

**Small-scale Commonage Farmers and Livelihoods in  
Loeriesfontein in the Northern Cape Province, South Africa.**

Shu-aat Davids

18357369

Sociology Honours Research Project

The Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Professor Cherryl Walker

13<sup>th</sup> December 2017

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	3
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Background</b> .....	4
<b>1.1. Background on the Municipal Commonages of Loeriesfontein</b> .....	5
<b>1.2. Research Focus and Research Questions</b> .....	8
<b>1.3. Research Methodology</b> .....	8
<i>A Case Study Research Design Method</i> .....	9
<i>Research Methods</i> .....	9
<b>1.4. Research Ethics</b> .....	12
<b>Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review</b> .....	14
<b>2.1. Conceptual Framework</b> .....	14
<i>Sustainable Development</i> .....	14
<i>Sustainable Livelihoods</i> .....	16
<i>Social Equity</i> .....	17
<b>2.2. Literature Review: Land Reform</b> .....	18
<i>The History of Land Reform in South Africa and the Northern Cape</i> .....	18
<i>Municipal Commonages as a Form of Land Reform</i> .....	20
<b>Chapter 3: Research Findings and Discussion</b> .....	23
<b>3.1. Profile of the Loeriesfontein Small-Scale Commonage Farmers</b> .....	23
<b>3.2. Emerging Themes</b> .....	26
<i>The Significance of Farming on the Commonage for Livelihoods</i> .....	26
<i>The Non-Material Meaning of Farming</i> .....	28
<i>The Challenges of Governance</i> .....	30
<i>Access and Control</i> .....	31
<b>3.3. Discussion</b> .....	33
<b>3.4. Recommendations for Further Research</b> .....	35
<b>3.5. Conclusion</b> .....	36
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	38
<b>Appendix B: Interview Schedules</b> .....	44



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the National Research Foundation (NRF) for their financial assistance in the completion of my Honours research project. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Cheryl Walker, for her guidance throughout this project.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Against the backdrop of widespread concern about the problems facing land and agrarian reform in South Africa (Walker & Cousins, 2015), this research project looks at the contribution municipal commonages make to the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in Loeriesfontein, a small town in the Northern Cape Province, as well as at the challenges farmers using this land face in relation to land access and governance.

This was not my initial plan for my Honours research project. Originally, I intended to investigate gender dynamics among small-scale commonage farmers in Loeriesfontein and the experiences of women farmers. However, once I started my fieldwork in September 2017, I realised that most commonage farmers in Loeriesfontein are men and that it was going to be difficult to find women using the commonage as farmers in their own right. What I mean by 'farmers in their own right' is women who own their own sheep and are actively involved in farming. When I asked male informants whether they knew of any female farmers in the area whom I could interview, very few could identify any and some went so far as to say that there were no female farmers in Loeriesfontein. While this does not mean that women are not involved in commonage farming as members of a household or that there are no gender issues to explore, my preliminary scoping work also made me realise that there were more immediate issues to understand before I could address gender dynamics.

A critical issue that I stumbled upon was that there is a land restitution claim on the commonage, the outcome of which was still unfolding at the time of writing this report. What really caught my interest was the lack of information about the land claim in town, as well as the confusion the claim has caused around the ownership and management of the commonage land, and the knock-on effects of this on small-scale farmers' livelihoods. It was at this point that I decided, with the guidance of my supervisor, to shift the focus of my project to look more generally at issues of access and control around the commonage, and their consequences for the potential of municipal commonages as a form of sustainable development.

In this introductory chapter I first provide some background information on my research site, before discussing my research focus and the research questions that have shaped my study and then the methodology that I have developed to answer these questions. In chapter two I discuss my conceptual framework and my literature review on municipal commonages as a form of land

reform. In the third chapter I discuss my findings in relation to my research questions as well as my recommendations for future research.

### 1.1. Background on the Municipal Commonages of Loeriesfontein

Figure 1: Map showing location of Loeriesfontein in the Hantam Local Municipality



(Source: Google Maps)

Loeriesfontein is a small town situated in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, within the Hantam Local Municipality. The town was established in 1894 by a travelling bible salesman called Fredrick Turner (Hantam Municipality, 2015:27). The town became a municipality in 1958 but now forms part of the Hantam Local Municipality, along with the towns of Calvinia, Nieuwoudtville, and Brandvlei. The Hantam Local Municipality had a total population of 21,578 as of 2011, of which some 82% were classified coloured, 12,1% white, 4% black, and 0.7% Asian (Hantam Municipality, 2015:27) The population of Loeriesfontein itself was 2,400 in 2011.

Although I have struggled to find documentation concerning socio-economic conditions in Loeriesfontein, I was able to obtain some data on the larger Hantam Local Municipality. In 2011 the official unemployment rates were 15,3% for youth and 11,8% for people of working age, although how the distinction is made between youth and working age is unclear (Hantam Municipality, 2015:29). If one considers the large number of people within the Hantam Local Municipality who have given up looking for jobs and are considered not economically active, the problem of high rates of unemployment becomes even more significant. According to the 2015/2016 IDP, education levels in the Hantam Local Municipality are low, with most individuals having low skill levels.

Loeriesfontein currently has ten municipal commonages, nine of which are 'traditional' and one which is an 'additional' commonage. Traditional commonages are municipal lands surrounding the town that historically were leased to white farmers, while additional commonages are municipal-owned lands that have been acquired after the transition to democracy in 1994 for the sole purpose of land redistribution. The lack of readily available official documentation concerning the history of Loeriesfontein has made it difficult for me to provide a more substantial history of the commonages. The commonages, both traditional and additional, make up around 30,000 ha of land surrounding Loeriesfontein; 11,819 ha of this makes up the additional commonage, which is situated some distance from the town (Hantam Municipality, 2017:1).

During my research I was unable to establish exactly how many small-scale farmers are making use of the land but, according to one of my participants, the number could be approximately 45 farmers. The Farmers Association (FA) represents local small-scale farmers and was established in 1993, with an initial membership of 12 families (Loeriesfontein Emerging Stock Farmers, 1993:1). At first, they had access to only 2,000 ha of the traditional commonages but over time small-scale sheep farmers came to occupy all of the municipal commonages; however not all of them are members of the FA. According to my participants, the individual commonages are split into camps of approximately 600 ha each. There is an average of 5-6 farmers using each camp, which raises issues of overcrowding and the effects this could have on land degradation. This is especially concerning given the fact that, like most of South Africa, Loeriesfontein is currently facing a drought.

According to the information I was able to put together, the land restitution claim was lodged in 1996 for all of the traditional municipal commonages, on behalf of 240 claimants. According to the document I received, the claim was found to meet all the requirements set out by the

Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994 and was accepted as a valid claim by the Regional Land Claims Commissioner. According to one key informant who is involved in the claim, the claim was settled in 2008, leading to the establishment of a Communal Property Association (CPA) in September 2008, which claims to represent the claimants. The CPA is also claiming to be the owners of the commonage land but many small-scale farmers who are grazing their sheep on the commonage appear to be either unaware of this outcome or confused as to who the lawful owners of the commonage land are.

The precise history of the claim and the membership of the CPA require further investigation. During my fieldwork, I was unable to secure factual details concerning the claim from either the local municipality or the CPA leadership. On my last field trip to Loeriesfontein, in October 2017, I was told by both the CPA leadership and officials in the local municipality that the land claim was still an ongoing process, with key informants in the CPA stating that it would be finalised on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October; this, however, turned out not to be the case. According to the municipality, 210 of the 240 claimant households received monetary compensation, presumably in settlement of their restitution claims. This conclusion is supported by the information I received from the CPA, to the effect that because of the monetary compensation that was previously paid out to many claimant households, there are now only 30 households forming part of the land claim and only these 30 households will have rights to the commonage land when the claim is finalised. The uncertainty surrounding ownership of the land and the statement by the CPA that in future only 30 households will be allowed access to the land has caused conflict between the CPA leadership and the FA representing the farmers who are currently using the land. Most of the farmers that I interviewed are pensioners and their farming contributes significantly to their livelihoods. These issues will be discussed in more detail in chapter three of this report.

Given the limited scope of my Honours research project, many issues around the current status of the ownership and management of the commonages remain unclear and require further study. What is important to stress is that this confusion was shared by all of my participants and most of the small-scale farmers using the commonage land for grazing their sheep and supplementing their livelihoods. The confusion surrounding the land claim and its subsequent effects has important implications for the management of the land and the contribution the commonages make towards sustainable livelihoods.

## **1.2. Research Focus and Research Questions**

The focus of this research project is on the experiences of small-scale commonage farmers in Loeriesfontein and the potential importance of the commonages for sustainable livelihoods in the town. More broadly, I am interested in whether small-scale farmers' access to land through the traditional municipal commonages attached to small towns in the Northern Cape can contribute meaningfully to land and agrarian reform and thus promote sustainable development in the province. However, this issue is beyond the scope of an Honours project and I have thus narrowed my focus to look at small-scale farmers' understanding of the significance of the commonage lands for their livelihoods in Loeriesfontein, as well as their experiences with regard to the issues of governance, access, and control of the commonage lands. This project can thus be seen as a first step towards a larger research project.

