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# Using municipal tourism assets for leveraging local economic development in South Africa

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**Abstract.** Tourism development can be a vital component of place-based development initiatives in the global South. The nexus of tourism and place-based development thinking in the global South and of the role of local governments is only beginning to be investigated by tourism scholars. This article explores the record of using tourism assets in one South African local municipality for leveraging local economic development. Evidence is drawn from the experience of the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality in South Africa’s Eastern Cape province. The research results point to an unimpressive record on the part of local government in directing the use of local assets for assisting tourism development. Several challenges are revealed to explain the underperformance of potentially valuable local assets in this municipality. Institutional and governance shortcomings, including widespread corruption, underpin the observed weaknesses both in the everyday workings of local government in relation to service delivery and infrastructure support as well as its inability to implement plans for local economic development. Well-meaning policies proposed for tourism development are not implemented variously for reasons of funding, lack of local support, lack of entrepreneurialism by the municipality and lack of ability to implement because of capacity issues. Potential state assets which could bolster tourism and local development outcomes are not being realized and in many cases the assets themselves are in a state of deterioration because of neglect.

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## 1. Introduction

Over recent years Tomaney (2010: 10) records there has occurred “a growth in new thinking about the process of local economic development”. Globally, a rethinking of approaches to local economic development has been occurring on the part of international development agencies as well as by national, regional and local governments (Pike et al., 2014; Pugalis and Bentley, 2014; Pike et al., 2015). The new approach marks a turn away from previous policies seeking the attraction of external ‘footloose investors’ or the provision of major infrastructure projects and instead an emphasis upon the identification and mobilization of *endogenous* or local assets (Tomaney, 2010). Proponents of this new paradigm of ‘place-based development’ have been particularly influential in the European Union, its intellectual base (Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie 2017; Bailey et al., 2018; Todes and Turok, 2018). The seminal work of Barca et al. (2012) pioneered the evolution of an array of new place-based policies which aim to boost development from within. For Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie (2017) the planning of ‘place-based economic development’ essentially is concerned with the implementation of strategic policies which are uniquely tailored to the contexts within which they are to be pursued. From its European origins the principles of place-based development policies have spread and are being taken up in planning in many other parts of the world (Todes and Turok, 2018). Among others the works by Rogerson (2014, 2019a) and by Duranton and Venables (2019) advocate place-based development planning in the global South.

Place-based interventions are premised on the fact that development planners should be ‘place aware’ and take cognizance of several different factors that can influence the potential returns of strate-

gic intervention (Barca et al., 2012; Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie, 2017). Within the new policy focus the emphasis should “not just be about promoting greater growth, but also about reducing levels of inequality, and that mobilizing resources in lagging and/or peripheral regions may constitute a valid recipe for both overall growth and lower territorial polarization” (Tomaney, 2010: 12). From a radical viewpoint, however, Barca (2019) argues that place-based policy making should go further and endeavour to give power to local communities in order to de-stabilise the neo-liberal status quo, thereby allowing communities to escape under-development traps. Arguably, for successful place-based development the role of external actors can be significant also in terms of challenging entrenched local interests that may have “narrow, self-seeking agendas, parochial tendencies or weak institutional capacities” (Todes and Turok, 2018: 2).

The growth and international spread of place-based policies is in part a response to the perceived disappointments associated with the implementation of earlier policies and which have energized a renewed focus now on tackling underutilized local economic potential (Tomaney, 2010; Todes and Turok, 2018; Zsótér et al., 2020). Questions of place-leadership and the deliberative actions of individuals and institutions for shaping the future of localities are significant (Beer et al., 2019). Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie (2017: 153) point out that “in the most basic sense, place-based economic development entails the identification, mobilization and exploitation of local potential”. Alongside an important focus on skills and innovation capabilities the new paradigm stresses also the significance of unlocking the potential of a range of local assets (Pike et al., 2015). Place-based development interventions seek to leverage a locality’s stock of physical, human or other forms of capital, its institutional context as well as the local resources or assets with which

it is endowed (Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie (2017). In the global North place-based development policies find particular expression in promoting “locally rooted human and knowledge-based assets through fine-grained locally conceived and executed development strategies that provide public goods aimed at improving the local business environment; skills, technology and clusters” (Pike et al., 2017: 53).

The relevance of such forms of intervention in the global South is acknowledged (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2010). This said, for many localities a vital element of untapped local assets often are those which surround the potential for promoting the growth of tourism. In a rich analysis of coastal Mexico Faber and Gaubert (2019) demonstrate the large economic gains and positive development impacts that accrue from maximizing the local potential for tourism. As stressed by Timothy (1998) local governments generally are considered the best suited to coordinate tourism development at the local level. As the third tier (after national and regional governments) of the public sector in tourism, local governments assume an important role in tourism planning and for achieving sustainable development (Adu-Ampong, 2016). From the perspective of Australia this view is elaborated by Ruhanen (2013: 82) as follows: “local governments are often best placed to support tourism development within a destination due to their local knowledge; something that is often lacking in distant capital cities and among leaders who are less familiar with regional cultures and local conditions”. Adamo (2019) stresses the significance of planning in the context of peripheral tourism spaces. The nexus of tourism and place-based development thinking in the global South and of the role of local governments is only beginning to be explored across international tourism scholarship with most work undertaken by geographers (Adu-Ampong, 2016; Saarinen et al., 2017; Rogerson, 2019b).

