOL properties throughout the country, with the Western Cape and Limpopo provinces having received not a single one (Witness, 26 October 1999).

Through this process, northern KZN's SAFCOL plantations (involving 25 000 ha bought at R100m) were transferred to a joint venture group called SiyaQhubeka - made up of Mondi and Imbokodo Lemabalabala (IL) Holding Company, a black empowerment company controlled by ex-officials of DWAF in the name of communities. This followed the Eastern Cape Singisi deal that saw state plantations transferred to a joint venture of Hans Merensky (a private timber company) and the Singilanga Community Trust – which had plans to involve community leaders and communities neighbouring the plantation estate. By December 2001, SiyaQhubeka plantations had become the second package to be transferred from SAFCOL to a consortium with claimed community involvement. When launching the programme, Public Enterprise Minister, Jeff Radebe, together with then Water and Forestry Affairs Minister, Ronnie Kasrils, emphasised that “a strong community involvement will ensure that, through the forestry initiative, black economic empowerment is fostered and local residents uplifted” (Witness, 1 October 2002). Part of the deal is to phase out timber plantations from part of the western shores of Lake St. Lucia over a five-year period. The rehabilitated land would be incorporated into the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park, adding 11 000 ha.

The consortium's shareholding amounts to 75% with Mondi holding an initial 65% while IL has a 10% stake. Government, through SAFCOL, the National Empowerment Fund and employees, holds 25% of the shares. Mondi committed to transfer 14% of its interest in SiyaQhubeka to rural black timber farmers, communities and the empowerment shareholders, thereby reducing its share over time to 51%. Mondi proposed to transfer this 14% to the small growers participating in Mondi's Khulanathi out-grower scheme. One could fairly conclude that SiyaQhubeka is nothing more than a Mondi partnership with government (sharing 90% between them) rather than a genuine empowerment deal. There is also no definite time frame put in place for the transfer of Mondi's shares to the community, and this transfer will come as Mondi's initiative rather than of the community or government.

Chart 1 - The Distribution of SiyaQhubeka Shares



It was agreed upon transfer that, wherever possible "local communities and black South Africans are given opportunities to benefit from the industrial activities of the company" (SA Forestry, Sept/Oct. 2004: 24). Much of the timber grown by SAFCOL was unsuitable for Mondi's pulping needs, as it was largely pine and mostly in saw-log rotations. Instead of investigating alternative land uses that could direct SiyaQhubeka towards developing agri-forestry, the land cleared of pines is being quickly converted to eucalyptus, a task that will take five years to complete. The unplanted areas are also being planted to eucalyptus, without the option of any alternative land use.

SiyaQhubeka controls three separate land holdings. St. Lucia plantation in the north has 12 550 ha planted. It runs along the western border of the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park and is entirely enclosed within the park game fence. The reasoning behind this was to allow elephant, buffalo and rhino access to SiyaQhubeka's plantation lands, including 2171 ha of unplanted areas. North of Richards Bay is the KwaMbonambi plantation which has 6 257 ha of trees and 1516 ha of unplanted areas. To the south of Empangeni, is the Port Durnford plantation (3010 ha) with 947 ha of unplanted areas. Altogether SiyaQhubeka has 21 817 ha of timber plantations, and 4634 ha of land not planted to industrial plantations. The unplanted areas are mostly roads, servitudes, service areas, firebreaks and unplantable slopes or wetlands.

In making the decision to award the deal to SiyaQhubeka, DWAF emphasised that local community members in the three areas where the plantations are found, namely Mtubatuba, KwaMbonambi and Port Durnford, would be sub-contracted to provide services. The key activities around which contracts are sourced: planting, slashing and clearing bush in the plantations and, to an extent, clear felling. Felling trees has recently become increasingly mechanised with the industry acquiring integrated machines that cut, strip and stack the logs, making them ready for loading. Felling is one of the most labour intensive and expensive processes. By mechanising this stage of the timber management process, this limits the potential for job creation in the sector. It is not surprising that the only community contractors that are operational in the former SAFCOL plantations are only involved in planting and cleaning plantations. These are processes that do not require heavy capital investment. In many of the contracts, the workers actually use their own tools. Examples of these include Umbonambi Forestry Services (UFS), which was awarded the contract to plant SiyaQhubeka's eucalyptus trees at KwaMbonambi plantation. UFS employs only 17 people with one supervisor and expects its team of workers to plant at the rate of 6 ha per day. In the Mtubatuba plantation, Thalaku, a joint ownership contractor of three entrepreneurs from the Khula Village in Dukuduku, is involved in slashing and clearing undergrowth in the plantations. Thalaku employs in the range of 40 to 45 people depending on the size of the contract. It also contracts to undertake pine sapling removal from the St. Lucia Eastern Shores area that is being rehabilitated for conservation purposes.

b) Woodlots and Small Grower Issues

In the final analysis the opportunity cost of growing timber versus other agricultural activities and other non-agricultural activities needs to be determined so that they can inform development planning and initiatives. Small timber growers are growing trees for profit, and as discussed, this cash income makes up one more part of the average family's total income. This situation is similar to that found among small sugar-cane growers in KwaZulu-Natal. Vaughan (1995) states that while cane production has had a "huge" impact on the overall volume of income generated in certain communities, for individual households the income is only supplementary. The same is true of small timber producers; the small size of average landholding simply precludes timber as a viable full time farming option. In terms of the opportunity cost, the results of Cellier's research (1994: 144) indicate that growers do not believe they are giving up land or time from other activities to grow trees. Grazing land may be sacrificed for trees (as suggested by Cairns, 1993), but this was not evident from the discussions held with growers. Most farmers keep some cattle, and these animals use whatever land is available. It is likely, therefore, that grazing pressure will increase with the spread of woodlots, and lead to conflict situations or a transition whereby woodlots replace cattle as a measure of wealth. Lyne and Nieuwoudt (1990) suggest that herd sizes decrease where sugar-cane and timber have been introduced in response to an increase in the opportunity cost of lost grazing land. A detailed analysis is needed to determine to what extent the introduction of woodlots in an area might lead to overgrazing on surrounding land. Other factors including loss of surface water, shading out of grassland plants, and restriction of the use of fire as a grazing resource management tool, must be assessed in order to establish how they impact on pasture quality and livestock numbers, in order to determine the economic impacts of woodlots.



