WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND IN NAMIBIA: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT

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ABSTRACT

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Threats to wildlife in Africa and elsewhere around the world raise the question: how can humans work together in the Anthropocene to manage and conserve wildlife and other natural resources? By documenting the use of common property as a tool for wildlife management and conservation on private ranchland in Namibia, this dissertation documents one unique possibility. Drawing on anthropological data and information collected over 13 months of ethnographic research, it examines how and why groups of white ranchers have used common property as a tool for managing common-pool wildlife across boundaries of private land. These arrangements and the territories they govern are called freehold or commercial conservancies. This research resulted in an in-depth case study of one of the largest and most active conservancies in the country, as well as a rich collection of stakeholder narratives and observations on the interactions of a wide range of different actors. The findings suggest that common property offered not only a tool for conservation, but also a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa. After acquiring extensive rights to the wildlife on their land in the 1960s-70s, private landowners in Namibia still faced the challenge of managing this fugitive common-pool resource. While

some landowners sought to prevent overexploitation and enclosure, others saw conservancies as a defense mechanism against the state, and as a strategy to escape the threat of land reform. By working together, white ranchers in Namibia have attempted to construct a new niche for themselves based on the conservation and sustainable use of African wildlife. Since the early 1990s, freehold conservancy members have transformed their relationship to wildlife and each other, contributing to the conservation of wildlife and habitat on private land. Yet, despite their accomplishments, many ranchers see their efforts as failing or falling short. Their disillusionment, as documented in this dissertation, stems from the politics of land, fear of a potentially predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging.

To my father, Ronald Dean Klataske, who inspired my appreciation and concern for the natural world and rural folks

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The Challenge of Common-Pool Resources

We find ourselves, as a species, in a new geologic epoch defined by our impact on the Earth (Lewis and Maslin 2015; Smith and Zeder 2013; Steffen, Crutzen and McNeil 2007; Waters et al. 2016). Termed the Anthropocene, this epoch is characterized by climate change, widespread pollution, an accumulation of plastic and other materials, ocean acidification, dead zones, and other serious environmental problems (Crutzen 2006; Malhi 2017; Zalasiewicz et al. 2010). The Anthropocene also involves unpresented threats to wildlife and other natural resources (Corlett 2015; Johnson et al. 2017; Tilman et al. 2017). In Africa, for example, wildlife face an array of formidable threats, from habitat loss and fragmentation to human-wildlife conflict and illegal trafficking (Galvin et al. 2008). Similar threats to wildlife exist around the world (Young et al. 2016). These threats raise the question: How can humans work together in the Anthropocene to sustainably manage and conserve wildlife and other shared natural resources? This dissertation seeks to answer that question.

African wildlife and many other natural resources are common-pool resources (Ostrom 1990). Common-pool resources are resources "for which exclusion is difficult and joint use involves subtractability" (Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo 2005: 130). In other words, regulating the use of

common-pool resources is often difficult or costly and one person's use limits or subtracts from the benefits to others (Ostrom 2000: 337). When unmanaged or managed poorly, these resources face the risk of overexploitation and degradation.

Humans use and depend on common-pool natural resources including fisheries, forests, water, and wildlife. To prevent the overexploitation and loss of these shared and valued resources, our challenge is to devise effective and equitable institutions for sustainable management, conservation, and governance. The problem, however, is that "there is no consensus on what those institutions are" (Acheson 2006: 117). Through an ethnography of common-pool resource management in Namibia, this dissertation documents one unique possibility.

For decades, scholars have debated the effectiveness of different institutions for sustainably managing common-pool resources. The conventional theory on common-pool resources is that problems of overexploitation and degradation result from common property tenure—a long-held idea in Western thought (McCay and Acheson 1987: 2). This theory was made famous by Garrett Hardin in his 1968 article on "the tragedy of commons" (Hardin 1968). Hardin argued that in situations involving commonly held resources, individuals acting rationally in their own self-interest will inevitably lead to overexploitation and destruction of the

shared resource. “Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all,” he proclaimed (Hardin 1968: 1244).

To convey the tragedy of the commons, Hardin presented a metaphor, asking readers to “picture a pasture open to all.” In this pasture, rational herders act in their own self-interest and seek to maximize personal gain. These rational herders each decide to increase their number of animals on the pasture, eventually resulting in overgrazing and a negative outcome for all herders. “Therein is the tragedy,” Hardin explained. “Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited” (Hardin 1968: 1244). This powerful metaphor underlies the conventional theory that commonly held resources inevitably end in tragedy. It has become popularized as both a folk and academic explanation for a range of social and environmental problems (McCay and Jentoft 2010). Proponents of this theory have advocated for either privatization or centralized government control.

Despite its influence on both research and policy, numerous critiques of this theory began to emerge—driven in large part by the findings of anthropologists. These critiques highlighted several important misunderstandings underlying the conventional theory of common-pool resources. One misunderstanding was the confusion between common property and open-access, leading to the idea that all commonly held resources are essentially a free-for-all. Hardin, for example, correctly

described the vulnerability of open-access common-pool resources, but confused open-access with resources that "are the join property of a community" (Ostrom 2008: 11). In other words, he failed to consider that these metaphorical herders could devise an institutional arrangement for sustainable use.

Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop (1975: 715) provided one of the earliest attempts to clarify this misconception. They argued that, "common property is not 'everybody's property'," pointing out that common property is different from open-access situations in which there are no clear property rights or regulation of resource use. In contrast to open-access, which likely leads to overexploitation and degradation, common property is "a property-rights arrangement in which a group of resource users share rights and duties toward a resource" (McKean 2000: 30). Common property is a highly variable type of institutional arrangement designed to limit access to a specific group of users, whereas open-access is the lack of any institutional arrangement for the regulation of resource use. Thus, as Margaret McKean explains, when a group of users and their rights are well defined, common property is best understood as shared private property (30).