South Africa is one country in the global South which has seen the recent emergence of some writings and debates which are probing questions surrounding tourism and place-based development (Rogerson, 2014; Dlomo and Tseane-Gumbi, 2017; Lawrence and Rogerson, 2018; Drummond and Snowball, 2019; Kontsiwe and Visser, 2019; Rogerson and Collins, 2019; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2019a, 2019b; Rogerson and Visser, 2020). The 1996

Constitution of South Africa assigned a dynamic role for local governments to overcome serious development challenges and catalyse local economic and social development (Nel and Rogerson, 2016a; Venter, 2020). Until the 1994 democratic transition the management and implementation of local development initiatives was not a traditional function of South African local governments which instead “primarily focused on traditional service delivery functions, such as infrastructure, roads, water, electricity and waste management” (Venter, 2018: 546). The transition from managerial to entrepreneurial forms of governance has been particularly challenging for less well-resourced and capacitated local governments which are mostly those in South Africa’s secondary cities, small towns and rural municipalities (Kontsiwe and Visser, 2019). With much optimism attached by national government to tourism’s importance as a driver for renewing growth of the flagging South African economy it is unsurprising that the promotion of tourism is currently the most widespread focus for local economic development planning (Nel and Rogerson, 2016b). In particular, tourism development is seen as of special significance in many South African small towns (Donaldson, 2007; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2014; Donaldson, 2018; Kontsiwe and Visser, 2019; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2019a).

As is the situation in other parts of the world the role of local governments is critical for maximizing tourism as a driver for local economic and social change in South Africa (Rogerson, 2013). In the only previous investigations the challenges facing local municipalities in South Africa from fully capitalizing on immovable municipal assets to support development of local tourism were highlighted from research undertaken in the contexts of the city of East London (Dlomo and Tseane-Gumbi, 2017) and the coastal resort town of Hermanus in Western Cape (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2020a). The objective in this paper is to examine the application of local assets for achieving tourism development in one small town local municipality in South Africa. The research focus is a municipality which is situated in one of the country’s most economically distressed regions. Use is made of documentary analysis, structured interviews (undertaken in 2019) with key municipal stakeholders, and a purposeful

sample of local (almost exclusively Black) tourism entrepreneurs.

## 2. The setting - King Sabata Dalindyebo municipality

The case study is of the King Sabata Dalindyebo (KSD) Local Municipality in Eastern Cape Province (Fig. 1). This administrative area incorporates much of the territory that under apartheid was the former Transkei Homeland. Table 1 provides a profile of key indicators about the study area. The municipality has a total population estimated (2016) as 490 000 (99.1 percent Black African). The two largest settlements are Mqanduli and Mthatha (150 000 people); the latter formerly as Umtata was the ‘capital city’ of the so-termed ‘independent’ Transkei until its reintegration into South Africa following democratic transition and with negative ramifications for the local economy as its governmental role was diminished (Siyongwana, 2005, 2009). Of interest is that Mthatha is one of South Africa’s ‘urban’ places where the major part of its population lives in rural settings (de Witt and Ndzamela, 2018). The scope of KSD extends to part of South Africa’s Wild Coast, a region of considerable natural

beauty and tourism attractions particularly around Coffee Bay and the Hole-in-the-Wall area. Mahlangu-Piliso (2016: 9) points out that coastal residents of these areas “have a long historical relationship” with natural resources where the role and influence of traditional leaders remains of importance. Coastal livelihoods are made up of government welfare grants, income from tourism as well as crop and livestock farming. The Coffee Bay area offers award-winning examples of responsible tourism practices by local enterprises (van Doorn, 2019).

The KSD municipality is categorized as one of the country’s most economically distressed and marginalized areas and falls within South Africa’s development periphery (Rogerson and Nel, 2016). Characteristically poverty is widespread, service levels poor and unemployment levels chronic (Harrison, 2008; Tsheleza et al., 2019). The contemporary (formal) economy of the KSDM is dominated by government services, finance and trade (Table 1). Overall, Mthatha might be described as one of many South African localities which in terms of the recent trajectory of national development to a large extent have been ‘left behind’ or are ‘places that don’t matter’. In the wake of the fragile state of the municipal economy the making of place-based initiatives is therefore essential (Rogerson, 2019c). Nevertheless, the capacity for evolving such initiatives is con-

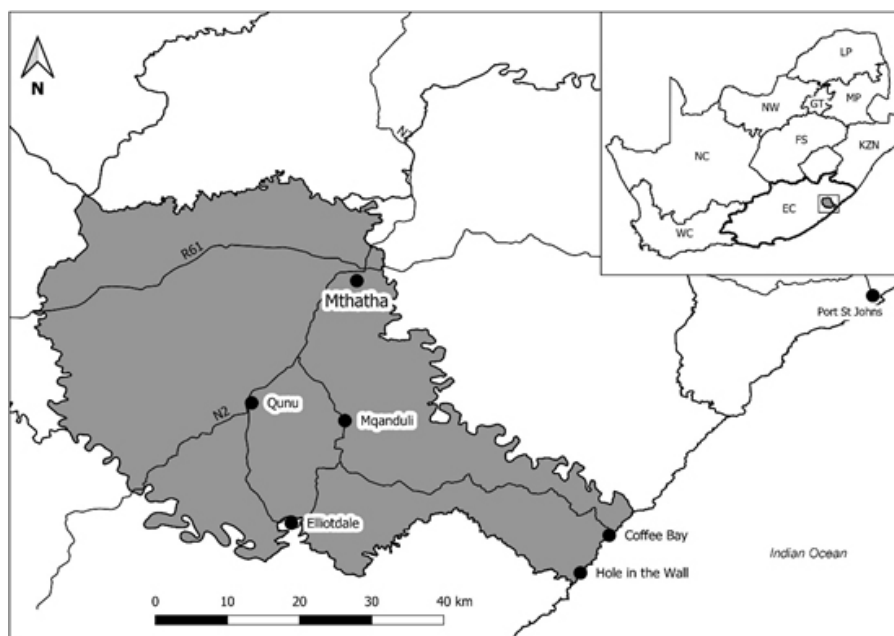


Fig. 1. The Case Study Area: King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, South Africa