Plantations and harvest of eucalyptus



Tourism plays an important part in creating employment for people who sell their woodcarvings on the roadside near Lake St Lucia



Large volumes of eucalyptus timber are exported in the form of woodchips, where little value is added and very few people are employed



As timber plantations expand, more people move into the rare forests of the region, causing even more environmental damage



Eucalyptus plantation in South Africa



Women working in the plantations are usually employed through contractors and earn low wages for doing work that is physically demanding and often dangerous



Manguzi plantation in South Africa



Large volumes of eucalyptus timber are exported in the form of woodchips, where little value is added and very few people are employed





People in Mtubatuba can make a good living selling craft objects made from locally available resources



Blessing Karumbidza (left) with a Slovoville villager and his groundnut crop



Women with sedge that is used to make sleeping mats. These plants have become very scarce where wetlands are impacted by eucalyptus plantations



A typical eucalyptus plantation near Mtubatuba. Young native forest trees can be seen growing among the eucalyptus trees



Roads near Mavuya are damaged by heavy timber trucks creating dangerous conditions for other motorists



The Sappi pulp mill at Ngodwana (Mpumalanga Province) pollutes the atmosphere and the nearby Elands River



People in Sabokwe do at least have small plots of land, but because they are so poor, their homes are built using any material that can be found

In the usual, social responsibility manner, Dinga Mncube (the CEO of SAPPI) suggests that the project allows women to perform maternal duties while supplementing their household income, in a situation where many of the men are employed elsewhere as migrant workers. This is important in a society where women are in the majority and are fundamental players in the rural economy (Personal Interview with Mncube, 1998). There is, however, no evidence of sufficient capacity to raise women’s income in absolute terms while significantly increasing income as a proportion of total household income. Instead, the scheme has led to an increased burden on women who already are treated as beasts of burden, carrying all the drudgery of rural life. As the Eucalyptus trees that are grown are perceived to have more value being sold to the timber companies than as firewood, women still depend on wood collected from natural woodlands or forests for their daily heating and cooking energy needs. Women also tend the fields for subsistence crops as well as taking care of other survival chores in the homestead. The task of growing trees for sale further compounds their already difficult work.

According to Alice A. Ojwang (1999: 85), one of the biggest problems with contract farming is its unequal power relations between the companies and growers – which expose women’s exploitation through unpaid labour as they work the farms whilst the men control the benefits. She also highlights the fact that in the competition for land and labour between cash crops and food crops it is women that are most affected.

Table 5 - Project Grow Growers Distribution by Gender by December 1999

Growers	Number of Growers	Area in ha	Average in ha
Female growers	2407	3 431	1.43
Male growers	793	3 934	4.92
Total	3200	7 365	2.3

Source: Karumbidza (2001).

Even though women officially own woodlots, by virtue of having entered into a contract with Sappi, they cannot use the proceeds from the sale of their timber. These are taken away from them by the male household heads (Interview with Mr Bheki Gumede – 12 May 2000 in Karumbidza, 2001: xxxiv). Rural family life is patriarchal and the status of the male head is unchallenged. It is usually the male head who will make the important decisions in the family.

Women are potentially affected by contract timber growing in two ways. As members of grower-households, they are affected by the shifts in labour allocation and income generation within the household arising from the contract tree growing activities. They are also affected by the shifts in employment opportunities resulting from direct and indirect hiring by agribusiness. Another important development is the increasing contestation of land ownership and access to land by women. In Nongoma for example, in 1993, a woman-headed household lost its land to a male-

headed extended family for tree growing. Even though this matter was referred to the induna (headman) of the area – the household is still struggling to regain its land (Interview with Mr Bheki Gumede – 12 May 2000 in Karumbidza, 2001: xxxiv). There are however two issues here: one of traditional inheritance; and access to land by female members of traditional society.

Theoretically, and very often in practice, tree growing offers an economic option to rural women who have no other opportunity, provided they have access to some suitable land. In the Sappi project, women hold more than 75 per cent of the growing contracts. A study of Mondi's Khulanathi project by Cellier (1994: 72), however, indicated that many woodlots are contractually owned by men, but actually worked by women. Friedman (1991) contends that, depending on how the contractual arrangements work out, the labour aspects have the potential to boost men's cash income although women do the work. That aspect of the contract that provides for cash payments to contract growers highlights the issue. The payment procedures are such that the contract holder can approach the company for an advance payment when some plantation management task has been completed. The contract holder or grower can then pay out the money to those who were responsible for carrying out the task. Where family labour carried out the task, the grower may not claim for it, so as to keep the repayable loan as low as possible. However, many growers claim the money for other personal purposes unrelated to the woodlot. This money seldom benefits the women and children who did the work as men often consider them already paid by virtue of staying in their homestead.

The role of women in these economies is complicated by the lack of mainstreaming of female involvement and participation in broader issues. Women are largely considered as reproductive rather than productive, as noted in the UNDP Human Development Report (1990: 34):

... much of the work that women do is invisible in national accounting and censuses, despite its obvious productive and social worth. The reason is that women are heavily involved in small-scale agriculture, the informal sector and household activities – areas where data are notoriously deficient. The low value attached to women's work requires a fundamental remedy: if women's work was more fully accounted for, it would become clear how much women count in development, as well as determining how they are affected by specific interventions.

As a result of the gendered division of labour, women are most pressured and affected by rural poverty, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS has further complicated their situation. As primary caregivers, responsible for the bulk of the childcare process as well as the sustenance of the rural economy, the effects of industrial timber plantations on women are more apparent. The workload of women is determined by the hours spent on different tasks. Three categories of activities were considered in determining how timber production and related activities affect the situation of women. These were:

- farm work, which included crop production activities and animal husbandry,
- off-farm work, such as work for contractors or trading (away from their land, homestead or farm), and
- non-farm work, which included domestic chores, craft-work, among many other community services and productive functions that have nothing to do with farming – but happening within the context of the land, homestead or farm.

Women are affected by the timber industry through involvement as workers, as growers, or because they reside close to or inside plantations. For many it is because their livelihood activities depend on what happens in the industry. Those that work are affected by differential wages or the ability (or lack of it) to access skilled or better paying jobs. Timber growers are affected by their ability to command access to adequate land to ensure profitability, as well as retaining or independently deciding how to use the proceeds from the sale of the wood.