Against the background of my larger concern with sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods, the research questions guiding this report are as follows:

- 1) How do small-scale farmers in Loeriesfontein understand the value of the commonages and the contribution that access to this land makes to their livelihoods?
- 2) How does the current governance context of the commonages affect the small-scale farmers currently making use of this land?

## **1.3. Research Methodology**

Given the nature of my project as well as the limited time available for an Honours research project I decided to adopt a qualitative research methodology. According to Bryman (2012:280) a defining feature of qualitative research is that it aims to acquire an '...understanding of the social world through the examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants'. I consider this methodological approach appropriate for my research project because of my interest in understanding the experiences of the small-scale farmers using the commonage land.

### *A Case Study Research Design Method*

Given the focus of my study, my research design can also be seen as that of a case study. A case study research design is characterised by an in-depth analysis of a single case of a larger phenomenon, in this case, municipal commonages as a form of land reform in Northern Cape Province. Within the context of this project, my understanding of what a case is is informed by Bryman (2012). In his book Bryman provides two definitions of a case: the first is that a '...case is a focus of interest in its own right' and the second is that it concerns '...a location, such as a community or organisation' (2012:67). In my project both definitions are applicable, given my interest in the experiences of small-scale farmers using the traditional commonages of Loeriesfontein. The case study design method also allows an investigation of what is particular about the specific case, which in this case is the presence of a land claim.

### *Research Methods*

My primary research methods have involved semi-structured interviews with both commonage farmers and key informants, and documentary analysis. My fieldwork was split into two week-long trips to Loeriesfontein, spread about a month apart. During my field trips, I stayed at the edge of town in a guest house. Due to my proximity to the town, it was fairly easy for me to arrange interviews that suited the preferences of my participants. I was also able to supplement my more formal research methods with observations of the social interactions within the town in the course of my fieldwork. This included attending two social events, the first marking the opening of two wind farms that have been constructed in the area surrounding Loeriesfontein and the second, an awards evening at the Loeriesfontein primary school.

#### *Semi-structured Interviews with Key Informants and Participants.*

The main research method used in this project involved semi-structured interviews with key informants and small-scale farmers. Due to the limited time frame, I was only able to interview eleven farmers (nine small-scale commonage farmers plus two local commercial farmers), as well as four key informants (two members of the CPA and two municipal officials). I interviewed the

two commercial farmers as part of my scoping exercise; however, while I found it interesting to gain their views on the issues surrounding the commonages. I have not included their perspectives on farming in my analysis due to my focus on the experiences of small-scale farmers.

I used the semi-structured interview method outlined by Bryman (2012) which views the questions drawn up by the researcher as more of a guide than being set in stone. The interview process is viewed as being flexible and there is a large focus on how the interviewee frames and understands the issues being addressed (Bryman, 2012:471). Before embarking on my fieldwork, I drew up a list of questions to guide the conversation. The interview schedules differed depending on whether it was an interview with a key informant or participant (See Appendix B). The interview was conducted in an informal manner and conducted more as a conversation than an interview. Participants were able to direct the conversation and could speak about their specific interests as farmers, land claimants and officials, and thus voice their thoughts openly on whichever issue we were discussing. I also enquired about the future of sheep farming in Loeriesfontein, a question which yielded generally positive answers.

My key informants were members of the CPA and local municipal officials. These participants could be described as key informants because of their greater knowledge of the history of the commonage and the land restitution claim. Each of these interviews lasted for around an hour and although they did little to clarify the issues surrounding the claim, they proved to be valuable in contributing to my understanding of the context within which the commonage farmers find themselves. I also had follow-up phone calls with my key informants, which took place after my second field trip to Loeriesfontein, in order to find out whether the land claim had been finalised.

### *Sampling Method*

I used a purposive, snowball sampling method to identify small-scale farmers to interview, as there were no reliable lists of who is using the commonage land. A purposive sampling method entails choosing participants on the basis of a specific criteria chosen by the researcher (Bryman, 2012:418). In this case, that would be small-scale farmers using the land, and any organisations associated with the commonages. Although my sample of nine small-scale farmers – 6 men and 3 women – cannot be considered representative of the farming population of Loeriesfontein, I am confident that the issues raised illustrate the challenges these farmers are facing within the current context.

When I first arrived in Loeriesfontein I contacted a farmer whose contact details I had been given in order to set up an interview. He was unavailable at the time and directed me to another contact who he said could help me. Unfortunately, due to some miscommunications when trying to find this contact's home, I ended up meeting with another person. While he was very helpful this mix-up would later cause a few complications when I tried to contact the CPA. At the time, however, I was unaware of the mix-up and found it fairly easy to make appointments for interviews with people identified to me as small-scale commonage farmers by the person I did meet. I only experienced one direct refusal, during my second field trip to Loeriesfontein, when I attempted to make an appointment with a female farmer. After agreeing to speak to me and arranging a time and date for our appointment, she then declined to continue with the interview. I was initially disappointed but realised that, due to my inexperience as a researcher, I might have missed signs that she did not want to speak to me from the start.

As mentioned, my initial connection to the 'wrong' key informant caused some problems when I attempted to contact the CPA leadership, which made it difficult to find out more about the land restitution claim from the start. Fortunately, on my second trip to Loeriesfontein, I was taken to meet the CPA member I should have met originally, who initially refused to be interviewed, but was introduced to his wife. After a rather awkward introduction, and an apology and explanation in my part for the earlier miscommunications, the couple agreed to speak to me.

### *Documentary Analysis*

The process of documentary analysis involved studying the documentary information I was able to gather during my time in Loeriesfontein, as well as online, on the history of the commonage land, the land claim, and the general policy framework and legislation. Gathering the documentation I required around the history of the Loeriesfontein commonages and the town proved challenging in the time available and I am aware that this aspect requires further research. During my fieldwork, I visited both the local municipal office and the Loeriesfontein library in search of material but was unsuccessful. I was, however, able to obtain some documentation on the land claim from members of the CPA as well as some material concerning the management of the municipal commonage from the Hantam municipal office in Calvinia. Documents that I accessed online include the 2015/2016 Integrated Development Planning (IDP) report for the

Hantam Municipality, and a document providing information on the Loeriesfontein Emerging Stock Farmers (which would later become the FA).

### *Data Analysis*

I used thematic analysis as my primary method of analysis of both my key informants and small-scale farmer interviews. According to Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2014:10), thematic analysis can be defined as ‘...identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes’. I did this by first transcribing my interviews manually and then, guided by my research questions and conceptual framework, conducting a close reading of the transcripts in order to identify key emerging themes in what was said by multiple participants. I then attempted to draw relationships between these themes so that I could better understand the ways in which they might influence one another. I also looked at these themes against the larger context of the commonages in the town of Loeriesfontein as a whole. Key themes that emerged from my transcriptions centred on the significance of farming for livelihoods, the meaning of farming, issues of governance, and concerns around access and control.

After my interviews were transcribed, I also drew up life histories of each of my small-scale farmer participants. This was important for my understanding of how the general themes that emerged from my data analysis interact and play out in the individual life experiences of small-scale farmers.

### **1.4. Research Ethics**

In conducting my study, I have followed the Code of Conduct set out by the International Sociology Association (ISA) (2001) concerning both the treatment of participants and the professional behaviour of the sociologist. According to the ISA, there are four criteria that a sociologist should aim to follow when conducting research. The first pertains to the position of sociology as a ‘field of scientific study and practice’ (2001:1). Here there is a clear focus on the integrity and validity of the research. The second concerns the research procedures followed in relation to sponsorship, costs and rewards, and data gathering. The third focuses on the publication and communication of the data and concerns the presentation of data as well as issues of ownership,

copyright, confidentiality, and the manipulation of data. Lastly, the ISA Code of Conduct looks at the extra-scientific use of the research results obtained. This focuses on the sharing of the findings and considers the impact that misrepresentations of data might have.

My research proposal was also submitted for approval to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the University of Stellenbosch and approved as a low-risk project. In order to comply with ethical standards of informed consent, I prepared an informed consent form for my research participants which they were asked to sign before I began the interview, if they agreed to take part in my research project. The informed consent form was available in both English and Afrikaans. All of my participants were willing to sign the consent form and I provided them with a copy of the form if they requested it. The English version of my informed consent form is included as Appendix A.<sup>1</sup> I used an audio recorder to record my interviews but first asked participants whether they consented to being recorded, which all did. I assured them that the data and recordings obtained from the interviews would be kept confidential (on a password protected laptop) and be treated with respect. During my interviews, I spoke in the language that the participant was most comfortable with and used simple language so that I could be easily understood. Participants were also free to request that I stop recording at any time as well as withdraw from the interview whenever they wanted.