**Table 1.** King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality: Key Demographic, Economic and Social Indicators

Indicator	KSD Municipality
Total population (2016)	490 207
Total number of people urban (2016)	179 704
Total number of people rural (2016)	310 503
Total number rural traditional (2016)	309 693
Total households	116 243
Sectoral Share of Economy (2015)	33.9% Government; 20.1% Finance; 19.8% Wholesale and retail; 9.1% Community services; 7.3% transport; 3.7% construction; 3.4% manufacturing.
Unemployment rate	38.3 %
Youth unemployment	48.3 %
Households with indoor water	15.7 %
Households with flush toilet	36.7 %
Households with electricity	84.5 %

Source: Based on Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council 2017 and de Witt and Ndzabela, 2018

strained because of weak institutional capacity (de Witt and Ndzabela 2018: 7). Much optimism has been raised by the potential for attracting investors in agro-industrial ventures into the Wild Coast special economic zone which is planned to be developed at the Mthatha airport development precinct (Ngcukuna, 2018a). One local imperative, however, must be to maximise local assets including those for tourism for economic and social development. The record of this municipality in using its local assets to assist tourism development is analysed in the following two sections of material.

### 3. Maximising state assets for local tourism

Tourism has been recorded in the area of what is now KSD municipality as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Rogerson, 2019c). Spatially, the contemporary tourism economy in the municipality exhibits two distinct clusters namely that around Mthatha dominated by business tourism and a second focused upon the coastal node of Coffee Bay and firmly anchored on leisure tourism. The growth of tourism has been identified by local government as one of its pillars for economic and social change. The most recent Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for KSD highlights its vision as follows: “A developmental people centred municipality spearheading RADI-

CAL economic transformation in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner” (King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, 2019: 67). Over several years the local integrated development plan has identified consistently a vital role for tourism expansion (King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, 2016, 2019). This emphasis on tourism as a potential base for economic development is further indicated by the planning statements of the O.R. Tambo District Municipality (ORTDM). The District IDP observes as follows: “The district faces a declining economy, high level of poverty, underdeveloped and infrastructure backlogs as well as reliance on the government sector. The economy of the district hinges around the key drivers and growth sector, of which tourism is among them...The ORTDM has identified tourism as one of its economic drivers” (O.R. Tambo District Municipality, 2017: 151).

It is against the backcloth of these policy commitments that one observes the recent poor performance of the tourism sector in the municipal economy. Local tourism data from IHS Global Insight reveals the weakness of the tourism industry across the KSD municipality. It is evident that during a period marked by a considerable expansion as a whole of the tourism economy for South Africa the performance of the local tourism sector of KSDM was poor. Between 2001 and 2018 the total number of tourist trips to KSDM fell from 250 000 trips in 2001 to 152 000 by 2018 with the most rapid decline occurring since the 2008 financial crisis

and the subsequent impact of recession and stagnation of South Africa's national economy (Rogerson, 2019c). By comparison to the contribution of tourism to the GDP of Eastern Cape Province and to South Africa as a whole, the tourism economy of KSDM is 'underperforming'. Tourism has been contributing a progressively declining share to local GDP since 2006 when it represented almost 4% to the local economy; by 2018 this was reduced to just over 2% of GDP for KSDM. The unpromising condition of the KSDM tourism economy can be interpreted as a sign partly of the ineffectiveness of efforts to maximise the potential of local assets for tourism development in support of broader development objectives for the municipality.

Arguably, the policy commitment to tourism development which is evident in planning statements is not backed up by implementation measures for maximizing local assets for tourism expansion and employment creation. In several of the municipal interviews the importance of tourism was re-iterated for driving economic development and for job expansion across the local municipality. The KSDM Local Economic Development Manager asserted that *"I think tourism is significant in terms of local economic development in KSDM, due to the fact that tourism has been identified as one of the five industries that have a potential to drive economic development of the municipality"* (Interview - KSDM Local Economic Development Manager). Another respondent reflected on the nexus of tourism and planning for local economic development: *"Tourism is an important strategy or branch for local economic development because LED and Tourism have similar mandates or aims. LED programmes are aimed at improving the lives of people and building better economic development. The tourism industry assists LED by providing job creation that caters for well-educated and uneducated people and their skills"* (Interview, Manager Eastern Cape Provincial Tourism Authority). This nexus of tourism and LED is reinforced by the institutional structure of KSDM as evidenced by another respondent: *"Yes, I think tourism is very important for local economic development and that is why KSDM has tourism and LED under one umbrella because both these departments or units act as agents of transforming economic development and*

*change lives of the people"* (Interview, Assistant Manager, Asset/ Supply Chain KSDM).