Women's time is shared amongst a multiplicity of activities, for which production responsibilities (food, the availability of water and energy for home use) compete with the reproduction responsibilities (childbirth, caring for and raising children). A sample of 11 women (6 in Khula and 5 in Zwelitsha) were asked about their daily routine and how they divide their time. The results were tabulated and indicated that women spend about 24.5% of their time on gardening activities, 8.1% on activities related to animal husbandry, 31.1% on off-farm activities and 36.3% on non-farm activities. Asked the same questions, 5 women from the village close to the University of Zululand (Esikhaweni) spent 49% of their time on gardening activities, and devoted 16% to animal husbandry activities, with off-farm activities taking up 23% and non-farm activities 12% of their time. In KZN, as in Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape and other largely rural provinces, rural life and social organisation is still mostly land-based and households derive their sustenance from agriculture related activities (May 2002).

In Khula and Zwelitsha villages, as a result of tourist activities, women involve themselves in activities such as mat weaving, petty trading, curio sourcing or making, bead work and other handcraft. The caring duties of women are being complicated by the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS in society. All the families interviewed indicated that they knew someone close to them who had died of diseases caused by the virus, and are caring for their AIDS-affected orphans. Elderly people used to be assisted by younger members of the community, but this has since become difficult with many younger people dying first. This also puts more of a strain on the old-age pension grants, which help sustain many rural families.

The advent of industrial timber planting activities in these rural communities complicates the nutrition and caring role of women. When water becomes scarce it is women who have to walk longer distances to fetch water. It is women who have to wake up much earlier to get water for the household. It was also argued by the industry that woodlots would make fuel wood more available, but the fact is that the industrial timber woodlots are valued more for their potential to generate monetary income, and not for fuel wood provision (Karumbidza, 2001: 59).

Social and Cultural Issues

As pointed out in the interview with Mr Mbonambi (see above), there are many social and cultural impacts of industrial tree growing on rural communities in South Africa. Analysis of the differentiation among contract farmers fails to take into account the original differentiation in terms of access to land – which is very critical in determining levels of profitability (Karumbidza, 2001: 105). Ojwang (1999: 90) also reached similar conclusions that those who have access to larger pieces of land are advantaged and some of these growers have moved up to a different social class acting as labour contractors and transporters of raw timber to mills. These ad hoc contract schemes and the timber industry activities compromise the traditional self-sufficient livelihood system which was replaced by dependency upon the activities of timber companies and casual wage labour. This transformation has important resonances for culture. Where such jobs are not available in more remote rural areas, getting into the pool of labour requires that individuals leave the rural space and move to urban or peri-urban settings. In industrial farming, plantation and mining environments, job seekers may have to live in compounds and squatter camps where life is different from the rural village life to which they are accustomed, affecting the way they do things and ultimately reshaping their culture and values. In urban and working environments, the communalism of rural life is traded with the individualism of the market based urban space. The traditional rituals, which were practiced under specific trees, with specific cultural regalia become difficult to continue with. Under these circumstances, the culture of a people is highly compromised.

Loss of Natural Vegetation

The loss of diverse scenery to a monotonous blanket of timber plantations creates an eyesore whose impact cannot be easily quantified. The sadness felt by Alan Paton, the famous South African author of *Toward the Mountain* is shared by farmers and other rural inhabitants, conservationists and environmentalists, as more and more land is converted to tree plantations. High rainfall areas of the KZN Midlands and Lowlands, including Bulwer, as well as in East Griqualand in the North-eastern Cape and the Richards Bay and Lake St. Lucia catchment areas have fallen victim to timber plantation expansion. This increased sharply in the late 1980s in a bid by the industry to supply international demand for timber products. Concerned farmers and residents complained to *The Natal Witness* (3 July 1989) that they were:

... very concerned that afforestation is taking over good agricultural land and natural grassland, soaking up their water resources and having a detrimental effect on the socio-economic viability of their communities. We are very worried about our livelihood. Trees are being planted on the farms where our water comes from, and this means we will be short of water in the future.

In the northern part of KZN province, plantation encroachment has had the same negative effect on natural grasslands. According to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (the provincial conservation services), in the Eastern Shores area of Lake St. Lucia:

Forestry activities, begun in the late 1950s, have imposed constraints on the way the area has been burned. Since planting of the first pine plantations, most of the fires have been put set under cool and clammy conditions so that the fires do not get out of control. The result has been that fires have been slow burning and cool, which promoted the expansion of forests and loss of grasslands (Wetlands Wire, 2 (3): Dec 2004/Jan 2005, 12).

A process of land rehabilitation has recently begun that involves the removal of the pines, planting of indigenous grasses, and encouraging hot burns to exclude regeneration of woody vegetation, as well as rebuilding animal numbers and diversity.

Transport as a Social Issue

The timber industry uses road more than rail in transporting its logs and other products. Recently it has come under fire from government for the deterioration of public roads as well as increasing road accidents. Some of the costs transferred to society by these activities and subsidised by government may not be immediately clear. However, these can be calculated in increases on road accidents, loss in human life due to fast deteriorating road conditions, maintenance costs transferred via taxes to other road users, traffic congestion, and so forth. Taxpayer money is diverted from social welfare and other social development initiatives each time government increases budgetary votes to the Road Accident Fund to contain the increasing claims from accidents.

Responding to public criticism of the negative impact of increased use of road by the sector, the timber industry launched the Load Accreditation Programme (LAP) to encourage truckers to operate within a set of standards spanning driver wellness, vehicle maintenance, load securement and vehicle operation within permissible mass ranges. This initiative was a direct response to the increasing number of accidents involving heavy vehicles and long-distance hauliers. It was initiated by the CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), National Productivity Institute (NPI) and Forest Engineering South Africa (FESA) a company that services the timber industry. The industry is subsidising an incentive-driven programme with participating hauliers set to qualify for a number of concessions including discounted insurance premiums and excess payments, reduced license fees and toll road fees. The government funds this programme through the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Forestry South Africa under the DTI's Sector Partnership Fund. Funds that should be available for welfare and development in the underdeveloped sectors of society are channelled to subsidise operations in the big business sector.

The poor state of many feeder roads in rural KZN is a matter of great concern, as those providing access to plantations are not adequately surfaced to handle heavy loads. These roads are shared with the tourism sector, and undermine the efforts to increase tourist flows into these remote areas and create an opportunity for improving the rural economy. The destruction of these roads by heavy timber vehicles often makes them impassable for the local communities as well as the tourists – the majority of whom cannot afford four-wheel drive vehicles.

c) The Case of the Bhangazi/Mbuyazi People

500 families of the Bhangazi people lived on land near Lake Bhangazi on the Eastern Shores called Nkokhweni. To make way for industrial timber plantations they were uprooted by the government between 1950 and 1970. Their land claim was the first to be settled in a KZN protected area, seeing each family walk away with R30 000 minus occupation rights of what is now part of the Greater St. Lucia Wetlands Park. Through the Wetlands Park Authority and the Land Claims Commission, the people of Nkokhweni have been given a site to enable them to honour their ancestors buried there, and establish a cultural village, craft market and small lodge. Culturally, this means that the community will have controlled and limited rights of access not only to their land, but also to their ancestors and cultural practices.