Another area of confusion resulted from the conflation of the terms *common property* and *common-pool resource*. This lead scholars to argue for the need to distinguish between the characteristics of a resource and the various ways in which humans use, manage, and govern a resource (Berkes

et al. 1989; McCay and Acheson 1987; Feeney et al. 1990; Ostrom 1990). While common-pool resources are goods defined by their physical characteristics, common property is a social institution—a human invention (McKean 2000: 29).

Elinor Ostrom (2010: 337) pointed out that this confusion has been perpetuated by the use of the term "common property resource" to refer to a type of economic good more accurately described as a common-pool resource. The same acronym (CPR) for both terms has also complicated the problem. As Ostrom explains, the use of the word "property" incorrectly associates common-pool resources with a particular type of property regime, when in fact, "there is no automatic association of common-pool resources with common property regimes – *or, with any other particular type of property regime*" (Ostrom 2000: 338, emphasis in original). Instead, common-pool resources can be open-access or "governed and managed by a wide variety of institutional arrangements that can be roughly grouped as governmental, private, or community ownership" (Ostrom 2008: 11).

Perhaps the most forceful argument put forth by critics of the conventional theory of common-pool resources is that common property is not inherently doomed to fail, and under certain conditions, groups of resource users are capable of devising systems for sustainable use. Although the sustainable governance of common-pool resources is often a struggle (Dietz, Ostrom and Stern 2003), research across multiple fields has shown

that tragedies of the commons are not inevitable, and common property does not necessarily end in failure (Berkes et al. 1989; Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo 2005: 129-155; Bromley et al. 1992; Feeney et al. 1990; McCay and Acheson 1987; National Research Council 1986, 2002; Ostrom 1990). In fact, for centuries, humans have used common property as a tool for the management and conservation of common-pool natural resources.

Yet, while there is a growing consensus that common property does not always end in tragedy, it is not guaranteed to succeed. As Ostrom argued repeatedly, *there are no panaceas* for the management of common-pool resources (Ostrom, Janssen and Anderies 2007). Under certain conditions, all structures of resource governance may fail or fall short (Acheson 2006). One of the priorities for human-environment interaction research in the twenty-first century, therefore, is to better understand "the conditions favoring institutional success or failure in resource management" (Moran 2010: 19). In the meantime, however, many of our world's natural resources face serious threats and the problem remains that "although there is agreement that institutions are needed to solve resource problems, there is no agreement as to what institutions would do the best job" (Acheson 2006: 118). This dissertation offers insight into one situation applicable around the world: the use of common property as a tool for the management of common-pool wildlife on privately owned land.

Common Property and the Role of Anthropology

Anthropologists have played an important role in challenging the conventional theory of common-pool resources. Many anthropologists have argued that common property can be an effective tool for the management of common-pool resources in a variety of situations. Studies ranging from Maine lobster fisherman (Acheson 1988) to Swiss peasants (Netting 1976, 1981), for example, illustrate that local groups of resource users can organize relatively effective systems of management over considerable periods of time[1]. Evidence from a vast body of anthropological research on fisheries, forests, irrigation systems, agriculture and grazing systems around the world supports this argument. The role of anthropologists has been facilitated by a rich tradition of "inquiry into the relations between human groups and natural resources," including familiarity with common property through studies of subsistence economics, cultural ecology, property rights, law, and social evolution" (McCay and Acheson 1987: xiv).

Despite this wide-ranging body of research on common property, there are still gaps in knowledge on the diversity, variability, and possibility of these systems. Addressing these gaps requires that anthropologists move beyond outdated conceptualizations of common property, or expectations of where to find it. As Agrawal (2002: 42) has pointed out, the ethnographic

[1] See also McCay and Acheson (1987); Feeny et al. (1990); Acheson (1989, 2006, 2011); Agrawal (2002, 2003); Peters (1994); National Research Council (1986); Chibnik (2011)

work of many anthropologists has "implicitly implied that such arrangements lay outside modern life." Until the 1970s, as Agrawal explains, scholars in various disciplines placed common property in the "historical past," while "contemporary work by anthropologists located the commons in nonmodern, nonwestern societies." In effect, anthropologists have portrayed common property as perhaps "no more than the institutional debris of societal arrangements that somehow fall outside modernity" (42).

Yet, common property remains an important tool for resource management throughout the world—a tool with applications to current challenges. One challenge facing the world's rangelands, for example, is the conservation of wildlife and habitat on privately owned ranchland. In Namibia, where this study takes place, nearly half of the land is privately owned, divided into large ranches, and supports much of the country's wildlife. In fact, private land in Namibia contains 21-33 times more wildlife than its protected areas (Lindsey et al. 2013: 41). Barnes et al. (2013) note that 88 percent of Namibia's wildlife numbers are on private land. Although anthropologists have documented the use of common property among a variety of different groups including pastoralists, peasants, and fishermen, there are few investigations of common property as a tool for ranchers. Ranching often takes place on privately owned land, and in southern Africa and elsewhere, most studies of common property have tended to focus on groups living on communally held land. The lack of knowledge on the use of

common property as potential tool for ranchers and private landowners is, therefore, a critical gap in the anthropological literature on common-pool resource management. Understanding this potential has important implications for both wildlife and people.

This dissertation examines how and why groups of white ranchers in Namibia have used common property as a tool for the management of wildlife on privately owned ranchland. I argue that common property offered not only a tool for conservation, but also a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa. Following the devolution of wildlife rights from the state to individual private landowners, some neighboring ranchers sought to avoid a "tragedy of the commons", while others worked together to escape another potential tragedy—the looming possibility of a violent, race-based land reform process. By organizing common property systems, white ranchers in Namibia have attempted to construct a new niche for themselves based on the conservation and sustainable use of African wildlife. Despite a transformation in their relationship to wildlife and each other, many ranchers see their efforts as failing or falling short. This disillusionment, I argue, stems from the politics of land, fear of a predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging.

By documenting a system of common property, this dissertation advances our understanding of the ways in which humans can work together to sustainably manage shared and valued natural resources. I argue that

common property provides an effective tool for collaborative natural resource management and conservation on privately owned ranchland. However, like all institutions for the management of common-pool resources, it is not a panacea and can fail under certain conditions. Sustainably governing the Earth's natural resources is always a struggle (Dietz et al. 2003) and, as I argue in this dissertation, for many whites in southern Africa, belonging feels like one too.