Several commitments have been made to assist tourism albeit concrete actions in support of the sector have been somewhat muted. Prior to 2010 the municipality commissioned detailed research to inform the development of a strategy for responsible tourism, an important issue given the character of KSDM assets for tourism promotion (Kyle Business Projects, 2010). The IDP states on a regular basis that initiatives are pursued by the municipality concerning tourism product development facilitation, tourism infrastructure improvement; and, tourism promotion and marketing (King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, 2016, 2019). Added impetus for tourism development in the local municipality derives also from the support initiatives given by the district municipality (O.R. Tambo Municipality) and from the Eastern Cape provincial government especially its parks and tourism agency. In terms of tourism promotion however respondents flagged the municipality's minimal budget allocated to tourism support. The Acting Tourism Manager for KSDM admitted that: *"We do have a budget that is allocated for the tourism unit, but the budget is not enough to cover everything that has to be done in order to drive tourism in the municipality"*. As a consequence of budget limitations tourism promotion by KSDM is confined simply to maintaining the website of the municipality, the production of a number of brochures and the operations of two tourism information centres. Further tourism promotion for KSDM is through the activities of the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Authority (ECPTA).

It is significant that the IDP document accords considerable weight to the potential offered by the municipality's "untapped natural resources, culture and historic heritage" which are described as "some of the strategic assets that the municipality possesses" (King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, 2019: 200). Certain of these assets are listed in the IDP documentation; information on others was obtained through interviews conducted with two officials of the KSD municipality attached to the department that deals with supply chains and assets. Overall, it was revealed the KSDM is responsible for managing a set of critical assets in terms of a range of natural attractions, built attractions as well as tourism

information centres. These assets are best discussed separately for the Mthatha and Coffee Bay clusters. The tourism economy of Mthatha is mainly oriented around domestic business tourism whereas the Coffee Bay area is dominated by leisure tourism and with a significant component of international tourism by backpackers (Rogerson, 2011, 2019c).

### 3.1 The Mthatha Cluster

In terms of natural attractions for the Mthatha area the most important is the local dam resort which the municipality owns but presently (2019) rents out to a private operator. The respondent in the asset department of the municipality clarified that *“Mthatha Dam Resort has been rented out to a private company to run it and we share a certain profit at the end of the month, so we are taking care of such facilities”* (Interview, Assistant Manager Asset Department, Mthatha). Most municipal interviewees considered that the core future business for Mthatha would continue to be that of business rather than leisure tourism. For example, the town’s acting tourism manager was of the opinion that: *“I think Mthatha town can stick to business tourism, because it has many conference venues that can cater for a large number of spectators, For example we have three big hotels, two malls and a shopping centre (Mthatha Plaza)”* (Interview, Acting Tourism Manager Mthatha). None the less, some respondents were of the opinion that the dam resort offered certain unrealized opportunities for leveraging municipal assets and diversification of the local economy into leisure tourism: *“Leisure tourism in Mthatha is untapped. Take a look at Mthatha Dam Resort. Activities such as canoeing, quad biking and zip line can be introduced in order to attract tourists to spend two days there, visit Nelson Mandela museum and then visit Madiba trails before going to Coffee Bay or Port St Johns”* (Interview, Research Coordinator Nelson Mandela Museum).

Of critical importance for asset leveraging and maximization for tourism growth is that important municipal assets be at least maintained rather than degraded or left abandoned. Because of a crisis in the local municipality’s finances and budgets this is not always the case in KSDM. At least one interviewee admitted that: *“We do not have enough funds*

*to maintain municipal facilities but we are not neglecting them. For example there is Community Work Programme that has employed youths. These employees are placed to clean municipal facilities such as swimming pools, parks and gardens and the entire town assisting street cleaners of the municipality”* (Interview, Senior Officer Asset Department KSDM). Other interviewees were less optimistic and reflected that certain *“municipal facilities have become a hot spot for criminals, for example the Savoy Park is clean and tidy but there is no safety and security”* (Interview, Local Economic Development Officer, Mthatha).

For Mthatha and its surrounds the core municipal assets of strategic importance for tourism are its several built attractions. Many of these built attractions are highly significant from a cultural heritage perspective and others for the development of sports tourism. Arguably, the most important tourism asset is the Nelson Mandela Museum, which is a national state asset owned by the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture. The municipality provides technical support at Mthatha and Qunu as the museum is under its jurisdiction. Mgxwekwa et al. (2017, 2019a, 2019b) discuss that heritage sites associated with the legacy of Nelson Mandela are gaining increasing interest from local and international tourists. Since Mandela’s death it is reported that there has been *“a doubling of the daily number of local as well as international visitors”* (Mgxwekwa et al., 2017: 5). The Nelson Mandela Museum was conceptualized as comprising three interrelated components namely the Bhunga Building, the management and administrative centre, which is situated at Mthatha; the Nelson Mandela Youth and Heritage Centre (a community museum) at Qunu; and, the open air museum with the Mandela homestead situated at Mvezo, Mandela’s birthplace (Mgxwekwa et al., 2019a, 2019b). The museum’s so-termed Footprints Trail *“extends from its physical facilities, the schools and churches once attended by Nelson Mandela, through the playground (sliding stone of Qunu) of his childhood and the villages that nurtured him to the towns and cities beyond”* (Mgxwekwa et al., 2019a: 85).