The Bhangazi Trust was formed to work together with the GSLWPA and Ephraim Mfeka (who was five years old at the time of the removals) is now chairperson of the Trust. A documentary produced by Eddie Koch on the Mbuyazi people's land and development struggle called 'The Buffalo Thorn' (for the SABC-TV environment programme 50/50) tells how the social and cultural life of the people are closely linked to their land, environment and nature. It tells a story of a modern-day journey by an old man, Baba Mthethwayo, and others, travelling in a minibus taxi to the new heritage site, carrying the spirit of their dead leader in the branches of a buffalo-thorn tree. This cultural practice demonstrates the inseparable link between life and environment in African society. Notwithstanding the R30 000 per family compensation paid, as well as the right of access to a cultural site, the social, cultural and economic lives of the affected community will never be fully recovered. Through the Bhangazi Trust, the community will receive money from gate fees, which will be used in community development projects. However, to date, gate fees collected have not been channelled into projects that might benefit the community.

d) The Case of the Dukuduku People

Dukuduku, (which means the forest you can disappear in) is the largest coastal lowland forest in Southern Africa and is situated at the gateway to the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park, a World Heritage Site. Since 1988, it has been at the centre of a conflict between informal settlers and government conservationists. The Dukuduku area comprises 11 000 hectares of forest and 9 000 ha of alien timber plantations. As stated earlier, original communities had been removed from the area by the state to make way for pine plantations to supply the demand for construction timber and pulp. Since the late 1980s, other people from various locations have been settling in the forest resulting in considerable conflict between conservation officers and settlers, and making some parts of the conservation area no-go zones for government agencies.

What started as a settlement of a handful in 1988 had become a stream of thousands by 1993 ... (Mercury, 10 January 1998).

According to the Mercury (25 June 1989), in October 1988 there was evidence of harvesting of non-timber forest products for subsistence, but there was no sign of homes being built. But, by February 1989, there were dozens of beehive huts and squatter shack settlements in the thick vegetation, and every week, scores of new people were arriving to set up home in the forest. This has been linked, among other things, to promises of jobs made by Richards Bay Minerals (RBM), who wanted to mine the dunes on the nearby St. Lucia Eastern Shores. However, it also had to do with removals of people in the vicinity or displacements due to timber and sugar plantation expansion, 'illegal' immigrants seeking work in the area, particularly war refugees from Mocambique, and people wishing to maintain livelihoods independent of the controls existing over more formal settlements (keeping cattle, growing dagga (cannabis), using forest products, and so on, as illustrated later).

The Dukuduku forest was declared a protected area in the early 1950s to conserve more than 6 000 ha of coastal lowland forest, that was home to three animal, twelve bird, and many plant species listed in the Red Data Book of rare, threatened or endangered species. The apartheid government charged the settlers under the Forestry Act of 1984 and the Illegal Squatting Act of 1951. In a test case heard in the Mtubatuba magistrate's court on 16 July 1990 (Witness, 17 July 1990), seven of the estimated 1500 occupants of the forest were found guilty. Sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment or a R1000 fine – suspended for five years, they were given a month to leave the area. However, the complication was that even if the forest was an unsuitable place for the people to live in, particularly as it offered very poor grazing for cattle and goats (R. Van Wyk, Interview, December 2004) there was no alternative land onto which the people could move. The landlessness that had originally forced many of these people to settle there was a result of apartheid government policies that restricted where people could live. It therefore became government's responsibility to find alternative land for these communities. Many of these people had previously moved into tribal homeland areas, under pressure from expanding sugar and timber plantations.

One of the accused at the 16 July 1990 court case, an elderly induna, Velaphi Dube, had explained: "In 1973 we were chased out, our huts burned, our cattle chased away. We decided to come back because we were hungry and the Government is not using the land..." (Witness, 17 July 1990). The state's case was based on the interpretation of aerial photographs, indicating that the forest had never been settled on a permanent basis. There might have not been permanent settlement there before, yet it is not in dispute that neighbouring and outlying communities would have derived benefits, harvesting timber and non-timber products for subsistence purposes. It is known however that the adjacent land on which Dukuduku plantations were established was previously occupied by the Ncube tribe, and is still considered among the Zulu people as Ncube territory. The Ncube people moved back to their ancestral land to avoid the growing crush of people around Mtubatuba (Witness, 17 July 1990).

The last people residing in the forest vicinity had been removed by departmental officials under a court order in 1973, yet by 1987 they were coming back with their cattle and belongings. Another forest dweller told journalists what had attracted him to the forest, leaving his low-paying job with the timber industry:

There are economic benefits to living in the forests. No rates are payable, dwellers receive a plot of land to develop at will, and people live off trees of the forest, which can be used as firewood, building material or shaped into crafts to sell to tourists on their way to St. Lucia (Daily News, 3 August 1999).

The forest provided a very good place to grow vegetables, as the soil was rich. People who had been displaced from these lands returned to use slash-and-burn agriculture to grow fruit and vegetables for survival, as well as harvesting reeds for mats, and growing cannabis as a cash crop. In 1998 the government agreed to the purchase of alternative land for their resettlement as two neighbouring farms had become available (*Sunday Tribune*, 29 November 1998). The Norwegian Government had made a grant of R31 million for the establishment of an alternative settlement near Futululu. A six-member task team chaired by then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Kader Asmal, proposed that one-third of the land be left protected under conservation, while the already badly damaged two-thirds be given to the settlement of the squatters.

The government realised that their chances of resolving the Dukuduku case could only lie in an arrangement that allowed settlement in part of the forest and the regeneration of the other part – resolution by accommodation. In 1993, the Natal Provincial Administration had started the construction of the Dukuduku North settlement (now Khula Village) to encourage people to move out of the southern side of the forest. Khula village was fully established in 1998 but some people remained in the south, resisting the promise of legal title in Khula settlement plus gaining access to farming land on the newly acquired land near Monzi. The official view was that the new community would benefit from converting part of the forest through establishing eco-tourism ventures.