Freehold Conservancies in Namibia: A Brief Overview

This dissertation provides an ethnographic account of freehold conservancies in Namibia. Since the early 1990s, voluntary associations of neighboring landowners have organized common property systems for the management and conservation of common-pool wildlife. These systems and the territories governed by these groups are called "freehold conservancies."[2] The term "freehold" refers to the private ownership of land in conservancies—all members hold freehold tenure over individual ranches and farms[3]. "Conservancy" represents a shared identity and the collaborative approach to conservation that these landowners have agreed to

[2] These conservancies are also sometimes called "commercial" or "private" conservancies.
[3] The term "farm" is commonly used in Namibia to describe a unit of freehold land. These farms are perhaps more accurately described as ranches, since extensive commercial livestock production and grazing are common practices. Both terms are used in this dissertation.

pursue. Freehold conservancies illustrate how groups of neighboring landowners can use common property as a tool for managing common-pool wildlife on privately owned ranchland.

Namibia, and southern Africa in general, are unique in the extent to which wildlife rights have been devolved to private landowners and local communities. In many parts of the world, wildlife is owned and managed exclusively by the state, but in Namibia, policy reforms in the 1960s and 1970s granted (white) freehold landowners extensive rights and conditional ownership over "huntable game" on their land. These legislative changes led to the expansion of wildlife-based land uses and increases in wildlife populations on private land, creating the conditions for the emergence of freehold conservancies (see Chapter Three). Decades later, the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 granted residents of communal land similar rights and opportunities to benefit from wildlife through the formation of conservancies on communal land (Jones and Murphree 2001: 41-42).

Nearly half of all land in Namibia is privately owned. This privately owned (freehold) land is divided into approximately 6,000 units or "farms" and is held under a system of freehold tenure by roughly 3,800 landowners (Harring and Odendaal 2007: 3), which accounts for less than one percent of the country's total population. Since the early 1990s, private landowners have established 23 freehold conservancies, comprising more than three

million hectares of private land (CANAM 2010).[4] Most of these conservancies are in the central and north-central parts of the country. This territory forms part of a broader rural landscape of privately owned land, shaped by a history of settler colonialism and commercial livestock production. Characterized by large ranches, small towns, and scattered, dusty villages, this landscape also contains a rich mosaic of shrublands, grasslands, savannas, and woodlands, as well as 'wide-open' vistas and world-renowned wildlife populations.

Freehold conservancy members, like many private landowners in Namibia, are predominately whites.[5] A considerable proportion of these European-descended landowners are German-speaking ranchers whose claims to land stretch back to early German colonialism. Many others speak Afrikaans, and while it is common that members' families have held land for multiple generations, some of these landowners are newer arrivals. Despite an increasing number of black landholders near conservancies, there are very few black members. While freehold conservancies are voluntary associations of landowners, and therefore, it is possible for blacks to join, there are significant cultural barriers and biases that have impeded

[4] It is difficult to specify the exact number of freehold conservancies that currently exist in Namibia because some are not affiliated with CANAM, some are dormant, dissolved, or in the process of forming.
[5] Like Gressier (2011), I acknowledge that the terms white and black are highly problematic but choose to use them because they are emic descriptors used by my informants and are commonly used throughout southern Africa.

cooperation. Not only are blacks underrepresented and largely excluded from freehold conservancies, they are underrepresented in wildlife-based land uses more generally (Lindsey 2011).

In addition to ranching, freehold conservancy members have incorporated a variety of wildlife-based land uses including game ranching, trophy hunting, ecotourism, and meat production. Many members practice a mix of livestock production and wildlife-based land uses, although the ratio varies among members and conservancies. Some members also harvest hay and medicinal plants, and charcoal production is increasingly common in the fight against bush encroachment. Wildlife use contributes to the livelihoods of landowners and farmworkers in freehold conservancies, as well as the conservation of wildlife and habitat (see Chapter Four).

Trophy hunting is a particularly important land use among conservancy members. Lindsey (2011), for example, found that trophy hunting (also called safari hunting), which is more common on freehold land in conservancies, is positively correlated with wildlife diversity and biomass. This study showed that wildlife-based land use "is more prevalent within conservancies, livestock biomass lower, wildlife biomass is higher and the percentage occurrence of wild ungulates is typically higher than on farms not part of conservancies" (57). He also found that declines in wildlife populations were also more common outside conservancies (60).

After gaining rights to use the wildlife on their land, Namibian landowners still faced the challenge of managing this "fugitive" common-pool resource. Wildlife migrates and moves across the boundaries of individually owned land, and conservancies provided a mechanism for collaborative management and conservation. Freehold conservancies typically involve a defined membership, a constitution, and a management plan (see Chapter Four). Leadership structures vary, but include conservancy boards, management committees, and leadership councils, which sometimes include representatives from sub-conservancies or sections of the larger conservancy. Conservancy-wide decisions are often discussed at annual general meetings (AGMs). Management activities often include game counts, data collection and information sharing, monitoring, the coordination of objectives and utilization, the allocation of quotas and collection of fees, habitat and species management including the reintroduction of game, discipline, and the coordination of protection against illegal hunting. As institutions for managing common-pool resources, freehold conservancies exhibit many of the "design features" of successful common property systems (Ostrom 1990: 88-102; Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo 2005: 135-136).

By working together in conservancies, neighboring landowners have an opportunity to produce a range of ecological, financial, economic, and social benefits. For example, freehold conservancies have the potential to increase

the scale and coordination of resource management, allowing for greater connectivity and heterogeneity of habitat, a wider range of species, higher value land and wildlife uses more conducive to conservation, greater ecological resilience, reduced reliance on primary production, along with opportunities for wildlife-based economies of scale (Lindsey, Romañach, and Davies-Mostert 2009; Bond et al. 2004). These benefits of conservancies are important in Namibia where private land provides critical habitat and supports much of the country's wildlife.