The only ethical challenge I faced while conducting my fieldwork was how to deal with the expectations people in the Loeriesfontein community had about how I might help them with gaining access to the traditional municipal commonages. For instance, during the course of my first field trip I was approached by a man who claimed to be a farmer and, after I had told him about my research, insisted on showing me his sheep, which were located in his backyard. When showing me his sheep, he expressed his need for land so that he could continue with his farming. I then had to explain that I was only a researcher and could not help him gain access to the commonage. The incident highlighted for me the importance of being clear about my position as a researcher in my encounters with research participants but also left me feeling uncomfortable about raising the man's hopes and then disappointing him.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that the informed consent form gives the title of my original research topic as I only shifted my research focus to commonage farmers' experiences more generally after my fieldwork was completed and I reviewed my fieldwork data. This shift has not resulted in any harm to my participants as the principles and practice of ethical research remained in place and general issues around livelihoods, access and governance were always part of my research enquiry.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, I first explore the key concepts which I have chosen to work with to guide my understanding of the current situation in Loeriesfontein and inform my answers to my research questions. These are sustainable development, sustainable livelihoods, and social equity. Thereafter, I provide a brief overview of the literature on land and agrarian reform in South Africa and the significance of municipal commonages within the Northern Cape.

### 2.1. Conceptual Framework

#### *Sustainable Development*

As already indicated in Chapter 1 of this report, the underlying interest informing my choice of research project is the contribution of municipal commonages in small towns such as Loeriesfontein towards sustainable livelihoods and thus to sustainable development in the Northern Cape. In this section I therefore discuss my understanding of sustainable development as it has framed my research project.

According to the World Commission of Economic Development (WCED) (1987), sustainable development is defined as socio-economic growth which 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This definition implies the need to recognise limitations on the use of environmental resources and the effects human activity has on the environment itself. Within this conceptualisation of sustainable development, the WCED report places an emphasis on the reduction of poverty as one of the essential 'needs' of society. However, what is meant by needs is also variable, depending on the social and historical context, as well as the specific time frame within which the society in question finds itself. This understanding of sustainable development also implies limitations around the level and pace of development, whether it be industrial, infrastructural, economical, or social, so that this development does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

While the WCED concept of sustainable development has been widely adopted it is not without criticism. Redcliff's 2015 article, 'Sustainable development: An oxymoron comes of age', considers whether the concept of sustainable development has a future. He states:

... the expression 'sustainable development' has been used in a variety of ways, depending on whether it is employed in an academic context or that of planning, business or environmental policy. As a result, during the last 18 years, we have been confronted with several different discourses of sustainable development (2015:213).

By highlighting the range of interpretations of this concept and how each one comes with its own set of assumptions, he questions 'what should be sustained' in any given societal context and time-period (2015:213). Here, he brings up the issue of what constitutes a need: '...it is clear that 'needs' themselves change, so it is unlikely that those of future generations will be the same as those of the present generation'. He thus problematises the concept of what a 'need' is and highlights its variable nature. What we may consider important aspects of the environment and valuable resources to be sustained today may not be what future generations consider to be resources worth sustaining. Redcliff goes on to question various methods of implementing sustainability and how one decides which method is 'more sustainable'. This has made me question who decides what is sustainable and which needs are more pressing and which are not.

Holden, Linnerud, and Banister (2016) also question the conventional conception of sustainable development derived from the 1987 WCED report. Similar to Redcliff's argument concerning the relevance of sustainable development, they argue that since that report there have been numerous 'models, assessments, and indicators' suggested for sustainable development, all of which are plagued by a weak theoretical framework. However, unlike Redcliff, Holden *et al* provide an alternative model for understanding sustainable development, in which they reconceptualise the three pillars on which the idea of sustainable development is based in terms of social equity, human needs, and environmental limits and argue that these are non-negotiable – i.e. all three conditions have to be met. Here they include key elements of the definition of sustainable development of the 1987 WCED report but take this a step further by including social equity as key to the equation and arguing that economic growth is not, in itself, a necessary factor for sustainable development.

I find the three-tiered model provided by Holden *et al* (2016) useful as a means for conceptualising sustainable development. This is largely due to this inclusion of social equity into their model, an issue which I discuss further below.

## *Sustainable Livelihoods*

Due to the focus of my research project on small-scale farming I view the concept of sustainable livelihood as an important concept, falling beneath the larger umbrella term of sustainable development. I am aware that there is a very large body of literature on the issues of sustainable livelihoods which, due to time constraints, I have been unable to explore fully. Here I am only providing a brief discussion of the concept.

According to Chambers and Conway (1991:1) a livelihood 'comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income, and assets'. They distinguish between an environmentally sustainable livelihood, which 'maintains or enhances the local and global assets on which livelihoods depend, and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods' and socially sustainable livelihoods, which 'can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and provide for future generations' (1991:5). However, environmentally sustainable livelihoods and socially sustainable livelihoods are not presented as being mutually exclusive but, rather, are both seen as key elements of sustainable livelihoods.

According to Chambers and Conway, a livelihood becomes sustainable once it can recover from external shocks and stresses as well as increase people's capabilities and assets, which puts them in a position to secure the sustainable livelihoods of future generations. They distinguish between two kinds of assets, namely tangible assets (such as land, money, and natural resources) and intangible assets (which include social resources such as friends and other social connections). Much like the three-tiered model of sustainable development of Holden *et al* (2016) Chambers and Conway also identify three elements as key to sustainable livelihoods: capabilities, equity, and sustainability. Capabilities are defined as the ability of people to 'cope with stress and shocks, and being able to find and make use of livelihood opportunities' (1991:4). Capabilities can be both reactive (the ability to respond to changes) and proactive (adaptable). Equity is defined as there being equal access to resources for all and an 'end to discrimination against women, against minorities, and against all who are weak, and an end to urban and rural poverty and deprivation' (1991:4). Chambers and Conway also define the third element of sustainable livelihoods, sustainability, as the 'ability to maintain and improve livelihoods while maintaining or enhancing the local and global assets and capabilities on which livelihoods depend' (1991:5)

In a 2010 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (the 'Guidance Note on Recovery: Livelihoods'), the authors restate Chambers and Conway's (1991) conception of

sustainable livelihoods and build upon it by identifying six 'livelihood contexts'. According to the UNDP, livelihoods are 'formed within social, economic and political contexts' (2010:2) within which the following issues are key: social relations, social and political organization, governance, service delivery, resource access institutions, and policy and policy processes. The report defines governance in terms of the 'form and quality of government systems, including structure, power, efficiency and effectiveness, rights and representation' (2010:2). Resource access institutions are defined as involving 'the social norms, customs and behaviours that define people's access to resources' (2010:2).

Given that challenges around governance, access and control have emerged as two of the key themes in my study of the Loeriesfontein municipal commonage, I find the understanding of sustainable livelihoods provided by the UNDP (2010) as particularly useful to my analysis.

### *Social Equity*

The concept of social equity is vital to the understanding of both sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods and, as shown above, is addressed by both Chambers and Conway (1991) and Holden *et al* (2016).

For the purposes of my research report, I have turned to Holden *et al* for the provision of a workable conception of social equity. They liken social equity to social justice and identify two principles of justice as the starting point in their conception of social equity. The first principle concerns equal participation in social affairs. Here they argue that equal participation cannot be reduced to political participation in terms of elections: 'participation itself is not enough, but must be embedded in a system that makes it possible to transfer individual voices into action' (2016:5). Rather, what is required is 'rich participation' in which not only does everyone have the right to participate equally in politics, but also for individual voices to be heard. I find this aspect of social equity particularly relevant for my research, especially given the lack of communication between the FA and CPA. From what I have seen in Loeriesfontein and been able to find out about the land restitution claim specifically, there has been very little joint participation by the FA and CPA in addressing the consequences of the claim for access to and governance of the commonage land.

The second principle of justice identified by Holden *et al* is that 'low voices should be given particular attention' (2016:6). What is meant by this is that the voices being heard should include those of 'poor people, nature, and future generations', although a distinction is made between poor people who have 'low voices' and nature and future generations who have no voice at all. I find this particularly relevant within the context of the Loeriesfontein commonages, especially given the threat of land degradation. The issue voiced by both key informants and small-scale farmers rarely concerned the state of the land but concentrated on issues relating to access, control, and governance of the commonage land. This ties in with Holden *et al*'s concern about the unheard voices of 'nature' and the negative consequences of this for sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development for the future.

## **2.2. Literature Review: Land Reform**

This section of my report provides a brief overview of the history of land reform in South African and the Northern Cape, followed by a discussion of the position of municipal commonages in land reform. This background is important for understanding the context within which the small-scale farmers using the commonage land of Loeriesfontein find themselves.