There was a huge campaign against the settlement of any sort on any part of the forest by the Parks Authority who incessantly exposed the damage to the forest using an avalanche of aerial photographs taken over fifteen years. Besides the degradation argument, the authenticity of the claimants was challenged by alleging that certain officials in Ulundi (then home of the KwaZulu homeland administration) and elsewhere had profited by parcelling out plots in Dukuduku to landless people from remote regions of KZN, as well as from Mocambique. The fact that the majority of the forest dwellers were living in poverty was therefore seen as the result of the shameless opportunism of the leaders of the settlers, rather than the lack of rights to access and development opportunities. The *Sunday Tribune* (25 June 1989) published a report that permission was being granted in Ulundi to plots being sold for R10. The end of apartheid meant that the new government had to deal with Dukuduku as part of the land reform process with the Inkatha Freedom Party seeking to use the conflict to consolidate its support base in the province.

Finally an agreement was reached that established a section 21 village in Khula village and an agri-village in Monzi on the northern section of Dukuduku, earmarking the southern part for regeneration. However, this agreement was snubbed by many people, who chose to remain in the southern part of Dukuduku, the section designated for rehabilitation and conservation. Those who decided to remain in the forest continue to feel vindicated and point to undelivered promises for those who moved to the two new villages. Some are obviously doing well in the two new

villages as a result of their ability to command and pool resources from outside their immediate community for their development. There is no obvious difference in welfare between those who decided to leave and those who remain in the forest. The forest gives the freedom to practice slash and burn agriculture and rotate crops. The forest soil is sandy and after a period of growing crops it loses fertility and is susceptible to erosion (Interview with R. van Wyk, December 2004). According to one forest dweller, the forest is a “real democracy”; there is very little outside control. People do what they want when they want, for instance, there is a lot of dagga (cannabis) being grown in the forest. However, those seeking to have the people removed, often promote the notion of the forest as a harbinger of criminality. The decision to remain in the forest is a calculated one, based on the community’s perceptions and understanding of the history of delivery by government at different levels, as well as the knowledge of what they could do with their lives given the resources at their disposal in the forest.

Khula and Monzi: Failed Attempt to Establish an Agri-village

Technically with higher levels of funding agriculture is a possible option. However, given the lack of investment in the rural sector, it may not be the most sustainable endeavour. The soils of the area are sandy and can only be utilised through a combination of slash and burn methods alongside rotational cropping or fallowing. Yet these activities are anathema to those who perceive the need for formal conservation. In an interview ma Ncube complained that the major problem is that the promises made to them by government in encouraging them to move from the conservation area to resettle on the farm had not been kept. She lamented:

We are beginning to think that we made a mistake by moving. We probably should have waited until everything else was in place then we can move. We are not planting sugar cane and eucalyptus because we want to. It takes a full seven years before timber is ready. The government made promise to facilitate development of an agriculture economy. Yet we are still waiting for those promises to be delivered. We were under the impression that the government will support us through setting up irrigation infrastructure, money or tractors for tillage, inputs, loans and marketing processes. I remember clearly the words of the minister on the day the farm was officially handed over. It was suggested that after government and the people work together, those that chose to be resettled will be forever happy that they made the best move, while those that did not will not receive help from the minister to be resettled. Unfortunately, it is us that those in the forest are still laughing at. We are far away from the food and raw material producers that were pictured for our future. We are still depending on bought food. We have to look for jobs on white people’s farms or the forestry companies and leave our land un-attended. We cannot create employment for our children. Since my husband passed away, life has even been harder. One of my daughters is lying with HIV/AIDS, and I have to take care of her children. My son has turned to alcohol in a bad way – he cares nothing about anything anymore. He is disillusioned. He has lost hope. Our

lives are none the better even if we have land. We cannot use it profitably because it is sand and is dry. This land was used for pines for a long time. It grows nothing. We are helpless and the government does not care about us ... (Ma Ncube, Interview, Monzi Centre, 17 December 2004).

Clearly, while farming is the first economic activity many people think about in rural areas, it is not always the most sustainable. A number of factors must be factored in deciding what a sustainable project would be. In Khula village, the soils are bad and require heavy investment for which the peasants cannot have access and no programme of government is available.

e) The Sabokwe People

Close to Richards Bay (an Afrikaner Nationalist-controlled harbour town constructed as a political strategy to dilute Natal's strong English domination), near the Richards Bay Minerals mine smelter, is a community that has been a victim of three different evictions and resettlements in the past half a century. This group of people of the Mbonambi tribe found themselves coming back to their original land after exactly fifty years of being pushed around to different districts of the province. The initial forced movement was in the late 1950s and 1960s when their land was demarcated for sugar and timber plantations. They were moved to a community in the designated African reserves only to be moved in 1978 to Ntambanana, or Bukanana, 30 kilometres northwest of Empangeni, this time to make way for Richards Bay airport. Their settlement in this area was a waking nightmare as the existing tribes occupying that land refused to accommodate them. These new settlers and the original community developed a conflict-ridden relationship, which was falsely presented as part of the political violence affecting the province. According to Induna Mbuyazi (Interview, January 2005), it was this violence that forced them to accept the offer of the pathetically small and infertile land at Sabokwe. In his explanation:

It was the inKosi of KwaBiyela that came in and caused chaos. We tried to resist but we failed. He ended up saying, "Mbuyazi, are you still in my place with your people? You people, are you still staying in my place? Dig your trees, carry them on your shoulders and get the hell out of here. Even if it's a peach tree, take it with you. Go to KwaMbonambi." Those were the words of the inKosi of KwaBiyela. We sat back thinking things would cool down until one day we were just encountered by a brawl. People's children were finished in one day. We escaped just by luck. On that day my children were killed when those people were demanding firearms from them. Just because they were fighting Mbuyazi. That was actually his place. It is even still registered under his name but they are still fighting him. We do not know what will put an end to this. Maybe the government will put an end to this. We are just helpless. If you think about it, people could still die even today. Not all people left that place. Some people actually remained behind. Some left some remained behind.

What upset us there was the fact that when we had to move away, it was because of violence. Our children were killed. Some died in the fields, some were drowned in the river and some were burnt. People's houses were burnt in front of our eyes. Some were burnt during the day and some at night. We were ill-treated when we left there.