The Nelson Mandela museum development is planned as a centerpiece of the evolving national Liberation Heritage Trail that traces other heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle across South Africa (Bi-

alostocka, 2013). Maximisation of the potential impact of the museum in terms of tourism growth for Mthatha and its surrounds has been affected by several challenges in terms of the history of project development. These include flawed baseline funding which caused an incorrect human capitalisation of the museum such that it struggles to fill critical positions such as curators, conservators and researchers (Nelson Mandela Museum, 2014). In the annual report of the museum for 2003/2004 “the major resource limitations” it was experiencing in terms of “limited staff numbers” were clearly set forth (Nelson Mandela National Museum, 2004: 6). It was conceded that the “museum continues to operate within a legacy of financial and human resource limitations as a consequence of grant allocation that has not kept track of the evolution of the institution in line with its mandate” (Nelson Mandela National Museum, 2004: 6). Lack of professional staff severely impacts the prospects for the museum’s development and competitiveness as a tourism attraction. Outside of Mthatha further problems have arisen in terms of developments planned at the other sites especially at Mvezo where “the museum has lost control over” the project (Nelson Mandela Museum, 2014: 14). The groundwork is being prepared for the museum as a whole to be nominated as a future UNESCO World Heritage Site (Interview, Acting Tourism Manager KSDM). Arguably the funding and human resource development issues surrounding the Museum require resolution in order for its long term tourism potential to be actualised, including its UNESCO nomination.

Beyond its assets for heritage tourism Mthatha must be noted for its municipal asset base for sports tourism. These include a cricket stadium, a football stadium, and most significantly the corruption-tainted Mthatha Stadium which had been planned initially as a potential base camp for training by soccer teams playing at the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup (Botha and Ntsaluba, 2010). Much hope attaches to the potential that the completed stadium might offer for hosting sporting events – and particularly South African Premier Soccer League matches - in this part of the Eastern Cape. The construction history of this stadium, however, has been dogged by controversy, several delays and massive tender irregularities. Use was made of an ‘inexperienced contractor’ with the consequence of “bad

workmanship” and a stadium that failed to meet required standards to host major league games (Botha and Ntsaluba, 2010). From its inception the stadium had been planned as a provincial project and branded as a ‘legacy project’ which was to attract high calibre sports events and to ensure economic benefits for the town beyond 2010. But, with continual problems surrounding poor quality of construction work as well as funding issues the original 6000 seater ground remained mostly unused for several years. An upgrading programme was launched in 2015 for final completion of a stadium which is to accommodate 21 000 spectators at appropriate quality standards.

Several municipal interviewees in Mthatha stressed the potential for the multi-purpose stadium when complete to be a key base for developing sports and events tourism in the town: “*Business and event tourism could be a market that Mthatha can target as a destination. For example; there is an event that is hosted in December in Mthatha Stadium (Natives Summer Party) and there is an Ocufo event in October which people from outside Mthatha attend and sleep over*” (Assistant Manager, Asset Department KSDM). Another respondent confirmed the leveraging for assets for tourism: “*We use municipal assets such as Mthatha 2010 stadium for tourism when hosting events even though the stadium is not yet finished due to lack of funds*” (Interview, Acting Tourism Manager Mthatha). This said, again for successful leveraging for events tourism it will be critical that the built attractions of Mthatha be properly and regularly maintained. The evidence from the interviews was this was not always happening as explained by the town’s local economic development officer: “*The Town Hall building needs some renovations. It needs paint to bring it back to life*” (Interview, Local Economic Development Officer KSDM).

### 3.2 The Wild Coast Coastal Cluster

At the Coffee Bay coastal cluster the issues surrounding leveraging of municipal assets are in relation to the natural rather than human-made attractions. The tourism assets in this area must be rated as extraordinarily rich and among the best in terms of tourism destinations across the entire Wild



Coast of Eastern Cape Province if not for South Africa as a whole (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2020b). These municipal assets comprise the natural beauty of the beach at Coffee Bay, the Baby Hole, the Hlungwane Waterfall, Mapuzi cliffs and caves, and most significantly the Hole in the Wall. The remarkable Hole in the Wall is a spectacular natural archway which consists of a hole in a large free-standing cliff which protrudes from the sea approximately 100 metres off the coastline at the mouth of the river. It was reported by the Acting Tourism Manager for KSDM that an application is being prepared for the Hole in the Wall to be recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (Interview, Acting Tourism Manger KSDM). In view of the positive impact that inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list might have on tourism the importance of this application for the future maximisation of the impact of this particular tourism asset cannot be underestimated.

Acceptance on the UNESCO list would impose certain obligations in terms of appropriate environmental management of the site and its surrounds for its long-term preservation as has occurred at other South African World Heritage sites (cf. Van der Merwe, 2019). Such obligations and management regimes urgently are needed as it has been observed that “the environmental and tourism carrying capacity at Coffee Bay and Hole in the Wall is being regularly exceeded” (Kyle Business Partners, 2010: 54). For the maximisation of this most important municipal asset of KSDM there is a critical need for a long-term sustainable development plan which addresses the over-exploitation of coastal marine resources and tightens existing lax development controls which threaten a deterioration of the tourism experience. Inadequate and inappropriate sanitation is a current major danger to tourism growth in the Coffee Bay cluster as septic tank leaks pose health and environmental risks. Finally, another challenge for responsible tourism specifically linked to Hole-in-the-Wall is the threats from climate change, rising sea levels and of potentially damaging storms on the archway.