### *The History of Land Reform in South Africa and the Northern Cape*

The history of South African land reform which follows, although fairly basic, is generally unknown by most of the South African population and was certainly unknown to me at the start of my research. After only a very brief encounter with the history surrounding land reform I, like many others, was under the impression that the Natives Land Act of 1913 was the starting point for years of land dispossession and racial segregation in this country. However, once I began to read the literature on land reform I found that this was not the case. As argued by Beinart and Delius (2014) the Natives Land Act might have paved the way for later laws of segregation, but black South Africans had been dispossessed of their land long before the Act was passed. This legislation did not affect the Northern Cape province directly, because at the time it fell within the Cape Province which was exempt from its provisions, and the history of white colonisation and land settlement in this region differed in some important respects from the rest of the country.

During the colonial era the movement of white farmers, known as 'trekboers', into the Northern Cape caused most land to be dispossessed from the Khoisan during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this context the history of the mission stations, which later became the 'coloured reserves' along the coastal Namaqualand area as well as further inland, is important. These stations acted as a place of refuge against the effects of colonialism, which had become progressively more violent (Rhode and Hoffman, 2008:190).

According to the Department of Land Affairs' 1997 'White Paper on South African Land Policy', three key elements make up South Africa's post-apartheid land reform programme and these are land restitution, land redistribution, and tenure reform (1997:4). Of importance within the context of this project is land restitution. During the negotiations to establish a democratic South Africa in 1994, the Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act of 1991 lifted the racial restrictions that had previously been placed on the ownership of land and led to the establishment of the Advisory Committee of Land Allocation, which focused on a limited process of land restoration. The constitutional negotiations led to a more substantial commitment to a post-apartheid programme of restitution which paved the way for the passage of the Restitution of Land Rights Act in 1994. This element of the land reform programme is characterised by the restoration of land to people 'who were displaced as a consequence of the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936' (Bradstock, 2005:4). This is particularly relevant given that the traditional commonage lands of Loeriesfontein are currently under a land restitution claim.

Due to the complexity of land in South Africa, especially given its history of land dispossession both pre-apartheid and during Apartheid, the land reform programme is not without its own share of debates and controversy. It is easy to view land and land dispossession as a marker of racial inequalities in a still racially divided South Africa, and thus easy to view land restitution as a symbolic answer to years of institutionalised inequality. The land reform policy represents not only the readdressing of former forced removals and racial segregation, but also the hope for a transformed South Africa. However, as is argued by several analysts (Walker and Cousins, 2015; Walker, 2005), this perspective of land reform and land dispossession is too simplistic, given the many changes that have taken place since people were dispossessed. The ambitious land reform policy has failed to live up to expectations and one has to question the viability of the policy. Thus Walker (2005: 806) argues that although the issue of land is an important one and most South Africans agree that the land should be returned to its former owners, only a small percentage of South Africans identify land as a major issue that should be addressed ahead of other priorities.

A related issue I would like to highlight concerns the term 'Land Question'. The land question, during 1994 when the land reform programme was being established, focused on the country's history of land inequalities and dispossession, but today, over twenty years later, the land question problematises the question of land itself (Walker, 2017:3). This is largely due to the insufficient progress of the land reform programme in terms of its original aims, as well as the changing socio-economic landscape of agriculture in South Africa. Walker and Cousins (2015:2) argue that 'South Africa is no longer the agrarian society it once was' and has become increasingly urbanised, with most people having their main source of income coming from salaries or wages (See also Atuahene, 2011.) However, this sentiment is not universally shared, especially by those with a direct relationship to land and who are deeply invested in the outcome of land reform.

Given that the Northern Cape is still economically very dependent upon the utilisation of natural resources through livestock farming, the 'Land Question' remains a significant issue for many people, as my research in Loeriesfontein brought to the fore. In the first decade of land reform the Northern Cape accounted for the largest portion of land transferred through the land reform programme with 233,634 ha of land transferred as of 2004 (Hall, 2004:13); municipal commonages, which are discussed in more detail in the next section, constituted the bulk of the land that had been redistributed.

In a 2005 paper Alastair Bradstock highlights the issues which beneficiaries of the land reform programme faced at that time within the context of the Northern Cape. Key issues which stood out for me are the importance of multiple livelihoods, the issue of land beneficiaries being 'too poor to farm' which is something that was raised by many of my participants, the lack of infrastructure, the uncertainty around the responsibilities of elected CPAs, and equitable access to land (Bradstock:2005). These issues are very similar to concerns mentioned numerous times by my participants during my fieldwork in both interviews and more informal settings.

### *Municipal Commonages as a Form of Land Reform*

Municipal commonages are pieces of land that are owned by the local municipality and are available for the use of the local community, whether it be as a source of natural resources such as fire wood, or for agricultural purposes such as stock farming (which is prevalent within the Northern Cape province). Historically, during the Apartheid era, municipal commonages were

leased to white commercial farmers and did not benefit poorer people of colour. Since the transition to democracy in 1994 these 'traditional' commonage lands have been identified as an important resource that the local state can use to benefit emerging small-scale farmers.

In 1997, the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), introduced the Municipal Commonage Programme which focused on making municipal commonages take on a greater role within the land reform programme, especially in the Northern Cape (Anderson and Pienaar, 2003). As of 2003, land redistribution in the form of commonages made up 67% of redistributed land within the Northern Cape. According to the municipal commonage policy set out by the DLA in 2000, the aim is for commonages to serve as either a source of supplementary income and household food security for subsistence farmers or to serve as a stepping stone for small-scale emerging farmers to shift from subsistence farming to commercial farming. As of 2004, this programme had managed to accomplish the greatest transfer of land at the time, with approximately 17,393 ha of commonages being made accessible to black farmers (Anderson & Pienaar, 2004:2). The shift brought forth by the 2000 Municipal Commonage Policy brought emerging farmers to the forefront and this has caused the limited commonage lands to be split between wealthier and poorer farmers, with severe implications for the significance of commonages within land reform. It has reduced the value of the commonage programme, especially in light of the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme which was adopted as policy at that time, which focused attention on the redistribution of private land holdings (rather than access to municipal land) as the primary element of land reform (Anderson & Pienaar, 2004:2).

However, the reliance on municipal commonages as a form of land reform is not without its faults. In a 2012 paper Atkinson, Cupido, and Samuels discussed the failings of the municipal commonages in terms of their weak management and also presented proposals for how to resolve the issues they identified. In this paper it is argued that the main cause of the poor management of commonages lay with the establishment of newly integrated local municipalities and inexperienced councillors (Atkinson, Cupido, and Samuels, 2012:8). The argument made in this and subsequent papers is that the then DLA overestimated the capacity and abilities of the newly formed municipalities, and local municipalities were ill-equipped to handle the strain of such an intensive and ambitious land reform programme (Atkinson, 2013:8). Issues experienced included not only a lack of interest by the municipalities in the commonages but also a lack of assistance by provincial departments in creating feasible management systems.

In addition to this, when the commonages were made accessible to black emerging farmers, local municipalities also experienced a loss of the income which had previously been generated by leasing the land to established commercial farmers. The monetary loss also affected the infrastructure of the commonages negatively. The new system, i.e. the Municipal Commonage programme, was also not clearly understood by leaders of local governments and, therefore, the commonages were badly managed (Atkinson, 2013:9). To make matters even worse, the DLA had lost interest in the Municipal Commonage Programme already by 2003, due to the fact that it did not include the actual transfer of land from white to black ownership as it was lease-based.

In his paper, 'Municipal Commonages: A publish good or bad?', Ingle (2006:50) states that the importance of good management for the municipal commonages is underestimated, which has led to the downfall of this programme. He identifies three main elements of mismanagement. The first looks at the infrastructure and the technical aspects of commonage management, which includes mending fences, wind pumps, drinking holes, and the provision of proper roads to the commonages. The second involves institutional management, which entails questions of who gets to use the land, how large individual herds of stock should be, and how the general rules that manage the commonages are to be developed and applied. Third is the financial aspect of commonage management, which involves questions of how much a farmer should pay per hectare or if payment should be based on the number of sheep he or she has on the land (Ingle, 2006:51)

Given the context of the town of Loeriesfontein, the issues mentioned in this paper are relevant for my own research.

## **Chapter 3: Research Findings and Discussion**

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from my fieldwork. I begin with an overview of my research participants which includes a demographic profile. I then discuss the major themes that have emerged through my fieldwork and analysis of my data, which revolve around the significance of the commonages for livelihoods, the meanings of land and farming, and the issues surrounding governance, access and control of the commonage land. I then discuss these findings in relation to my research questions and provide a few recommendations for further research before concluding.

### **3.1. Profile of the Loeriesfontein Small-Scale Commonage Farmers**

Table 1 below summarizes the general demographic details of the nine commonage farmers that I interviewed. As can be seen from the table, all the farmers identified themselves as 'coloured' and there are significantly more men than women farmers in my sample. Although not statistically representative, this reflects the predominance of male farmers in the farming community of Loeriesfontein. This does not mean that women in the households of male farmers do not contribute to or benefit from commonage farming as an occupation, but it does reflect the unequal gender dynamics in terms of who is able to access commonage land rights.