By 1995 the violence reached high levels and a large component of this community fled from the area. The Sabokwe people then instituted a claim for their lost land north of Richards Bay. In 1996 the Department of Land Affairs investigated various locations leading to the settlement of the claim, bringing them back to their original land that had been appropriated in order to establish government plantations under apartheid. Upon establishing the community, the Land Affairs Department funded a planning exercise that identified certain basic minimum conditions and resources that should be made available for the community. These included, among other things:

- a. ... access to an affordable and comfortable home, basic engineering services and social infrastructure such as schools, a clinic, community facilities and recreational areas as the foundation of a peaceful and harmonious co-existence and community upliftment and development.
- b. ... opportunities in terms of land use allocation and the identification of educational and other programmes for the effective utilisation of on site resources for the purposes of agriculture and home industries.
- c. ... assist the community, on a continual basis, with applications for funding for social infrastructure, empowerment and education programmes and other assistance.
- d. ... define acceptable agricultural activities for the interface between the natural system ... and the area allocated for housing development.
- e. ... determine how the community can be involved in the implementation of the management plan and how sustainable utilisation of the resources available within the natural system can be ensured in the long term.

(Source: Settlement Framework for the Sabokwe Community - Setplan Metroplan Association, May 1997).

However, ten years after resettling at Sabokwe, the community is still destitute and few of the above promises have been delivered. The biggest complication in this community is that of an uneasy existence between the community and the 'sea' of timber plantations surrounding them. Besides the plantations delimiting the community's access to land for crops and grazing, there is also no direct benefit in terms of jobs and other social and economic benefits. As a result of this situation, there is an intense sense of alienation from these timber plantations. The plantations have come to represent all that is bad in the community.

Socially, they provide a haven for thugs, and a theatre of rape and violence; economically, there is a denial of land and jobs; culturally, there is a threat to community integrity and sustainability, and politically, a limit to community regeneration and reproduction.

One of the clear problems in the land resettlement agreement reached in 1996 is that there was inadequate compensation and bad faith on the part of government to give such a big number of people a very small area to live on. Also there were not opportunities to make a living, let alone enough land to grow their own food.

One of the participants in a group discussion held at Sabokwe Hall on 12 February 2005 said:

I have a complaint. I've been in this area for about ten years now. We have no crops in this place. We were just dumped here. I have no idea what those who are unemployed eat. I don't have a clue how they survive. I don't know how they sleep, having eaten. There was another place that we were told was being given to us but it was then divided up just like that. Mbuyazi had given 598 people land. That's the number of people who were to get land if things had gone according to plan. After being given the land it was later divided up and taken away from the people. Their houses were all destroyed and they are now all over the mountains. They are not here anymore. Their land is all gone. We are aggrieved by these plantations. Car thieves hide stolen cars in these plantations. That is what we are unhappy about. Why are there so many plantations whereas there are not even fields? We should get more fields. The only positive thing we've found in this area is electricity. We have no water. There are no water pipes running on our yards for us to get water at home. Water is quite scarce here. The roads are very bad. They are not taken care of at all. They are totally neglected. These are all the things we are unhappy about. We keep on wondering where all this will take us. My sister, I think I have to say that we are living in a very uncomfortable area. You saw when I showed you my house. You saw the family I have to take care of. You saw how many children I have. How can I feed them when I don't have space to grow crops and only can use my small yard? That's my complaint. The others may comment as well.

From being evicted to make place for plantations, the Sabokwe community was brought back to reside among plantations, with RBM dune mining to the East and all other sides bordered by plantations. A strong resentment towards the plantations, and alienation by the plantations, was expressed by the participants. One of the village elders testified against the plantations with much emotion, charging:

The plantations belong to the government. They are not ours. They squash us, we can't even breathe under these conditions. We feel trapped being located so close to such huge plantations. It makes us unsafe. Our cattle are not free in this place. Even if you want to collect firewood you need to first go and get a letter authorising you to collect firewood before you can collect the firewood. Living in this area is uncomfortable. People are very unhappy. They feel like prisoners. For every move you make you have to first acquire a letter of

authorisation. These plantations are real prisons because even if you want to go to the toilet you get arrested if you are caught without a letter giving you permission to pee there. Am I telling lies? Truly speaking, there is nothing connecting us with the plantation. They are working on their own and we are impoverished on our own. They don't assist us with anything. We are strangers. They get the money but we find ourselves in trouble. The iNkosi has a duty to address these issues but his efforts to seek a response from the owners of these plantations and the Lands Ministry which settled us here have not been successful. In the interim we continue to die of starvation here. When a person is sick here they never recover. There are no herbs to heal people. When someone is sick here it is a well-known fact that they are going straight to the grave. In the past you would cook vegetables for a sick person and you'd keep feeding them bit by bit until they recovered. There are no vegetables here. There is no fresh healthy food that could help a sick person to recover quickly. Even if there was food in the shops, what would we buy it with? There isn't even porridge that a sick person could eat. Even the medication one gets from the clinic becomes useless because there is no nutritious food to supplement it. You can't just take pills on an empty stomach. The same tablet that was meant to heal you ends up being the poison in your system. If you were to see a sick person in this area you would be very sad.

The villagers felt a huge sense of insecurity and helplessness against the plantations. The fact that even their walking across the plantations was controlled reflected the criminalisation of their movement. The induna spoke against the excesses of the industry in controlling and limiting their activities:

Now even if a cow gets caught up on the fence I can't release it because I'm not even carrying a knife to cut the fence and save the animal's life. Even if I were to come across a wild cat in the plantations I would not be able to protect myself because I can't even carry a stick. I have to leave my stick at home. We are just burdened people. We are impoverished. Actually, the people I feel very sorry for are the women and girls. They have even more severe problems in the plantations. Sometimes people just appear in the middle of no where and start chasing the women and girls away from the plantations. You end up not knowing who these people actually are. Are they the police or just criminals? You find women running away madly all the time.

The youth also had their own concerns, as they see no future for themselves under their current circumstances, one of the youth leaders expressed the general anxiety against plantations and their lives in Sabokwe saying:

We, as the youth, cannot say that these plantations have any advantages for us at all. Even the owners of these plantations have not developed any relationship

with us at all. If you are found on their side you are arrested straight away. Another problem we find when we look at our future is that we are growing up and will soon need to have our own houses and we cannot see any land where our fathers can say we can have. There is absolutely no land. We consider ourselves as living in a rural area but it looks similar to the urban area. It's very unclear what this place is. We would be glad if the government could remove this confusion. We'd be very happy to get land. Growing crops; cattle; there are fences here; the cattle have to be tied up with ropes all the time. If ever they escape and run into the adjacent farms they get stolen and sold. The roads as well. The roads in our area should be looked after and maintained accordingly. But, the plantations should be removed. They are good for nothing. In terms of employment, even where there are some members of our community who work in the plantations but they are not even doing any proper and respectful jobs. Some are security guards and the most underpaid, while others, some work under the contractors but given the nature of the small wages they are paid – it's so pathetic that it is not even worth it. However, as there is nothing else – those that work count themselves lucky. Even those who work there do not last for a long time because they get sick and then stop working. This is due to the fact that they work with poison. Some of this poison is sprayed on the trees. But they get paid peanuts. They are not protected by medical aid as they are not employed permanently. One example I can make is that of one lady who was employed here in the plantations. Can you imagine that she only worked for one month and started getting sick. She ended up passing away. No one ever cared to even find out about her or her family – just to check how they could assist the family after the death of the breadwinner. So, as the youth we do not imagine ourselves having a bright future.