### 3.3. Leveraging assets for black SMME development

The discussion so far has concentrated on the direct maximisation of the benefits of rich municipal assets for tourism development and enterprise establishment or expansion. Another sub-focus of research was on questions relating to the transformation and expanding the involvement in the tourism economy of black entrepreneurs, which is a major objective of government policy (Abrahams, 2019). The potential stimulation of enterprise development through public procurement and leveraging of the supply chains associated with the municipal assets was explored. The use of public procurement for leveraging business opportunities for Black entrepreneurs is currently a major focus of national government policy in South Africa (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2019c; Giddy et al., 2020).

Respondents were requested to indicate whether they use (particularly black-owned) Small Micro Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) for the maintenance of municipal assets. The results were almost entirely that all work linked to municipal assets is done in-house through local employment or community work programmes. Two respondents from the asset department of KSDM made it clear as follows: “We do not use private companies because employees of KSDM together with Community Work Programme employees do the work and KSDM has employed individual people as security guards not a private company” (Interview- Assistant Manager, Asset Department); and “We are not utilising any Small Micro Medium Enterprise (SMME) because the unit of parks and gardens has employed people to do the work” (Interview - Senior Officer, Asset Department). A parallel response was given by the representative of the Eastern Cape Provincial Tourism Authority: “We are not using any SMMEs for cleaners or security. As for clearing of vegetation, field rangers do the work in the nature reserves” (Interview, Tourism Officer, ECPTA). Overall, at Mthatha the only state asset that offers any outsourced work opportunities is the Nelson Mandela Museum. In this case the procurement offered two enterprise opportunities respectively for cleaning and security operations.

At Coffee Bay minimal potential exists for supply chain opportunities linked to servicing the municipal assets which are the natural attractions. One potential opportunity that has been observed is the provision of more and improved facilities in terms for camping tourism (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2020c). This niche exists in the surrounds of Coffee Bay, a destination which is favoured by low budget travelers. That said, it is important to observe the growth of a number of black tour guiding businesses and of one kayaking enterprise in the area. It is estimated there are currently 20 tour guides in Coffee Bay (mostly males) who take tourists on walking tours from the town mainly to Hole in the Wall and Mapuzi cliffs/caves. Of these 20 guides four are qualified registered guides; the rest are ‘informal’ tour guides who whilst having knowledge of the area do not have an official tour guide qualification. It was revealed in interviews that the guides do not have ownership of these tours rather they are dependent workers in terms of being linked to the accommodation establishments in the town. As explained by one interviewee: *“When I take tourists from the [backpacker] hostel the bill of that hike is paid to the establishment and not to us. I only get a certain percentage”* (Interview, Coffee Bay Tour Guide). The extent to which the (mainly white) owners of the accommodation establishments control the tour guiding sector is elaborated by another registered guide: *“We tried negotiating with one of the hostel owners to own the hiking activities but we were discouraged. We were told that we do not even have the business insurance to conduct such activities on our own. The hostel owner asked us what are we going to do if someone gets injured during the hike. By this we felt discouraged and that prevented us moving forward. Though there have not been major injuries since I started and I am a qualified guide and first aid training is compulsory”* (Interview, Coffee Bay Registered Tour Guide).

A brief review of the development of the one black-owned kayaking enterprise is instructive in terms of the making of an independent tourism enterprise which links to the municipal assets – in this case the local Mdumbi River. This registered business (co-owned by two individuals) was started in 2016 and now engages also two part-time employees on a temporary basis during peak tourism season. The kayaking guides are both trained

life guards and qualified divers. Prior to establishing the business during January to November they worked as cray fish divers and from November-January were employed as life guards. One of the guides also assisted fishermen by driving them around the Wild Coast to show them good fishing spots. The trigger of unemployment resulted in the decision to start the kayaking business. Two factors came into play; first the municipality had trained too many life guards so temporary employment opportunities became scarce and second that the crayfish catch was depleted because of unsustainable practices such that their diving livelihood was under threat. In addition, the two entrepreneurs stated that the condition of the local people in Coffee Bay ‘encouraged’ them to start the business. As the two founders observed there were already too many tour guides in Coffee Bay so they were motivated to start *‘something different’*. The kayaking entrepreneur expanded on this point by saying: *“We started by purchasing three second hand kayaks with money we had saved. Only two of those kayaks were for clients (double kayaks) the other was for the guide. This was a challenge, however, because we were limited to only a certain number of clients per trip”* (Interview, Kayaking Entrepreneur, Coffee Bay). Overall, this vignette illustrates how municipal assets have been utilized successfully for tourism development and employment creation by members of the local community albeit within a context of the absence of any government support.

#### **4. Constraints on tourism development and local asset maximisation**

This section turns to analyse material on the constraints on tourism development in the KSDM in general including for the maximization of municipal assets. In addition to addressing several municipality-wide issues the discussion identifies certain specific matters that pertain to the two core clusters surrounding respectively Mthatha and Coffee Bay.

The first municipal-wide challenge is undoubtedly that of the geographical “peripherality” of the KSDM (Rogerson, 2019c). The planning imperative in such cases is for the development of innovative

place-based approaches to address the multiple issues that surround peripheralization (cf. Pezzi and Urso, 2017; Lang and Görmar, 2019). In terms of the national space economy the KSDM is an economically distressed area that is remote geographically from South Africa's major centres of power as well as influence. The peripherality of KSDM makes imperative that efforts are required to enhance by all means air and road infrastructure access to this area as part of a place-based initiative to address issues of 'peripherality' (Lang and Görmar, 2019).