Freehold conservancies also have a unique opportunity to both benefit and benefit from other less visible stakeholders including farmworkers and nearby resettlement farmers. Both of these categories form part of a permanent black and indigenous underclass in Namibian society, whose landlessness and poverty is rooted in colonial dispossession and exploitative labor practices. Both categories are also ethnically and linguistically diverse (see Chapter Four). Thousands of farmworkers live and work on private land in conservancies, and they play an integral role in land and wildlife use. While some farmworkers clearly benefit from the game meat produced by hunting and access to abundant wildlife, freehold conservancies have done little to incorporate or incentivize these stakeholders and largely perpetuate Namibia's system of rural inequality. As land reform reshapes rural demographics, white landowners also increasingly share this landscape and its resources with non-white resettlement farmers. Resettlement farmers

consist primarily of disadvantaged and formerly landless blacks and indigenous San who acquire land from the state through state-run land reform programs.[6] Some of these "emerging farmers" yearn to learn from the experience of conservancies, collaborate for conservation, and share in the benefits of wildlife. Once again, private landowners are presented with an opportunity to benefit from cooperation.

This ethnographic account offers a "thick description" of freehold conservancies, in which *thick* "is meant to indicate a more ethnographic perspective, following the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's notion of the place of "thick description" in interpretive cultural anthropology (McCay and Jentoft 2010: 212). These authors call for a "thicker," more ethnographic approach to the study of common property that involves a "careful specification of property rights and their embeddedness within discrete and changing historical moments, social and political relations, and environmental conditions, a methodological perspective that helps us avoid the twin perils of underestimating and overromanticizing the capabilities of people to manage the things they cherish and hold in common" (212). This study neither underestimates the potential of freehold conservancies as a tool for wildlife conservation on private land, nor romanticizes them at the expense of marginalized stakeholders and issues of land, race, and

[6] See Chapter Two for more information on Namibia's land reform programs and their beneficiaries. This information is also detailed in greater depth in Werner and Odendaal (2010).

inequality. Instead, this account situates freehold conservancies in the broader context of rural Namibia and the ongoing story of land in southern Africa.

Community-Based Natural Resource Management

By focusing on freehold conservancies, this study contributes to anthropological knowledge on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Namibia and southern Africa. CBNRM—also called community conservation—refers to projects that combine wildlife conservation and rural development, in which authority and rights over wildlife and other resources are devolved to local communities with the expectation that people are more likely to conserve resources if they benefit from them (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 200).

Much of the anthropological work on CBNRM has taken place in areas of communal land—not on private land, which is prevalent throughout the region. This is likely an outcome of anthropological research traditions and trajectories in Africa, including a limited focus on Euro-Africans. It also relates to the proliferation of conservancies and other community-based arrangements on communal land, one of the major outcomes of CBNRM in the region. These arrangements are similar in numerous ways to conservancies on private land, which also exist in Zimbabwe and South Africa (Lindsey, Romañach, and Davies-Mostert 2009; Wels 2003), although

there are many important differences that begin with their underlying systems of land tenure. The similarities and differences between community-based institutions on private and communal land in southern Africa, however, are not well understood.

There is also a need for greater recognition among anthropologists of the interwoven histories of these institutions, including the policies and legislation that granted wildlife rights and created the conditions for collective action. In Namibia, for example, the devolution of wildlife rights to freehold landowners, which led to the expansion of wildlife-based land uses and increases in wildlife populations on private land, contributed to the motivation to extend similar rights and opportunities to communal landholders and the emergence of CBNRM. Over two decades after freehold landowners first gained proprietorship over the wildlife on their land, the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 granted residents of communal land similar rights to use and benefit from wildlife through the formation of conservancies (Jones and Murphree 2001: 41-42).

In Zimbabwe, a similar experience involving the devolution of wildlife rights to private landowners in the 1970s informed the development of the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE), one of southern Africa's most widely recognized outcomes of CBNRM (Child 2009: 10). These innovations in CBRNM were validated and improved by emerging research—including the work of Ostrom (1990)—on

common property and the management of common-pool resources (Child 2009: 10-11).

To use and benefit from wildlife, local communities on communal land in Namibia began to organize a network of "communal conservancies" with the assistance of NGOs, government agencies, anthropologists, and other partners.[7] In 2017, there were 83 registered communal conservancies, comprising over 16 million hectares of communal land and 189,230 residents.[8] Figure 1 shows the location of communal conservancies in relation to freehold conservancies, state protected areas, and tourism concession areas. Despite the differences between freehold and communal conservancies, both types of conservancies are "institutional mechanisms to enable group management of natural resources in a sustainable manner that provides a range of benefit for conservancy members" (Jones 2005: 3). I argue that both freehold and communal conservancies should be understood broadly as common property systems for the management of common-pool wildlife. In contrast to communal conservancies, however, freehold conservancies are a tool for the management of common-pool wildlife on privately owned land.

[7] In contrast to communal conservancies, freehold conservancies have not received significant NGO support or little, if any, external funding from international donors.
[8] According to the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), nacso.org.na, accessed October 16, 2017.