The older generation of the residents of Sabokwe recounted the beauty of the area before they were moved to make way for timber plantations with nostalgia. One of the oldest ladies in the community and the focus group discussions (whose son estimated that she could be around 85 as he was 12 years in the late 1950s when they were moved for the first time) stated:

We had fields and everything. This place was a mix of grassland, dense bush around that river which is now dry you must have seen as you drove up here. It was so beautiful. We used to fetch firewood with groups of other girls and pick fruits – a thing you would not think of now. Our children were free and happy. The boys would carry their sticks and walk all over without any fear as they looked after cattle. Now these young people do not have the privilege to look after cattle. As a result of shortage of grazing land – we have lost our cattle. The girls would freely collect firewood. Now things are very different and it hurts to talk about how things were in the past. It is a very emotional issue that we choose not to even think about. We used to have no problem with receiving

visitors as there was always something to given them. Now having people visit is such a burden instead of being a pleasure. If my grandchildren visit me I have to go to town to buy something for them to eat. They must have something to eat. Even if it's my children I would still have to go to town. I would have to take a taxi or a bus with this limited money. I would leave home with R30.00 but by the time I get to town I'd be left with only R20.00 and then wouldn't be able to buy much because the money would be too little. I would then have to return home. If these people are going to stay for many days I would now have to bother my neighbours saying, "Good people, I have children please give me something to cook." All these things hurt us. I can't even keep chickens in this place. We keep fowls that we get from the rural areas but they run to the neighbours' houses. The neighbour gets irritated with you and asks you to fetch your chickens. Sometimes they don't even tell you to fetch your chicken, they just take a stick and beat the hell out of it and then throw it over the fence. These are the things are heartbreaking and creates conflict among neighbours over very small issues because we now stay too close together. There is no privacy at all, as anyone knows and hears your conversations and it is not nice.

Another woman supported the old lady's assertion, giving more emphasis to problems arising from plantations in relation to access to food. She argued:

From a woman's point of view my biggest problem is that of food. We were not used to buying food from the shops because where we come from we had fields for beans and mealies. There would even be fields for the following year's crops. You would rotate the fields comfortably because there was enough land. We would buy machines and grind our own corn. We would never buy mealie meal. These are some of the things that remind us of where we are coming from. The other issue is that of our small yards. If you have eight boys they would not all have space for their own rooms. This means that all the boys have to sleep in one room. They fight. Where will they go to with their wives? What we are used to is the situation where you go to iNduna and he would tell the iNkosi and then the boy would be shown a plot where he can build his own house for his new family. Here you cannot be given any plot. If you want to move out of the house you would have to go to town. You fight for this yard. Even if one of the boys has enough money to build his house he is unable to because our yard is too small. We are shocked by the fact that the old people have to sleep in the same room as the young ones. We are not used to this system. It is quite amazing that the girls have to sleep in the same room as the boys. The girls become very uncomfortable. They don't know how to sleep in the same room as the boys. These prisons we live in are a huge trouble. We don't know what kind of a life our children are going to live.

Participants of the discussion forum raised the problem of the erosion of Zulu culture as a result of the social and economic impacts of the timber plantations:

We still carry out the rituals. There's nothing stopping you from carrying out your ritual if you want. The problem is that you cannot perform the ritual using water. You cannot give the people water to drink. You need to brew beer. You cannot conduct a ritual using a wild animal. A ritual requires a goat or a cow. But where do we buy the cows? There is not even a place where you can keep your cattle so that you can use it whenever you need to do some rituals. I may not be working but my child needs to have a ritual done for her. I have to do umemulo when the time comes. The time will always come regardless of whether I have a cow or not. Because I don't have money to buy a cow I'll just have to forget about doing umemulo for my child. In the past, when a girl got a boyfriend we would cook a goat outside the yard. You'd just get a goat from your kraal. Now that we have no goats I would have to go and buy it from a farm where you get a goat that was fed weeds. They don't take good care of those goats. I won't even mention the big ceremonies. One could correctly say that our fathers' homes are now full of starvation. By right, even a stranger would get food and even carry some if he passes by a house where a ceremony is taking place. This means that we are just poor, as we have no land.

The living arrangements in traditional Zulu society have also been altered significantly as a result of land shortages as outlined below from a youth's point of view. An elderly man explained how the shortage of land for building houses impacted on the culture:

There is no land for young people to build their own houses. This boy cannot build his house on my yard. This yard is too small. If he builds on my yard where will his own children build because we cannot keep dividing this little yard? The norm is that when he gets a wife he should move out of the house and build his own. Girls should never sleep in the boys' room. That's why the girls' normally have their own room. As soon as a boy gets a girlfriend he gets his own room outside and move out of the common boys' room. Here we don't have that kind of space. This has totally removed us from our Zulu beliefs. We now live like those living in the informal settlements. In these settlements you find the mother sleeping here, the father sleeping here, the son here and the daughter here. It's the same situation as I have explained that if I have 5 boys and 5 girls I have to divide the room into two and have the boys sleeping on that side and the girls on this side. This is not in accordance with the Zulu tradition at all. Honestly, in the Zulu culture that is unacceptable. We now see very weird things happening in our community mainly because of poverty.

The Sabokwe community is adamant that the only way forward is to roll back the plantations so that they have breathing space, land to grow crops and to care for their livestock – and with that they are confident that the water situation would improve again.

f) Slovoville

With the expansion of the plantation companies' landholdings, many people who had been employed in mixed farming operations were ejected from the homes and land they had occupied on the farms (either as sharecroppers or tenants but mostly as wage labourers) for many years. It was the policy of the plantation companies to consolidate smaller farms into large estates, which could be managed by a single forester or plantation manager. Farmhouses, sheds and staff cottages were demolished to make way for contiguous plantations. People who may have lived on these farms all their lives were forced to relocate to overpopulated tribal areas, where they had to build new houses. They had to move their children to already overcrowded schools, and look for new jobs in sectors where they lacked appropriate experience.