Access to the region is made difficult because of its geographical remoteness (Rogerson, 2019c). The region and municipality is served by the airport at Mthatha which until recently had only one direct air route to Johannesburg operated by SA Airlink; during 2018 SA Express began as second operator. Air access from Cape Town requires a flight to East London followed by a three and a half-hour drive with arrival in Mthatha during the evening to struggle with poor street lighting as well as potholed roads. It is significant that attempts have been made to improve air access into Mthatha. During 2015 a competing airline, Fly Blue Crane, was launched on the Johannesburg-Mthatha route with the new airline owned by a black woman. The impact of its introduction was an immediate and drastic reduction in costs of flights on the Johannesburg-Mthatha route with SA Airlink slashing its fare for return travel. The consequence of this 'predatory pricing' was to contribute to the exit of Fly Blue Crane leaving SA Airlink once again with the monopoly (until 2018) on this route. In a statement issued by the Competition Commission it was revealed "Airlink had abused its dominance between 2012 and 2016 by charging consumers excessive prices" and thereby "potentially limited Mthatha's economic growth", including for tourism (Nicolson, 2018).

Arguably, the central problem for municipal economic development as a whole and tourism in particular is perhaps that surrounding institutional incapacity and governance processes of the local municipality (de Witt and Ndzabela, 2018). The performance of this municipality ranks it among those bottom one-third of local authorities that South Africa's Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) rates as "dysfunctional" and requiring significant work in terms of 'back to basics' in order for them to func-

tion effectively. The dismal performance of the municipality is evidenced by a record of corruption, poor financial management resulting in negative audit outcomes, and limited structures for community engagement. An inevitable outcome is the municipality's poor record of service delivery and infrastructure maintenance. Essential functions such as fixing potholes are not performed, refuse not collected, public places are not maintained and fixing street lights is not undertaken in Mthatha (Harrison, 2008; Mzamo, 2018). Another signal of institutional dysfunctionality is the unreliability of both electricity and water supplies. It is considered that while most of the necessary resources to render the functions or to maintain systems might be available the basic structures in order to perform these functions simply are not in place (de Witt and Ndzabela, 2018). The consequence is that the municipal government is failing in its responsibilities because of the absence of sound financial governance processes to manage resources, to sustainably deliver services and render development to communities. All these above critical issues are highlighted in detail in the 2019/2020 review of the KSDM Integrated Development Plan (King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality 2019: 52-53). The weak state of governance observed in KSDM is replicated in many other South African local municipalities (Munzhedzi and Makwembere, 2019)

The material collected from the interviews with key informants as well as recent newspaper reports reinforces a bleak picture of the workings of the KSD local municipality and of its ineffectual role as development facilitator, including for tourism. In May 2018 from press reports it was disclosed that officials of KSDM "squandered R500.6m. in fruitless, wasteful, irregular and unauthorized expenditure in the 2016/17 financial year" (Ngcukana, 2018b). It was revealed also that municipal officials "allegedly awarded tenders to close relatives, municipal employees and state officials and broke rules designed to make tender processes fair and competitive" (Ngcukana, 2018b). Although calls were made for the KSD municipality to be placed under administration COGTA has taken the view that it will intervene only "when there was outright failure to perform" (Ngcukana, 2018b). During 2019 the business community of Mthatha complained that "things aren't working" in the municipality in

the context of “chaos” in the town which was described as “unstable” and thus unattractive to investors (Zweni, 2019).

The key informant interviews identified a set of common themes which relate both to structural issues of peripherality and exacerbated by shortcomings in municipal operations as constraints for tourism development across the KSDM. The issue of peripherality was highlighted by an interviewee from the Nelson Mandela Museum who stated: “*We always get tourists who ask why our airport has one route. Most tourists are complaining that they have to travel to Johannesburg in order for them to land directly to Mthatha because if they land in East London the road between Idutywa and Mthatha is always on maintenance (when they are travelling) so they arrive at night in Mthatha which is known for a high level of crime*” (Interview, Research Coordinator, Nelson Mandela Museum). The constrained budget for tourism support was stressed as a factor by several respondents: “*Limited budget is a challenge that prevents the growth of tourism in KSDM. We rely on funding from the National Department of Tourism*” (Interview, Tourism Officer, ECPTA). Indeed, the low funding allocation

for tourism development in KSDM – in part because of low prioritization by the municipality itself - was part of the list of challenges given by other respondents who underlined also the questions of weak local infrastructure as well as safety and security considerations.

Similar challenges for tourism development in the municipality emerge from the results of a small survey which was conducted with a sample of (mainly black) tourism entrepreneurs in Mthatha and Coffee Bay. Respondents were asked to rate on a Likert scale (1-5 not important to very important) their assessment of a list of challenges for business development. On most issues the (mainly male) cohort of respondents gave high scores for most factors with the notable exception of ‘gender’. Table 2 shows that the issues scoring the highest overall were those of infrastructure, seasonality, government support (lack thereof), market access, mentoring, insufficient funding, and competition from existing large businesses.