It can also be seen that many of my participants were elderly, or middle-aged men who are currently receiving a pension. All of my participants use their farming to supplement their household income and this is especially true for those receiving a pension who have no other income besides farming. This table also shows the ways in which my participants gained access to the traditional commonages, with three of them doing so through informal rather than formal means; interestingly these three farmers (two of whom are a married couple) are the youngest of my sample. Given that there are some small-scale farmers with other sources of income, it would be valuable to have a complete understanding of who uses the commonages and whether their socio-economic positions influence their access to the land; this is an issue for further discussion.

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of the Small-scale Commonage Farmers

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>FA Member</b>	<b>Other sources of livelihoods</b>	<b>Means of Access</b>
Frank	70	M	C	Married	Yes	Pensioner, Woodwork	Formal, through FA membership
August	69	M	C	Married	Yes	Pensioner	Formal, through FA membership
Julian	68	M	C	Married	Yes	Pensioner	Formal, through FA membership
Tom	56	M	C	Married	Yes	Disability grant: declared medically unfit to work	Formal, through FA membership
Arthur	42	M	C	Single	No	Truck Driver	Informal, through social connections
Phillip	35	M	C	Married (To Phyllis)	Yes	None	Informal
Imogen	54	F	C	Widow	Yes	Pension: Received from deceased husband's policy	Formal, taken over from her deceased husband
Phyllis	34	F	C	Married (To Phillip)	Yes	None	Informal
Patty	32	F	C	Married	No	Social Worker	Formal, taken over from her deceased father.

### *Peter and Julie*

Not included in Table 1 are two of my key informants who are members of the CPA and aspire to farming the commonage lands but are not currently accessing the land. Peter and Julie are a middle-aged couple who are part of the leadership of the CPA. Peter is particularly involved in the land restitution claim that has been placed on the traditional commonage lands of Loeriesfontein; he was also generous enough to provide me with some key documents concerning the history of the commonages as well as some information on the claim itself. Peter and Julie have been involved in the land restitution claim for over 20 years and expressed their longing for the claim to be resolved so that they could begin farming the land. Although they want to farm, and have a passion for farming, they have never had the opportunity to do so due to the unsettled land claim. During our interview, Julie insisted on showing me her sheep, which she has been rearing in her back yard. When she showed me her sheep she said, 'This is our future, we just need out land'. I found it interesting that they have not farmed before, especially seeing that other aspiring small-scale farmers have managed to use the municipal commonages for grazing their sheep for years. They are not the only ones waiting for the land claim to be finalised in order to start farming. Julie described another CPA member saying: 'A member of the CPA was 55 when we started this, he is 75 now when the land is becoming available, but he is so sickly that he can't move around well so it's a happy story but a sad story'.

What was very evident when I was first introduced to this couple was the animosity that existed between the CPA and the FA. Peter and Julie claimed that the FA was farming illegally on their land and that after the land claim was resolved all of the small-scale farmers currently grazing on the land would be forced to vacate. When I asked them what the role of the CPA was, I was told it was to help the community, but they stated: 'We never had the opportunity to really work with the community and generate funds as a CPA because we didn't have the land, that was our whole problem'. This was confirmed by some members of the FA, who knew about the land claim and stated that the CPA had yet to do anything for local people since their establishment in 2008; however, none of the FA members were able to tell me why this was the case and in the time available to me I was unable to unpack these issues.

### 3.2. Emerging Themes

In this section, I discuss the major themes that have emerged from my research project. As mentioned before, these concern the significance of commonage farming for livelihoods, the non-material meaning of farming, the challenges of governance, and issues around access and control of the commonages.

#### *The Significance of Farming on the Commonage for Livelihoods*

Among the farmers that I have interviewed, what emerged clearly is that farming plays an important role in contributing to the livelihoods and sustaining the households who are using this land for their livestock. As can be seen in Table 1, five of the nine small-scale farmers that I interviewed were pensioners and of these five only two had an additional source of income, in both cases through selling the furniture they make from wood. In addition to this, two of my participants were unemployed and thus relying solely on their farming as a source of personal income. (In the time available I did not explore sources of income from other household members.) Only two of my nine participants were employed: Patty, the 32-year-old social worker and Arthur, who was employed part time as a truck driver.

Patty was very unusual among my participants as she is well educated, having finished a BA Social Work degree at the University of Stellenbosch, and has a fulltime job as a social worker. She has also got into farming by default, having inherited some sheep from her father after he passed away. When I spoke to her, she expressed a reluctance to define herself as a farmer, saying that her father-in-law manages the sheep that she inherited from her deceased father. What I found interesting about her story was that although she does not define herself as a farmer, she is in the process of starting a farming company with her father-in-law and her sister-in-law. When I asked what her role would be in this business, she spoke about her handling the administrative side of the business while her father-in-law would be in charge of the 'actual farming', by which she meant the caring of the sheep and the management of the farm. She did note that if her in-laws had more resources such as transportation and a larger herd, she would be interested in taking a more 'active' role in the farm business did not feel the need to do so due to the limited scope of their farming enterprise. Her story was, however, unusual and the evidence

from my research project shows very clearly that farming contributes greatly to the livelihoods of those Loeriesfontein residents who are able to access the commonage as small-scale farmers.

At the same time, during my interviews, farmers also spoke about the cost of farming and how expensive it is to continue farming, especially in light of the drought. This can clearly be seen in the joint interview that I conducted with Phillip and Phyllis, a young couple living in the RDP housing community of Loeriesfontein. Compared to Patty they are in a precarious financial situation. They have a one-bedroom house in an area that is situated on a dusty field and is not accessible via a tarred road. The couple derives most of their monthly income from farming. When I arrived for the interview, I was greeted by Phyllis and was told that her husband, Phillip, would be joining us later. My initial question as to how long they had been farming sparked a conversation that lasted for over an hour. Phyllis spoke of her struggle to build herself up and break out of the cycle of poverty and the challenges that she and her husband have faced in trying to build their farming. She says 'We have so little, but I can show you that I have worked for everything here. I have animals as well, we need money for medicine and feed. With this farming, I can't eat, I can't sit with my money'. In this quote, although farming is seen as an important source of their household income, it is also described as a great expense.

As previously noted, the traditional commonage lands of Loeriesfontein are split into camps that are around 600 ha in area. The farmers farming in each of these camps have no room in which to expand their herds and are also not able to rotate their livestock to new camps in response to the rainfall and to prevent the degradation of land. This issue was mentioned to me by several farmers and highlights the limitations placed on the commonage farmers in terms of growth and progress by the limited land in relation to local demand. With an estimated minimum number of 45 farmers using the commonages according to the FA, and assuming each farmer has around 50 sheep grazing on this land, the implications for land degradation and the natural environment are severe.

During my fieldwork, I regularly heard phrases such as 'You can't live off of farming' and even 'Farming on the commonage is a hobby' from my informants. At the same time, farming was a critical means of survival for several of my informants. This sentiment was captured by the story of one of the few female farmers that I interviewed. Imogen is a widow who inherited her sheep from her husband after he passed away. She farms alongside her eldest son, but has a dwindling herd of sheep. Unlike most of my participants, Imogen does not have a love for farming but continues to do so due to the support she receives from her friends and family, and because

farming is a source of additional income. Imogen receives her husband's monthly pension that the company he worked for has granted her after his death and this money is her only source of income besides farming. She told me: 'We can continue if we could better live, and not just live off the sheep; I do get a pension but that is just to survive. Life is expensive'. This quote clearly demonstrates the livelihoods significance for farming for this family.

Imogen's story is similar to that of Frank, an elderly farmer who uses farming as one of his main sources of income, alongside a government pension and his woodworking. Frank makes outdoor tables and chairs out of wood and sells them for an extra income. He says: 'The people with a little more money and sheep, they go forward quickly and grow themselves quickly, but us, as pensioners, we have to deal with the crumbs'. This statement resonates with similar sentiments expressed by Phyllis and her husband, Phillip, as well as other farmers.

### *The Non-Material Meaning of Farming*

One of the key themes that emerged through my fieldwork was that farming on the commonage is not just about livelihoods. A phrase I heard multiple times during my research was 'farming is in our blood'. The first response from one of my participants when asked why he had started farming was 'Because I love farming'. This sentiment was widely shared by the farmers that I have spoken to, both small-scale and commercial. Although small-scale farming in Loeriesfontein contributes to the livelihoods of the commonage farmers, according to many of my participants it is not possible to make an independent living off farming alone, due to the limitations placed on herd and camp sizes. It is however, more than just the promise of income that draws people to farming: it is also the meaning that farming gives to each individual.