Some people decided not to move far away and established a squatter settlement at the town of KwaMbonambi – called Slovoville (The late Joe Slovo was Housing minister before his death). With 600 households and a population close to 2000 (according to KwaMbonambi police estimates), Slovoville is home to workers in the timber industry, and others that depend on petty money-paying odd jobs around KwaMbonambi. People engaged in the survivalist sector, selling fruit and other basic commodities, and those that have come from other areas to seek livelihood opportunities also live in the settlement. The first group of people to settle in Slovoville were those displaced from the farms that were bought by Mondi and SAPPI at the height of their farm-buying frenzy of the 1980s. The timber industry bought farms, laid off workers, and, seeking to consolidate its plantations, destroyed farm villages that were being used by the workers, leaving them homeless. However, Slovoville's mix of inhabitants also includes those who came from outlying communal land areas where competition with industrial agriculture for land resources forced them to go in search of other opportunities. There are also those that came as a result of the political violence that gripped the KwaZulu homeland in the early 1990s.

Life in these squatter camps pollutes and undermines Zulu culture and social ethos. The relations between people of different registers (aunts, uncles, and parents to children, in-laws and so forth) cannot be sustained. The social fabric of the people becomes frayed and there is also a loss of the morality and spirit of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a Bantu term used to describe the sense of 'communitarianism' binding African people, which can literally be translated as 'I am because you are'. There is a strong sense that the fate of individuals in a community is intricately interlinked, and therefore commands everyone to be considerate of others and to show compassion in their dealing with other people and the environment. This concept that once kept the nation integrated and built a sense of order and cohesion is gradually being squashed and social solidarity increasingly eroded. The loss of the ability to control the youth resulting from the lost respect and compromised social registers leads to tendencies towards moral degeneration and with it, many social vices such as theft, vandalism, criminal violence, sexual assault and prostitution. Increased

instances of HIV/AIDS have resulted from incest and child abuse. The conditions in these compounds and squatter camps are such that it must be difficult for residents to maintain socially acceptable relations and registers. Young people growing up under these conditions are deprived of access to a traditional home environment where high moral values and standards of decency might be attained. As a result of the crowding and lack of proper accommodation, young people living in Slovoville are introduced to sex, drugs and alcohol at a very early age.

The police at KwaMbonambi have recorded the incidence of crimes of violence and sexual offences in Slovoville and other settlements in the district. Violence is seen as closely related to alcohol abuse. Many people have nothing constructive to do and they spend their days drinking alcohol. Rape is also of great concern, as rapists have easy access to cover in the plantations close to where people stay.

4. Conclusion

Despite the problems with industrial tree plantations in South Africa, an area of almost 1.5 million hectares is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as being well managed. According to FSC's Criteria 10.6, "the choice of species [in a plantation] shall not result in long term soil degradation or adverse impacts on water quality, quantity or substantial deviation from stream course drainage patterns." This criterion alone should prevent the certification of many industrial tree plantations in South Africa. On its website, FSC even claims that SiyaQhubeka is "changing the paradigm of plantation management" (FSC no date). In fact FSC is certifying a legacy of apartheid.

Timber industry plantations have displaced people from their original homes and with that disrupted traditional livelihood mechanisms. Out of a random sample of twelve adults (in the KwaMbonambi and Esikhaweni areas) asked whether they think people are reliant on land as the primary source of livelihood, nine agreed that people are opting for other sources of livelihood. Prompted to suggest why this was so, a selection of possible reasons was given which included: land shortages, land sub-divisions and loss of soil fertility making agriculture less productive and profitable, the lure of industrial crops promising immediate returns and cash benefits.

The displacement of communities by industrial timber plantations has serious impacts on the ability of communities to impart to the youth skills and indigenous knowledge that have been crucial for social and economic reproduction in the rural communities. There is an immediate threat of discontinuity and the loss of useful skills, in a climate of unemployment that threatens the whole stability of society. One interviewee, Mr Mbonambi, a former biochemistry lecturer and botanist at the University of Zululand, now operating a traditional pharmacy in Esikhaweni, put it this way:

Agriculture is becoming less attractive for young people who see chances of making a better living in urban areas, in jobs in plantations and agriculture, and mines. Young people see their peers coming from town driving cars and owning cell phones, and also want those things. They are aware that these needs cannot be met without breaking ties with rural life and all it comes with. Those who started the process of forced proletarianisation were quite clever when they made consumerism a tool for luring rural people to demand their own proletarianisation.

There is a danger that soon traditional knowledge and skills will be entirely lost to future generations as there is no-one available to learn these things, and rural and indigenous knowledge are no longer considered important. You can see me, what I know about traditional medicine was learnt through assisting my grandfather. University study in this field was actually to augment what I knew already and give my craft credibility in a day and age where

relevance and respectability are tied to modernity. These young people cannot be blamed for making these choices, which are at the least very practical. There is no clear plan of action, nor any sign from government at any level that they can make rural life better and more attractive to the youngsters. There is no land, and people have no means by which to maintain its fertility and productivity. People see themselves being squeezed out on a daily basis and their chances much bleaker (Interview with Mr Mbonambi, 13 December 2004).

The timber industry has accelerated a general trend towards a diminishing dependency on land-based livelihoods. This is an historical process, which should be understood within the context of the specific and current conditions found in these rural areas. The end of apartheid has not led to the revision of people's relationship with food production.

5. References and Abbreviations

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Abbreviations

AFRA	-	Association for Rural Advancement
BCTPM	-	Bleached Chemical, Thermal and Mechanical Pulp Mill
BEE	-	Black Economic Empowerment
DTI	-	Department of Trade and Industry
DWAF	-	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
FESA	-	Forestry Engineering South Africa
FSA	-	Forestry South Africa
FSG	-	Farmer Support Group
GSLWPA	-	Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park Authority
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
IL	-	Imbokodo Lemabalabala Holding Company
ITP	-	Industrial Timber Plantation
KZN	-	KwaZulu-Natal
LAP	-	Load Accreditation Programme
NAU	-	Natal Agricultural Union
NPA	-	Natal Provincial Administration
NPI	-	National Productivity Institute
NCT	-	Natal Combined Timbers Forestry Co-operative
SAFCOL	-	South African Forestry Company Limited
SAPPI	-	South Africa Paper and Pulp Industry (now Sappi Ltd)
SATGA	-	South African Timber Growers' Association
GSLWPA	-	Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park Authority
WRM	-	World Rainforest Movement

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