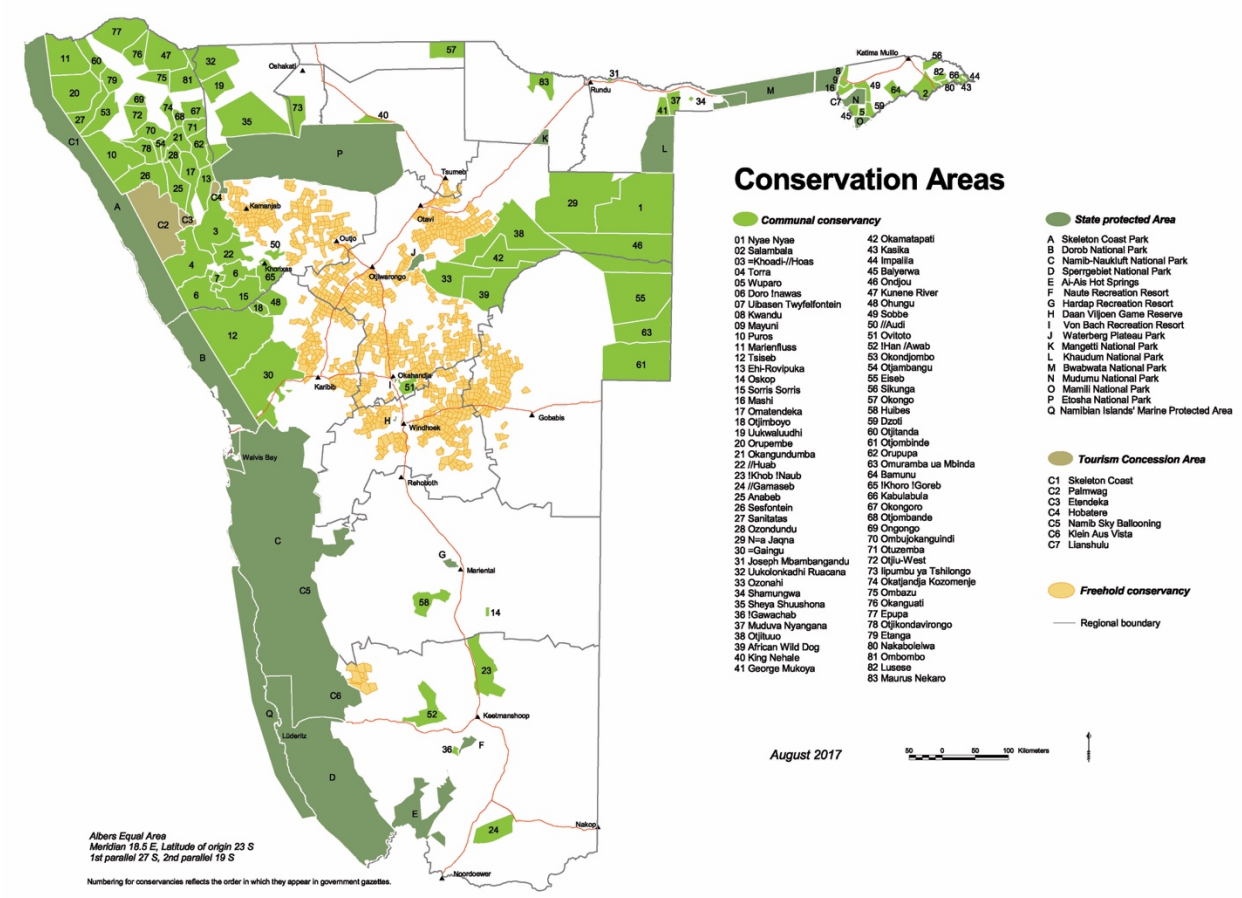

Figure 1: Location of Conservancies in Namibia*, NACSO, nacso.org.na*

Since their inception, anthropologists have studied and actively engaged with communal conservancies in Namibia.[9] In the late 1980's and 1990s, for example, Robert Hitchcock and Megan Biesele assisted the Ju/'hoansi in the development of the Nyae Nyae Farmers Cooperative (NNFC), which later became the Nyae Nyae Conservancy—the first

[9] For anthropological literature on communal conservancies in Namibia, see for instance Biesele and Hitchcock (2011); Hitchcock (2001; 2012); Koot and van Beek (2017); Jacobsohn and Owen-Smith (2003); Sullivan (2002, 2003); Wiessner (2004); Welch (2013).

communal conservancy in Namibia—established in 1998 (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011). Prior to this, the NNFC emerged from the combination of two earlier Ju/'hoan organizations started with support from anthropologists John Marshall and Claire Ritchie (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011). Hitchcock, Biesele, and other anthropologists continue to support San communities through their research, advocacy, and work with communal conservancies. South African anthropologist Margaret Jacobsohn is also well known for her years of work as co-founder of the Namibia-based NGO Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), which promotes CBNRM and supports the establishment of communal conservancies.

In contrast to communal conservancies, anthropologists have focused very little attention on freehold conservancies or the collective action of private landowners in southern Africa in general. Despite the interwoven histories and similarities between institutions on private and communal land, the efforts of private landowners are seldom explored in depth within the literature on CBNRM. As Wels (2003: 2) has noted, the field of private wildlife conservation "has been a major gap in the literature on community conservation in (southern) Africa." This dissertation helps to bridge this divide by focusing on freehold conservancies, although further comparative and integrative research is urgently needed, particularly in the context of land reform. In this context, anthropologists have an opportunity to contribute to new forms of cooperation and conservation.

Ethnography of Whites in Southern Africa

By focusing on freehold conservancies, this study also contributes to the ethnography of whites in southern Africa.[10] This growing body of literature highlights the struggle of many whites to belong and feel secure, describing the variety of strategies adopted to establish a sense of belonging and defend their claims to land, legitimacy, and citizenship. As Hughes (2010) explains in the case of Zimbabwe, Europeans never became "normal" like their North American and Australian counterparts. Gressier (2011: 353) points out that "white citizens of postcolonial African nations are frequently challenged about their identification as Africans." Their claims to belonging in these "extra-European territories are often perceived as inauthentic at best and neocolonial at worst" (Gressier 2014: 1). For white landowners in southern Africa, the politics of land—including the complex and contentious

[10] It is important to point out that the commonly used term "whites" does not refer to a homogenous category or population in southern Africa. Instead, people categorized as whites in this region are culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse. There are differences both between and within countries, and some of these differences are attributed to distinct histories of British, German, Dutch, Portuguese, and other European colonialization and settlement. In Namibia, for example, there are notable differences between German-speaking German-Namibians and Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaners, both of whom distinguish themselves culturally from each other and differ not only in terms of language, but also often in terms of customs, traditions, dress, food, music, modes of production, and livestock husbandry. Both groups, however, generally identify as African. Most of the whites profiled in this dissertation identify as one of these two groups, and many are German-Namibians. Namibia's minority white population also includes smaller numbers of people of English, Portuguese, and other European origins.