This came through clearly in my interview with Phyllis and Phillip whose journey to becoming farmers was filled with challenges; what motivated them to keep going was their love for farming and what it means to them at a personal level. Phyllis was abandoned by her parents at a very young age and was then taken in by an elderly couple who raised her. She used to work as a domestic worker for some of the more affluent households in the town but was currently unemployed when I interviewed her. She also mentioned that although her husband was working on a 'job', this was only temporary and that he would be unemployed again as well. She also told me that he does not have a good relationship with his mother due to the mother's alcoholism. As

a result of their difficult backgrounds, Phyllis is passionate about improving their life circumstances through farming. For her, farming is about far more than just the money. She spoke strongly about her love for farming and said something during my interview with her that I found quite profound. After speaking about the troubles of her past, including having been abandoned by her parents at a young age, she told me: 'So my interest is to heal myself, this isn't just about farming, it's about healing...' She also told me:

God says "Go to the animal and see what it is to love, and how to love, learn how to look after your children and learn how to treat your neighbours" ...That is love, and that is unconditional love. This is how I learn to love. Isn't it wonderful?

These statements highlight the importance of farming not only in her household's livelihood strategy but also for their mental and emotional wellbeing.

A different but related sentiment was expressed by Julian, another farmer whom I interviewed who belonged to the FA. When I asked him what farming meant to him, he said:

Independence, it lets you feel a little proud when you do well, and sometimes we have slaughter competitions and we bring lambs and you can win a prize and it shows that you are going forward in life, that you are not just farming for the pot, and self-pride and all those things.

The non-material meaning of land was also reflected in the way in which the key informants I spoke to in the CPA spoke about the land restitution claim they had lodged on the traditional commonage lands. As already described, Peter and his wife Julie, have spent over 20 years of their lives waiting for their land claim to be finalised. In Julie's words 'For 22 years we've been waiting for our rightful land'. For these members of the CPA the commonage land is tied to ideas around heritage, identity and rights. By heritage, I am referring to the legacy of a history of dispossession that has contributed to shaping how these claimants regard themselves in the present.

## *The Challenges of Governance*

What also emerges clearly from my study is that confusion over ownership and which institution is responsible for governance is resulting in weak management of the commonage lands; this is one of the biggest challenges facing small-scale farmers in Loeriesfontein which, I argue, is inhibiting their growth and success. As already noted, there is confusion around who owns the land. Initially the traditional commonages were owned by the local municipality but because of the pending land claim, nobody seems clear as to who the land actually belongs to currently. One of the consequences of this is that the commonages are increasingly being managed by informal means which is exacerbating the problem of overstocking of the commonage land.

Confusion around who manages the commonages was one of the first issues around governance that I picked up on. When I asked two members of the local Hantam municipality, located in Calvinia, about how involved the municipality is in the management of the commonages, one of them said that 'because the land belongs to the municipality, from that point of view the municipality is quite involved'. However, when asked about the CPA, the officials told me that although they knew that the land claim was being handled, not much was known about the claim. Thus, at the time of my finalising my study (at the end of 2017), it appeared that although the municipality acknowledged that there was a land claim on the land and that the claim was being processed, they still viewed the land as belonging to the municipality and not to the CPA or the community of Loeriesfontein.

At one point the CPA stated that the land claim was to be finalised by the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2017, but when I followed up with one of its members via a phone call in November 2017, I was told that this had not been the case and that the claim was yet to be finalised. The confusion about who manages the land has serious implications for the management of the commonages. According to the CPA, the land is still managed by the municipality and they will take over the management of the commonages only after the land claim is finalised. However, from what I have seen, the commonages are not being managed by any institution. Furthermore, the members of the municipality that I have spoken to are not well versed in what the land claim entails, even though municipality officials have been aware of this issue for quite some time.

The confusion around management can most clearly be seen in the responses of my participants to the question of who manages the commonages. Many of the farmers that I have interviewed are under the impression that the commonages are still under the management of the

municipality. Almost all of the farmers I interviewed were unaware of the existence of the CPA, and none knew who the actual members of the CPA are. What was even more surprising was that the members of the municipality with whom I spoke also did not know who the members of the CPA are. When asked this question, they responded: 'No idea, I'm not going to lie here, I don't know their names'. At the same time, although there is clearly a lack of official management of the commonages, the farmers themselves have shown some attempt to manage their own camps. Thus Tom, one of my participants, told me in September 2017:

We work well together. We have three camps, but we use one wind pump, and maybe there are 6 people in those camps. So, what we would do if the pump breaks are, there are people who can fix it and if it costs R3000, then the cost is shared among the 6 farmers.

What this shows is that although there is very little formal institutional management, the farmers themselves (or at least the ones that I have spoken to) do try to work together to manage their own camps in terms of infrastructural issues such as fixing fences or wind pumps. I am not well versed on the management of other aspects of farming such as predation, herd management, and stock theft, all of which have been mentioned as issues that the small-scale farmers are facing, and this could be seen as a limitation of this research project. However, several farmers expressed similar sentiments around management to those of Tom; following up on these issues of land management by the farmers themselves would be an important area for further research.

### *Access and Control*

Issues of who accesses and controls the commonage lands are directly affected by the issue of governance, which has been discussed in the previous section. The ways in which land is accessed ranges from the formal to the informal. The latter form of access was described to me in one of the first interviews I had, which was with Arthur, the small-scale farmer who is also a part-time truck driver. When asked about how he had gained access to the commonages, he said that he did not follow any process of applying for rights to use the land. Rather, 'The sheep just walks there on the state ground, I am busy trying to get access to such a camp'. A more formal system of applying for access was described to me by another farmer who told me that in order to gain access to the commonages, a potential farmer would first have to apply to become part of the FA and then submit an application form. Most of the farmers that I spoke to regarded

membership to the FA as being the most common way to access the commonage. However, another participant claimed that there was no formal process for gaining access to land; he described what could be regarded as a semi-formal way of accessing land through negotiations with farmers who are already using the land. He told me 'We don't have any of our own land so if we want to go and speak to someone who has land and he says yes, you can join him on his camp and then you can bring your sheep, then we do it in this manner'.

Another formal route to acquiring rights to the commonage is through the municipality whose land it is or has been until very recently. However, because of the confusion surrounding ownership of the commonages as a result of the land claim, the municipality appears to have abandoned active management over the land, which has led to insecure rights to the land and an overstocking issue. When I asked the municipality how many farmers are currently on the commonages, I was told five. This is far below the estimated number of farmers using the land that I received from a member of the FA, who put the number at at least 45. According to an informant in the municipality, currently only one farmer has a formal contract with the municipality for the use of the commonage lands, but this farmer is currently using the additional commonage land located some distance from Loeriesfontein and not the traditional commonage lands adjacent to the town. What this means is that none of the farmers currently on the traditional commonages have official contracts allowing them to use the land, and many of them have gained access through their social connections.

Given the unclear issue of governance and the unsettled land claim, those without official contracts are at risk of losing their access to the land should the management of the commonages be officially taken over by the CPA. As already described, according to the CPA only people who form part of the land claim will be able to use the commonage for their livestock in the future: '...keep in mind that you must be a member of the CPA or be one of those households registered with the CPA registered households they will be entitled to use the land'. Given that many farmers seem to be unaware of what the CPA is about and that access to the commonages once the land claim is settled will be dependent on one's membership of the CPA, many farmers currently enjoying access to the land are in a very insecure position, and stand to lose this access once the land claim is resolved. Here the two forms of land reform, restitution and access to municipal commonage land, are in direct competition with each other.

Given what has been discussed in this section with regards to access, it would be beneficial to investigate how gender dynamics influence women's ability to access land and this could be investigated in a further study.

### **3.3. Discussion**

In this section of my report I return to my research questions, mentioned in Chapter 1, to reflect on the contribution of the commonages to the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, and how current issues surrounding the commonages are affecting them. Although I do not address the broader issues of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods directly, the results of my research project do point to both the importance of these objectives and how the shortcomings of small-scale commonage farming as currently practised in Loeriesfontein commonage affect the potential of the commonage to contribute to sustainable development and provide sustainable livelihoods.

As discussed in Chapter 1, my first research question concerned how small-scale farmers in Loeriesfontein understand the value of the commonages and the contribution that access to this land makes to their livelihood.

In attempting to address this question, one of the first issues I would like to highlight, which has been touched on in my literature review, is the importance of municipal commonages as a form of land reform within the Northern Cape. As mentioned previously, at one stage the Northern Cape accounted for the largest area of land transferred from white to black ownership through the land reform programme, and the largest proportion of this land was from municipal commonages. Given the significance of the municipal commonages programme for land reform in the Northern Cape, the optimal management of this land must be considered a critical issue for ensuring its ability to contribute to sustainable development.