The results of qualitative responses from tourism entrepreneurs both in Mthatha and Coffee Bay shed added insight into the core business challenges of emerging enterprises as well as their expect-

**Table 2.** Elements Evaluated as Constraints on Tourism Businesses

Item	Mean Score
Insufficient funding	4.2
Competition from large enterprises	4.1
Skilled employees	3.7
Lack of income flow	3.8
Government support	4.3
Seasonality	4.4
Bureaucracy	3.8
Business environment	3.6
Gender	3.1
Training	4.0
Awareness	3.8
Market access	4.3
Marketing	4.1
Infrastructure	4.5
ICT	4.0
Crime	3.9
Mentoring	4.3

Source: Author Survey

tations of local government's role(s). The responses from Mthatha highlight stakeholder concerns about corruption, inadequate infrastructure and the failures of local government. These were as follows: "Corruption in the Department of Public Works", "Electricity and water supply from the municipality is sometimes not available which affects the running of our business", "Corruption", "Things that are challenging us at the moment is our local municipality", "Guests from overseas are complaining about bad roads and no street names. We have been asking about these things with the local municipality", "Infrastructure, service delivery – water and electricity" and, once again, "Nyoba [Corruption]". The responses from Coffee Bay indicate certain different local issues as well as reinforcing the municipality-wide problem as regards the poor state of local infrastructure. The voices of Coffee Bay respondents highlighted: "Road infrastructure", "Electricity is expensive", "Advertising is expensive – Coast to Coast (Backpacking) Guide", "Competing with whites that have knowledge of businesses", "Local people are interested in starting a business but don't have skills or knowledge", "Whites want business for themselves", "War against whites in terms of business" and "Racial divide within local businesses". Two issues can be clearly observed. First, is the apparent racial tension in terms of competition from established white-owned businesses in the area which dominate the local tourism economy and thus limit new opportunities for the entry of Black entrepreneurs. Second, is the issue surrounding potential lack of support for local individuals for start-up of tourism enterprises.

In terms of the respondents' opinions regarding what government could do to address the business challenges around tourism development several viewpoints were offered. Not surprisingly, many of them relate to the core problems around infrastructure, poor quality of basic services, perceived lack of government support, and corruption. In addition the voices of interviewees suggest government is simply not engaging with the key issues that are facing local tourism entrepreneurs. From Mthatha the following was revealed: "Build roads", "Provide internet access", "Infrastructure - roads", "Funding", "Each water pipe burst or electricity cable should be fixed as soon as possible whenever they have been ruined", "Minimize corruption", and "Improve ser-

*vice delivery*". Respondents from Coffee Bay and surrounds offered the following viewpoints: "Come to the people – provide awareness and programmes that will assist in business growth", "Build road for economic development of the area", "Government officials must come here and hear our cry and be involved", "Finance support" and "Provide a tourism officer dedicated to Blacks".

A further critical constraint emerged from the detailed interviews which were conducted with tour guides in Coffee Bay. Significant concern was raised about the lack of inclusion of local communities in decision-making processes in general and specifically in respect of local tourism development. For local tour guides this exclusion from decision-making was acting as a real constraint on the potential for tourism development in KSDM. One of the guides expressed the view that: "Even if the government officials come to Coffee Bay they do not come to us. They meet with the 'top' people of Coffee Bay. But what usually happens is that the 'top' people would first come to us as the locals and ask for our needs and ideas and then our ideas would be presented to the officials. But when the idea is implemented we receive nothing, we just get leftovers" (Interview, Coffee Bay tour guide). One example of the negative consequences of lack of involvement of local communities in tourism decision-making was spelled out, namely access to and the location of the local information centre which is at Mqanduli, 60km away from Coffee Bay. It was pointed out that the local people were not involved in the decision regarding the establishment of this centre. One local guide argued: "Why is the centre so far from the actual tourism area of Coffee Bay. There is no tourism in Mqanduli? This is because we were not included in the plans in the first place. Look now, the centre is closed and being vandalized" (Interview, Coffee Bay tour guide). Overall, these responses underline that exclusion from decision-making processes negatively impacts the local community, its prospects for tourism development, and ultimately serves to limit the potential for valuable municipal assets to be translated into, or leveraged for, opportunities for tourism development. In addition, the findings indicate that local communities with high expectations of tourism can end up disgruntled and effectively "reduced to spectators as their cultural and land as-

sets are exploited with little or no benefit” to these communities (Department of Tourism, 2016: 8).

## 5. Conclusion

As pointed out by Duranton and Venables (2019: 1) place-based policies and interventions “are an integral part of development policy, driven by both equity and efficiency concerns”. For successful place-based interventions in the global South one necessary element of strategy for many local governments is the maximization of local assets for tourism. Under scrutiny in this article has been the record of one South African local municipality which is in an economically distressed part of the country. The research on King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality points to an unimpressive record on the part of local government in directing the use of local assets for assisting the development of tourism. A catalogue of challenges has been disclosed to explain the underperformance of potentially valuable local assets in this municipality. Institutional and governance shortcomings, including widespread corruption, underpin the observed weaknesses both in the everyday workings of the municipality in relation to service delivery and infrastructure support as well as its inability to implement plans for local economic development. Well-meaning policies proposed for tourism development by local government are not implemented variously for reasons of funding, lack of local support, lack of entrepreneurialism by the municipality and lack of ability to implement because of capacity issues. In addition important tourism assets within the municipality are subject to control by higher levels of government. Overall, potential state assets which could bolster tourism development (and SMME development opportunities) are not being realized and in many cases the assets themselves are in a state of deterioration because of neglect. What this points to is the fundamental need for improved asset management for tourism by local governments and for the development of an asset management framework specifically for tourism assets in South Africa.

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