issues of land reform, restitution, and redistribution—amplify their angst and uncertainty. The threat of land reform heightens a sense of insecurity and, as Robert Mugabe unleashed a torrent of violent evictions and occupations of white-owned farms, white landowners throughout the region "watched events unfold in Zimbabwe with growing trepidation and public disquiet" (Alden and Anseeuw 2009: 2).[11]

Three brief examples offer insight into the strategies employed by whites and the relevance of this study. First, in Zimbabwe, both before and during Mugabe's "project of social destruction," whites have adopted a strategy of social escape. By investing themselves "emotionally and artistically in the environment," many whites sought to imagine away the black masses around them. As Hughes (2010) explains, this "imaginative project of colonization" required the cultural work of writers, painters, photographers, and farmers. Together, they negotiated their identity "with land forms rather than social forms," crafting a sense of belonging and security through their connection to African land, landscapes, and conservation.

Second, while Hughes highlights a strategy of social escape, Wels (2003) demonstrates how some white Zimbabwean landowners have attempted to build more balanced relations of reciprocity with the people

[11] See Derman and Hellum (2007) for more on Zimbabwe's "fast-track" land reform program.

around them. In his study of the Savé Valley Conservancy (SVC), Wels describes the efforts of landowners to address "a structural process of negative reciprocity, expressed mainly through poaching and fence cutting by the (black) communal farmers and communities and through an ever-tightening 'fines and fences' approach by the (white) commercial farmers of the SVC." By presenting their neighbors with a gift in the form of a community trust, the SVC sought to provide blacks with economic benefits from wildlife utilization and tourism in return for less poaching and fence cutting. This strategy, it was hoped, would also "serve as a political answer in the context of a deteriorating political climate" surrounding the issue of land in Zimbabwe (Wels 2003: 3).

Third, "the inherent insecurity of being a white minority in postcolonial southern Africa," according to Gressier (2014: 2), has "led white citizens to make emphatic assertions of belonging, while developing certain cultural values and practices, which serve to strengthen connections to their home." In their interactions with foreign tourists, white Batswana have defended their assertions of belonging and claim to African identities with "extensive knowledge and connections of and connections to the Okavango's social and natural environments" (Gressier 2011: 354). Therefore, a dominant cultural trope, forming part of the strategy adopted by whites in Botswana, "is their constant articulation of deep emotional ties to the natural environment" (Gressier 2014: 2).

This dissertation contributes to the ethnography of whites in southern Africa by presenting an apt illustration of the strategies and struggle of whites to belong. It shows that freehold conservancies in Namibia emerged not only as a tool for the management of common-pool wildlife, but also as a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa. For many white landowners, conservancies presented a defense mechanism against a violent, race-based land reform process. By organizing common property systems, these landowners attempted to construct a new niche for themselves based on the conservation and sustainable use of African wildlife. Yet, despite the accomplishments of freehold conservancies, few white landowners feel secure, and many believe that their efforts have failed or fallen short. Disappointment with this strategy has led to widespread disillusionment among conservancy members (see Chapter Five). This disillusionment, I argue, stems from the politics of land, fear of a predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging. It also provides an apt illustration of the broader struggle of whites in southern Africa and insight into one unique strategy for survival.

Plan of the Dissertation

Chapter Two describes the ethnographic setting of this study and my approach to fieldwork. It begins by providing a broad, national-level overview of Namibia including its geography and climate, ecology, patterns

of subsistence, population, history and land tenure. It then describes north-central Namibia and my experience in and around the small agricultural town of Otjiwarongo, which served as the hub in my multi-sited study of freehold conservancies. This chapter concludes by outlining my research design, methods, positionality, and limitations.

Chapter Three details the emergence of freehold conservancies. It begins by discussing three distinct phases in the political economy of wildlife in southern Africa since the arrival of Europeans, which provides important background and contextualizes the story of the emergence of conservancies that follows. This chapter then outlines the dominant narrative on the history of conservancies and, based on my ethnographic data, suggests that consideration of an alternative narrative is needed. The conventional wisdom, I demonstrate, fails to tell the whole story. By detailing the emergence of freehold conservancies, this chapter argues that conservancies emerged not only as a tool for the management of common-pool resources, but also as a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa.

Chapter Four provides an ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy, one of the largest and most active freehold conservancies in Namibia. Although this conservancy is unique in its level of participation, cohesion, and cooperation, it also faces many of the same challenges as other freehold conservancies across the country. This chapter begins by describing the land and wildlife resources of the conservancy. It then

describes the attributes of the community and their patterns of land and wildlife use, followed by an overview of the conservancy structure, decision-making arrangements, activities, and debates. Patterns of interaction are documented through a series of profiles of conservancy members and other stakeholders including farmworkers, a nonmember neighboring landowner, and a nearby resettlement farmer. This portrait shows how neighboring landowners have used common property as a tool for the management of common-pool wildlife, and in doing so, transformed their relationship to both wildlife and each other. Despite growing disillusionment, conservancy members continue to work together and make decisions that benefit the group and its shared resources. This is because, to paraphrase John Culkin, we shape our tools and our tools shape us. Consequently, in terms of the conservancy's objectives, this group of landowners has devised a relatively effective tool for wildlife management and conservation. Finally, this chapter makes several observations about Kalkfeld Conservancy in terms of wildlife-based land uses, the role of game meat in food security, and interactions with stakeholders that offer insight into freehold conservancies in general.

Chapter Five documents narratives of disillusionment and belonging among freehold conservancy members. Through a series of seven vignettes, representing six different conservancies, it explains why there is widespread disillusionment among members, and how it relates to the issue of legal recognition, the politics of land, and the prospect of a survival strategy

based on the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife. This chapter argues, as mentioned above, that the disillusionment of freehold conservancies members in Namibia is an apt illustration of the broader struggle of whites to belong in southern Africa.

Chapter Six revisits my findings on freehold conservancies in the context of common property and the management of common-pool resources. It reviews my arguments and evidence in each chapter, and draws conclusions about freehold conservancies, in general, along with opportunities for further research. This chapter concludes by outlining three primary contributions of this dissertation to the field of anthropology.