My previous discussion has shown the important contribution that access to the municipal commonages for grazing livestock is making to the livelihoods of small-scale farmers. This is according to their own understanding of their position and needs. The importance they attach to the commonages is as a result of the socio-economic positions of the small-scale farmers, which in most cases is precarious, as the demographic information contained in Table 1 shows, with many of my informants depending on social grants and only one with a full-time job. In many

cases, the spouses of my informants were also pensioners and they did not have alternative sources of income besides their monthly pensions and farming. While the absence of reliable information on the identities and demographic profiles of all the small-scale farmers using the commonage makes it difficult for me to draw general conclusions with regard to the total population of the small-scale commonage farmers, information regarding the employment levels in the Hantam municipality contained in its 2015/16 IDP shows that the economic problems my informants face are widespread and other commonage users are likely to share similar problems. At the same time, what my research also shows is that commonage farmers do not only place a material value on the land but also are driven by a range of non-material values to do with identity, status, heritage and rights. As discussed previously, farming and access to the commonage means more than just supplementing livelihoods; it is also deeply embedded in the identities of many of the small-scale farmers that I have interviewed.

Given what has been discussed it would be useful to conduct a larger study of all of the small-scale farmers in terms of their demographics, socio-economic position, and level of employment in order to strengthen my argument. It would also be useful to investigate whether there are other alternative forms of income among the small-scale farmers.

My second research question concerned the current governance context of the commonages and its effects on those small-scale farmers currently making use of the land. My previous discussion has shown how the confusion about the current status of the land restitution claim on Loeriesfontein's traditional municipal commonages is undermining governance and causing problems around the issue of management of the commonages. The major uncertainties surrounding the issue of ownership of the land and, consequently, where the responsibility for the management of the commonage lies, are having negative effects on the small-scale farmers. One of the major consequences of the uncertainty over governance is the increased cost of farming. As mentioned by Tom, one of my participants, due to the lack of formal management, small-scale farmers are forced to manage the infrastructure of their own camps as best they can on their own, without state support. What this often means is that farmers are being forced to pay for the repairs of wind pumps and fences out of their own pockets, and these expenses are often high.

Another major consequence of the failure of governance in the Loeriesfontein commonages is the absence of leadership around resolving the conflict between the land claimants and the small-scale farmers already using the commonage and the threat to the farmers continued access to this land if and when the land restitution claim is to be finalised. Once this has happened then, as

projected by Peter and Julia in their interview with me, the members of the FA currently using the land who do not form part of the claimant grouping, along with all the other small-scale farmers on the land who are in a similar position, will be forced to vacate the land and no longer be allowed to farm on the commonages. Given its importance for their livelihoods and wellbeing, this will have very negative consequences for them. In terms of promoting social equity in Loeriesfontein through land reform, this contestation over land can be seen as a major step backwards. One of my participants said the following; 'We have to worry about the jackals yes but, you know what our real problem is, it's the two-legged jackal'. I found this statement to be quite revealing about the current context of the traditional municipal commonages in that he likens the current issues of management, governance, and conflict over land to the issue of predation of sheep by jackals.

Given this, it could be that the biggest challenge to the commonages contributing to sustainable development might not be governance but rather, issues concerning social equity, but this is an issue to explore through further research.

### **3.4. Recommendations for Further Research**

In this section I make four recommendations for future research projects, including a possible MA project that I could take forward in 2018, should I continue with this particular research site and focus.

The first recommendation is for more systematic work on who the small-scale commonage farmers are in terms of their demographic profile and relationship to the rest of the Loeriesfontein community. As mentioned previously, it is unclear who the farmers are and exactly how many farmers are currently using the land as well as how, or how many sheep are currently grazing on the traditional municipal commonages. Although it is unclear who the farmers are, I have been able to establish that there are very few women who are identified as farmers in their own right and this could be an issue for future research as well. This information is essential for a more extensive study focusing on sustainable development and the commonages of Loeriesfontein. In addition to this, an in-depth analysis is needed for the history of the claim in relation to the earlier history of land dispossession within the Northern Cape, along with a detailed account of the history of the commonages. Both issues are important in order to fully understand the potential of the commonage lands for sustainable livelihoods and hence sustainable development in this part of

the country. It would also be useful to find out exactly who the claimants involved in the land restitution claim are, due to the large impact this claim is having on the management of the commonages.

The second recommendation I would like to make concerns the conceptualisation of sustainable development itself. I think it would be important to look at what the small-scale commonage farmers themselves understand sustainable development to be and if and how to implement 'sustainable development' in their everyday lives. This is especially important given the current drought present in not only the Northern Cape but also other parts of South Africa.

The third recommendation concerns issues of participation among the small-scale commonage farmers. In my conceptual framework I discussed social equity and issues surrounding participation. As I have mentioned, I used the definition of social equity provided by Holden *et. Al* (2016), which likens social equity to social justice. In this conceptualisation of social equity there is a strong focus on democratic participation. Given that there is not much communication between the CPA and FA, it would be interesting to look at who is actively participating in the FA and CPA meetings, which voices are heard, and which are not.

Related to this, the fourth recommendation I would like to make concerns understandings of governance and appropriate forms of management for the municipal commonage land. In a recent post-graduate conference at which I presented my preliminary findings (Davids, 2017), I was advised to look at different forms of land management. This is particularly relevant given that one of my key themes centres around governance, or the lack thereof, of the traditional municipal commonages. Given that some farmers I have spoken to have taken the initiative in fixing the infrastructure of their own camps, it would be interesting to investigate alternative forms of management that could be present in the commonage and among the small-scale farmers themselves.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

Given the significant role that the municipal commonages have played in land reform within the Northern Cape, I thought it would be interesting to investigate the contribution the commonages of Loeriesfontein could make to issues of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods. I was especially interested in this given the pending land restitution claim that has been placed on

the traditional municipal commonages of Loeriesfontein. However, I soon came to realise that the issues of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods are much too broad to be effectively addressed within the very limited scope of an Honours project and thus, with the guidance of my supervisor, decided to narrow the focus of my research project to looking at the contribution the municipal commonage make towards the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and how the current context of the traditional commonages affects their farming.

The major themes which emerged though my fieldwork and data analysis centre on the significance of the commonages in the livelihoods of the small-scale famers of Loeriesfontein, the meaning of farming beyond simply material benefits, the challenges of governance, and the problems of access and control.

Due to the limited economic opportunities beyond farming in the Hantam municipality, along with the low employment and education rates, access to the commonage for farming is an important resource for most of the small-scale farmers who are able to access this land. However, the current contestation over ownership of the traditional commonages of Loeriesfontein is undermining this situation, i.e. the confusion over ownership of the commonages and its negative consequences for the management of this land are having a negative impact on the small-scale farmers currently using the land for stock farming and undermining the potential of this land for land reform.

Given all that has been discussed, I question the contribution the traditional commonages of Loeriesfontein can make to sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods in their current form, especially in light of the current context of the commonages and their consequences, i.e. the conflict and confusion surrounding the land restitution claim that has been placed on the traditional municipal commonages of Loeriesfontein. However, the issues covered by this research report deserve far more consideration than an honours project can afford and thus require further study. I hope that the findings from this report will provide a useful basis for further research into the traditional commonages of Loeriesfontein and what they mean for marginalised local people.

## Bibliography

Anderson, D. and Pienaar, K. (2003). Municipal Commonage. Evaluating land and agrarian reform in South Africa. An occasional paper series No.6. PLAAS. University of the Western Cape. 1 – 20.

Anderson, M. and Pienaar, K. (2004). Debating Land Reform and Rural Development: Municipal Commonage. Evaluating land and agrarian reform in South Africa. An occasional paper series No.6. PLAAS. University of the Western Cape. 1 – 4.

Atkinson, D. and Büscher, B. (2006). Municipal Commonage and Implications for Land Reform: A Profile of Commonage Users in Philippolis, Free State, South Africa. *Agrekon*, 45(5). 437 – 466.

Atkinson, D., Cupido, C. and Samuels, I. (2012). Revitalising municipal commonages as a key approach to land reform and pro-poor agricultural development. In 'Towards Carnegie III': Strategies to Overcome Poverty & Inequality. University of Cape Town. 1-19.

Attfield, R., Hattingh, J. and Manamela, M. (2004). Sustainable development, Sustainable livelihoods and Land Reform in South Africa: A Conceptual and Ethical Inquiry. *Third World Quarterly*, 25(2). 405–421.

Atuahene, B. (2011). South Africa's Land Reform Crisis: Eliminating the Legacy of Apartheid. *Council on Foreign Relations*, 90(4). 121–129.

Beinart, W. and Delius, P. (2014). The Historical Context and Legacy of the Natives Land Act of 1913. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40(4). 667–688.

Bradstock, A. (2005). Key Experiences of Land Reform in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Farm Africa. Policy and Research Series No.3. PLAAS. University of the Western Cape. 1-36.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Chambers, R. and Conway, G.R. (1991). Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century. IDS Discussion Paper. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. 1 – 29.

