



Value of the San Rock Art in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage Site

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Short title: Tourism value of San Rock Art South Africa

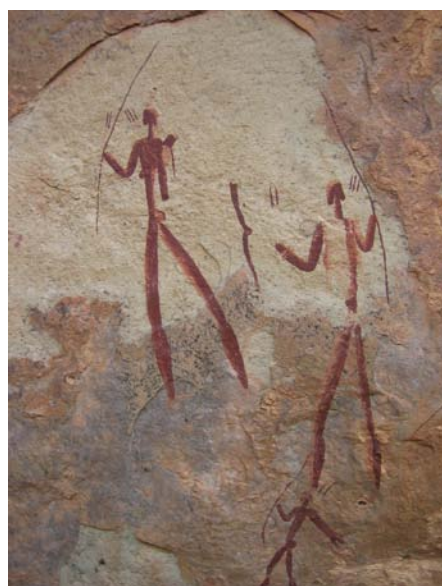
Key Message: The San rock art paintings in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg in South Africa, have a high potential monetary value related to their function as cultural heritage and the recreation service of the site for tourism.

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Picture 1: Examples of San Rock art paintings in uKhahlamba Drakensberg

Courtesy: Tommy Topp



Picture 2: Examples of San Rock art paintings in uKhahlamba Drakensberg

Courtesy: Tommy Topp

What is the problem? What is the link to local policy?

The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park in South Africa has been a World Heritage site since 2000. Its landscape is dominated by a mountain range with a length of about 180 km and a size of 243,000 ha. Besides its rich biodiversity and importance for supplying high quality water (designated as Ramsar Site in 1997), the Park also offers cultural and spiritual inspiration as well as a recreational experience. In its many caves and rock shelters there are between 25,000 and 40,000 rock art paintings, which were made by the San Bushmen who inhabited parts of these mountains for 20,000 years. All that is now left of their culture is the rock art. Besides this cultural value, the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park also provides recreational value for the people of South Africa (Heard and Barnard 2006).

However, the overall management of this valuable cultural asset is an area of concern. Damages caused by visitors and grassland fires are besides others the most pressing threats to the rock art (Topp 2010). In order to inform the development of conservation strategies, a study was conducted to establish a monetary value for the San rock art. This study tries to contribute to the long-term protection of the paintings and to assist the park management with regards to goals, objectives and future planning of this valuable cultural site.

Which ecosystem services (ES) are considered and how?

In order to value the cultural services, Topp (2009) used the contingent valuation method. With this tool, the tourism and recreation values were assessed by a survey on the park visitors' willingness to pay for visiting and protecting the paintings. Interviews were carried out with tour operators, park officials, and cultural authorities to get an estimate for the value of the paintings. The vast majority of the visitors were generally willing to pay for the protection and visits to rock art sites. The single willingness to pay of each questioned visitor, to protect and to visit the paintings was aggregated across the total number of park visitors (440,000 people per year). The potential monetary value for the park's rock art is between 9.8 million Rand (1.4 million US\$) and 13.4 million Rand (1.9 million US\$) per year (Topp 2009). In addition, the Park management and the cultural authority place a high value on the rock art (Topp 2009).

What policy instrument builds upon this ecosystem service information?

As the study was conducted very recently, no direct applications of the results by the park management could be observed (Topp 2009). However, the study resulted in several recommendations for improving the management of the tourism related to the rock art, and to enhance their protection. Some of them are being considered for implementation and further discussion.

Firstly, a detailed inventory of the rock art sites needs to be prepared to allow for more accurate management strategies (Topp 2009). Secondly, a cultural management team with an expertise and a focus on the rock art should be appointed to monitor these valuable sites and manage their maintenance. This is especially necessary for those sites which are known to be popular for self-explorations by park visitors (Topp 2009). Such a position for a cultural manager is already budgeted for the next financial planning period (Topp 2010). However, since the budget resources for the park management are generally limited, new sources for the funding of effective protection and raising awareness of the cultural heritage of the San people have to be tapped (Topp 2010). Such a source might be a "Rock Art levy" for Park entry and also for tours in the Park. The study showed that there is a big potential for such a levy because the cultural service that the Park and the San paintings provide, is being recognised by park visitors (Topp 2009). However, the quality of the offered guided tours to rock art sites needs to be re-examined in order to be able to offer a good experience to each visitor (Topp 2009; Topp 2010).

The study findings and the recommendations made are a good basis to improve the management of the World Heritage Site in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park. Furthermore, additional data and also higher quality data is currently being collected, which could improve this valuation exercise and possibly also include other criteria of valuation such as spiritual and educational values.

References:

Heard, D. and J. Barnard (2006), Integrated Management Plan 2006-2011. uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, South Africa.

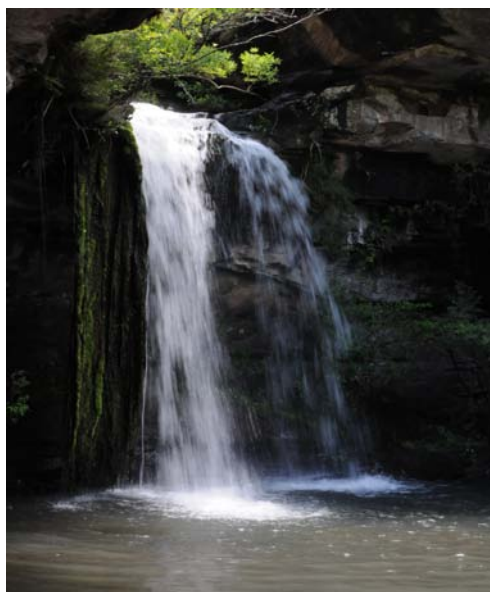
Topp, T. (2009). The Value of the San Rock Art in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage Site (South Africa). University of Klagenfurt, <http://mpa.e-c-o.at/index.php/plain/content/view/full/864> (last access April 7 2010).

Topp, T. (2010). Personal communication (April 15 2010).

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Picture 3: Tourists examining the paintings
Courtesy: Tommy Topp



Picture 4: A waterfall near the paintings
Courtesy: Tommy Topp