Chapter Two

ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING AND FIELDWORK

I first visited Namibia in 2008 to conduct research on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Since the 1990s, Namibia has garnered the attention of scholars, conservation organizations, and media from around the world for its environmental policies, programs, and support for CBNRM. Much of that attention has focused on the country's communal conservancies, an innovative approach to CBNRM discussed in Chapter One. During my initial research, I had the opportunity to visit communal conservancies and meet with community leaders as I accompanied staff from a local non-profit organization. I visited conservancies in Kunene, in the far northwest, and in Caprivi (now Zambezi Region), in the far northeast, but as I travelled between these distant locations, I began to learn about freehold conservancies and the issues surrounding wildlife use on private land.

I became fascinated by this model of collaborative natural resource management and wildlife conservation, and I wanted to learn more about how it emerged, how it worked, and if and how it benefited wildlife and the people involved—including the many farmworkers I met on private land across the region. I also wanted to understand what members and stakeholders thought about conservancies and how they interacted with each other and their environment, as well as the challenges facing these

groups and the impact of politics and policies. To answer these questions, I returned to Namibia a year later to embark on a year-long ethnographic study of freehold conservancies.

This dissertation draws on anthropological data and information collected over 13 months of research in Namibia, carried out between 2008 and 2010. Most research took place between June 2009 and June 2010. Research funding included a $23,000 Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship from the Rotary Foundation and several smaller grants from the Michigan State University (MSU) College of Social Sciences, the MSU Department of Anthropology, and the MSU Office of Graduate Studies. Prior to the beginning of my year-long study, I arranged a connection to the University of Namibia, secured government research permits, and obtained approval from the MSU Institutional Review Board (X11-194; 08-606). The graduate training at MSU that helped prepare me for fieldwork included coursework in anthropology, geography, ecology, environmental science and policy, as well as qualitative research methods. The feasibility of my research was also enhanced by my personal knowledge, skills, and experience related to livestock production and agriculture, wildlife management and conservation, hunting, independent travel, and the German language.

As explained in Chapter One, I have chosen to approach freehold conservancies as systems of common property and the wildlife on private land as a common-pool resource. In other words, freehold conservancies are

conceptualized as a case study of common property, in which "case study" refers to "an intensive study of a relatively well-bounded phenomenon or class of events" (Poteete, Janssen, and Ostrom 2010: 33). The case study method has played an important role in challenging conventional wisdom on common property and the management of common-pool resources (Poteete, Janseen, and Ostrom 2010: 31-63), and the ethnographic approach employed by anthropologists has contributed to this effort. This ethnographic study builds on and contributes to the work of anthropologists by documenting a unique case of common property in which it is used as a tool for the management of common-pool wildlife on private ranchland. This case study expands our understanding of the diversity, variability, and possibilities of these systems.

By analyzing this case study through a lens of environmental anthropology and political ecology, this dissertation also pays close attention to the interactions and competing interests of multiple stakeholders, as well as issues of power, politics, and inequality. This approach brings into focus the role of social relations, divisions underlying access to natural resources, and the relationship between winners and losers (Robbins 2012). It also provides a critical way of looking at freehold conservancies that is largely absent from existing literature. This critical, ethnographic approach has allowed me, for example, to project the voices of marginalized stakeholders including farmworkers and unravel the disillusionment of conservancy

members in the larger context of land in southern Africa.

This chapter describes the ethnographic setting of this study and my approach to fieldwork. It begins by providing a broad, national-level overview of Namibia including its geography and climate, ecology, patterns of subsistence, population, history and land tenure. It then describes north-central Namibia and my experience in and around the small agricultural town of Otjiwarongo, which served as the hub in my multi-sited study of freehold conservancies. The chapter concludes by describing the kinds of data collected, methods of data collection, research participants, positionality, and limitations.

Namibia

This study took place in Namibia, a country located on the southwestern coast of Africa (see Figure 2). The Atlantic Ocean forms

Figure 2: Namibia and Adjacent Nations*, credit: Robert K. Hitchcock*

its western border from the mouth of the Orange River to the mouth of the Kunene River. It lies north of South Africa, south of Angola, and west of Botswana. A narrow strip of land stretches inland to the Zambezi River. Once called the Caprivi Strip—named after German Chancellor Leo von Caprivi—

this area was recently renamed the Zambezi Region. Like all of Namibia's borders, its delineations are a legacy of colonial negotiations, treaties, and commissions. The country is divided into 14 regions and spans nearly 823,680 km^2 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The 14 Regions of Namibia*, credit Robert K. Hitchcock*

Namibia is an ideal location to study wildlife conservation and natural resource management. This southern African country is known around the world for its rich wildlife resources and biodiversity. It is often recognized for its constitutional commitment to conservation and the significant role of wildlife in the national economy. Like other countries in southern Africa, it is unique in the extent to which the state has devolved wildlife rights to local communities and private landowners. These rights provided the foundation for the development of CBNRM, for which Namibia is globally recognized in its leadership and innovation. The devolution of wildlife rights to private landowners contributed to the expansion of wildlife-based land uses and an increase in wildlife populations on private land. Private land is common in Namibia and parts of southern Africa, and these changes created the conditions across the region for a unique situation in which groups of neighboring landowners have worked together to manage and conserve wildlife across boundaries of private ranchland. Freehold conservancies are a prominent example. By considering the ecological and social context of freehold conservancies, we gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between these groups and their environment.

Geology and Climate

As Mendelsohn et al. (2009: 8) point out, "It is the geological history and climate, more than anything else, that make Namibia the country it is."

Its rich geodiversity plays an important role in shaping biodiversity and the country's many distinctive landscapes (Goudie and Viles 2015). Much of Namibia sits upon an expansive plateau that extends across southern Africa. At the edge of this plateau is the Great Escarpment, a distinctive band of mountain ranges, cliffs, and rocky outcroppings, below which lies a lower coastal belt that reaches around the region from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. In Namibia, this escarpment divides the higher eastern plateau from the lower-lying coastal plain in the west. Namibia can also be divided into two broadly defined geological zones (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 8). The western zone is rugged, rocky, and highly varied, while the Kalahari sands and sediments of the east produce a much flatter and more uniform landscape.