- Davenport, N. A. and Gambiza, J. (2009). Municipal commonage policy and livestock owners: Findings from the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Land Use Policy*, 26(3). 513–520.
- Davenport, N. A., Gambiza, J. and Shackleton, C. M. (2011). Use and users of municipal commonage around three small towns in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Journal of Environmental Management. Elsevier Ltd*, 92(6). 1449–1460.
- Guest, G, MacQueen, KM & Namey. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. sage Publications, Inc.
- Hall, R. (2004). Land and agrarian reform in South Africa: A status report 2004. Transformation No.20. PLAAS. University of the Western Cape.1 – 78.
- Holden, E., Linnerud, K. and Banister, D. (2016). The Imperatives of Sustainable Development. *Sustainable Development*., Issue 25. 213- 226.
- Intergrated Water Resource Management Objectives (IWRM). (1993). Loeriesfontein Emerging Stock Farmers. 41–43. Available at [www.iwrm.co.za](http://www.iwrm.co.za). Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017.
- Ingle, M. (2006). Municipal Commonage in South Africa: A public good going bad?. *Africa Insight*, 36(2). 46–55.
- Kepe, T. and Hall, R. (2016). *Land Redistribution in South Africa*. Commissioned Report on Land Redistribution. Parliament of South Africa.1–90.
- Kloppers, H. and Pienaar, G. (2014). The Historical Context of Land Reform in South Africa and Early Policies. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*., 17(2). 677 – 706.
- Lebert, T. (2004). Municipal Commonage as a Form of Land Redistribution: A case study of the new farms of Leliefontein, a communal reserve in Namaqualand, South Africa. Research Report No.18. PLAAS. University of the Western Cape. 1-55.
- Naidu, S. and Arendse, L. (2004). State of the Environment Report: Land Specialist Report Northern Cape. Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment & Conservation. 1 – 24.
- Redclift, M. (2005). Sustainable development (1987-2005): An Oxymoron Comes of Age. *Sustainable Development*, 13(4). 212–227.

Republic of South Africa. 2000. Municipal Commonage Policy. Northern Cape Department of Rural Development. Available at [www.ruraldevelopment.gov.za](http://www.ruraldevelopment.gov.za) . Accessed at 13 May 2017

Republic of South Africa. 2012. Land Reform Policy Discussion Document. 1 – 20. Available at [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za) . Accessed on 19 March 2017

Rhode, R., Benjaminsen, T. A. and Hoffman, M. T. (2002). Land Reform and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa. An occasional paper series No.16. PLAAS. University of the Western Cape 1 – 24.

Rohde, R. F. and Hoffman, M. T. (2008). One Hundred Years of Separation: The Historical Ecology of a South African “Coloured Reserve”. *Africa*, 78(2). 189–222.

Steyn, L. (2017). ‘1993 Land Legislation: Its Implications and Implementation’. *Review of African Political Economy.*, 21(61). 451–457.

United Nations Development Programme. (2010). *Guidance Note on Recovery: Livelihood*. 1 – 49. Available at [www.za.undp.org](http://www.za.undp.org). Accessed on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Vetter, S. (2013). Development and sustainable management of rangeland commons – aligning policy with the realities of South Africa’s rural landscape. *African Journal of Range & Forage Science*, 30(1–2). 1–9.

Walker, C. (2005). ‘The Limits to Land Reform: Rethinking “the Land Question”’. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31(4). 805–824.

Walker, C. (2007). “The Land Question in South Africa” 1913 and Beyond. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History. Available at [www.africanhistory.oxfordre.com](http://www.africanhistory.oxfordre.com). Accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Walker, C. (2010). Looking Forward, Looking Back: Beyond the Narrative of Loss and Restoration in the History of Land. In M. Godby (ed). *The Lie of the Land*. 12–27.

Walker, C and Cousins, B. (2015). Introduction. In: B. Cousins and C. Walker, ed., *Land Divided, Land Restored : Land Reform in South Africa for the 21st Century*. Jacana.

WCED, 1987. *Our common future*. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. G. H. Brundtland, (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

---

Good Day. My Name is Shu-aat Davids. I am an Honours student in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. I am asking you to participate in a research study which will contribute to my Honours degree. The aim of this study is to explore gender dynamics between male and female commonage farmers. As part of this study I wish to collect information from people like yourself who are knowledgeable about this issue.

If you agree to take part in this study, I will ask you to respond to some questions and to engage in a conversation with me, in which you draw on your experiences and knowledge concerning issues related to my study. Our conversation should take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Before we proceed, I need your agreement, either orally or by means of your signature, that you are aware of the following:

1. Participation in the study is voluntary, in other words, you can choose whether to take part or not.
2. If you agree to take part, you are free to stop and also withdraw at any time, without any negative consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with and still remain part of the study.
3. There are no foreseeable risks to you in this research. There will also be no direct benefit to you, including no payment of money for agreeing to take part. However, I expect that my study will add to our understanding of the position of between male and female commonage farmers.
4. You will not be identified as a participant in the study unless you give me express permission to use your name or you are responding in your official capacity (in which case the requirements of your institution around this will be respected). Otherwise, your identity will remain confidential and protected through the use of a pseudonym/made-up name.
5. If you agree, I would like to record my interview with you. This makes it easier for me to be sure my notes to our discussion are accurate. If you agree to being recorded, you may still ask for the recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview. The recordings are intended for research purposes only and will not be given to anybody else in the community.
6. All the data I collect will be stored securely and only used for legitimate research purposes.

7. I may publish the results of my study in an academic publication. As with the dissertation, unless you have given permission for your name to be used, your identity will remain confidential in any such publication, through the use of codes or pseudonyms.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact one or more of the following:

**Researcher:** Shu-aat Davids, Tel: 0849538650, Email: [18357369@sun.ac.za](mailto:18357369@sun.ac.za)

**My supervisor:** Prof. Cheryl Walker, Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology, Stellenbosch University, Private Bag XI Matieland 7602, South Africa; (tel: 021 808 2420; e-mail: [cjwalker@sun.ac.za](mailto:cjwalker@sun.ac.za)).

**Research Division:** Ms Maléne Fouché, Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University, Private Bag XI Matieland 7602, South Africa; tel: 021 808 4622; e-mail: [mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za) .

**ORAL CONSENT/SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

The information above was described to me by Shu-aat Davids in English/Afrikaans. I was given the opportunity to ask questions which were answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent voluntarily participate in this study. I have been given/ have been offered but not accepted a copy of this form.

**Note any conditions (e.g. participant agrees to be identified):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**OR Oral Consent given and noted by the Researcher [TICK]:**

**SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER**

I declare that I have carefully explained the information given in this document to

\_\_\_\_\_. He/She was encouraged and to ask questions about the interview procedure. This conversation was conducted in English/Afrikaans. This respondent chose to give consent via

**Signature    OR    Oral Consent    [CIRCLE AS APPLICABLE]**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## **Appendix B: Interview Schedules**

### *Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Key Informants*

#### General Information Regarding Background:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Home Language
- Educational Level
- Residence
- Marital Status
- Children

#### Institutional affiliation

- Organisation
- Position and responsibilities
- Length of time with the organisation

#### Level of Involvement in the Commonages

- Involvement with the operation/management of the commonages?

- What are your responsibilities in relation to the commonage lands?

#### Operations of the Commonage

- What is the process of application considerations and process to gain access to the commonage?
- What factors would prevent a farmer from gaining access to the commonage?
- What factors that could cause a farmer to lose access to the commonage
- Significance of commonages in Loeriesfontein and more generally?
- Do you think that the process of gaining access to the commonages is fair to all farmers?
- Challenges and opportunities around the commonages
- Perceptions of gender dynamics

## *Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Commonage Farmers*

### General Information Regarding Background:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Home Language
- Educational Level
- Occupation
- Residence
- Marital Status
- Children

### General Information Regarding Farming:

- How long have you been farming?
- When did you start farming?
- Why did you start farming?
- What kinds of animals do you farm?
- How many animals do you own?
- How large are your grazing grounds?

### Questions Regarding Access

- How did you go about gaining access to the commonages?
- Did you find this process time consuming or difficult?
- What challenges did you experience when applying for access to the commonages?
- Do you think other commonage farmers had an easier experience when applying for access? If so, why do you think this was?

### Questions Regarding Additional Resources and Management

- Does the municipality or any NGO's provide any additional resources that aid in your farming? If so, what are they?
- Did you have to apply to make use of these resources? If so, what was the application process?
- How did you experience this application process?
- Do you think your experience when applying was similar to that of other commonage farmers? If not, why do you think that was?

### Questions Regarding Relations with other Commonage Farmers

- How are your relationships with other commonage farmers?
- Have you had any major issues or troubles when it comes to interacting with the other commonage farmers. If so, why do you think this is?
- If you have experienced issues when interacting with other commonage farmers, were these issues resolved and are you happy with the resolutions?

## Questions Regarding the Farmers Association

- Is there a farmers' association present
- Are you a member of the association (why/why not)?
- What issues are discussed or brought by the association?
- Do you think the issues discussed are relevant to you in particular?
- What issues do think are important but have not been discussed by the association?