Overall, Namibia is one of the world's driest countries. Rainfall is highly variable and drought is a common occurrence. Maps in Mendelsohn et al. (2009: 84-85) showing average and median annual rainfall reveal a clear gradient from the wettest areas in the northeast—the Zambezi Region in particular—to the driest parts of the country in the west and southwest. This part of the country includes the hyperarid Namib Desert and the desolate Skeleton Coast. This rainfall gradient also reflects the convergence of incoming moisture from the northeast, driven by the Intertropical Convergence Zone, with drier air in the south and west pushed in by the Subtropical High Pressure Zone. This more dominant zone of high pressure

heats and dries the country. It lowers atmospheric moisture and results in the abundance of sunshine, intense solar radiation, high daytime temperatures, and high levels of evaporation that characterize the country's climate (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 70). Together, these climatic and geological features have shaped Namibia's soils, water, and natural resources, along with its plant and animal life and the ways in which people make a living.

Ecology and Subsistence

Namibian people make a living in a variety of different environments, and in a variety of different ways. Mendelsohn et al. (2009: 99) divide the country into five different biomes. The largest biome is Tree-and-shrub Savanna, which is divided between Broadleafed and Acacia sub-biomes. The other biomes include Nama Karoo, Namib Desert, Succulent Karoo, and Lakes and Saltpans. This section describes some of the characteristics of these biomes and the land cover and patterns of subsistence in different parts of the country.

While much of Namibia is sparsely populated, the far north has the highest concentration of people. This concentration corresponds with the availability of water in the Cuvelai drainage system and the perennial Okavango, Kwando-Linyanti, and Zambezi rivers. The Cuvelai System in the central far north is made up of an interconnected network of seasonal

channels called “oshanas”, and unlike most of the country, much of the land has been cleared for cultivation. Occasionally, there is sufficient water to flow into the salt pans to the south—the largest and most famous of which is Etosha Pan, located at the center of Etosha National Park.

Along the rivers of the far northeast, lush floodplain grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, and riverine forests characterize the landscape. In 2008, I had the chance to explore this area during my first period of fieldwork. I camped along the rivers, not far from the banks, and listened to the sounds of frogs, birds, and hippos. This region hosts the richest array of birdlife in the country, as well as the highest level of overall terrestrial diversity (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 108-109). During this trip, I also made my way along narrow sandy tracks to the edge of Lake Liambezi—one of two natural lakes in the country. Due to the availability of water in this region, crop production is common and freshwater fisheries play an important part in local livelihoods.

In contrast to the far north and northeast, the rest of the country’s landscapes reflect a greater thirst for moisture. Much of the country, in fact, sits between two deserts—the vast Kalahari Desert to the east and the Namib Desert in the west. The Namib Desert stretches along the coast where its towering sand dunes dramatically meet the Atlantic Ocean. In addition to large areas of sand dunes, this generally flat coastal region in the western part of the country is comprised of gravel plains, rocky outcrops,

rugged hills, and isolated 'inselbergs'. Sparse plant life includes grasses, herbs, and shrubs, although larger trees and shrubs congregate along ephemeral waterways. One of the desert's oddest yet most endearing plants is the *Welwitschia mirabilis*. This plant and many other unique lifeforms—including the colorful lichens that dot the landscape—depend on coastal fog for moisture. Most of Namibia's coastline is designated as state protected area, although licensing for mineral extraction is common. The region is popular with tourists, particularly the lively beach resort of Swakopmund, noted for its German colonial architecture. Both recreational and commercial fishing are also important economic activities.

The northwest part of the country is well-known for its spectacular scenery and the Himba people who inhabit it. These rugged highlands are covered in shrublands and grasslands with scattered trees. Pastoralism, based on a complex system of rangeland management, is the predominant mode of subsistence. Cattle, in particular, play an important role in local livelihoods. The rangelands of Namibia's northwest are also home to several distinctive wildlife species including "desert" elephants adapted to the dry conditions, black rhino, mountain zebra, giraffe, and lions. This arid environment supports particularly high levels of plant and animal endemism (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 112-113).

Much of southern Namibia is considerably flatter, characterized by vast, expansive plains. Elevation rises sharply along the escarpment, running

north and south through the region. Rocky outcrops and inselbergs rise from the plains, as do the prominent Karas Mountains. Much of the landscape is covered in grassland and low or dwarf shrubland, while succulent shrubs dominate in the far southwest. Due to low annual rainfall, average plant production in term of biomass is relatively low throughout the south (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 102). Except for small pockets of diversity in the highlands, overall plant and animal diversity is also relatively low. The relatively low levels of large game species diversity and abundance are also notable in comparison to other areas—in particular, areas of privately owned land in the central and north-central parts of the country. It is not uncommon, however, to see oryx or springbok grazing in this arid landscape. Throughout southern Namibia, the human population is also relatively low and sparsely distributed. Small towns seem few and far between. Ranching and pastoralism are common, but in contrast to cattle production further north, sheep are raised in much higher numbers.

In eastern Namibia, the Kalahari Desert, which extends westward from Botswana, dominates the landscape. This largely flat, sandy landscape is intersected by a higher plateau with rolling hills. Broadleaf woodlands and open acacia woodlands cover much of the area, although as previously mentioned, trees give way to shrubland further south. Except for the northern reaches of eastern Namibia, this part of the country has relatively low levels of overall terrestrial diversity and endemism. In my interviews

with freehold conservancy members, landowners in the east often complained that a lower abundance of large game and a less enticing landscape diminish the tourism potential of the region. Near Tsumkwe—and in particular, the area within Nyae Nyae Conservancy—these low levels are not the case. Here, wildlife and tourists are comparatively plentiful. This area is especially notable for its abundance of elephants and diversity of large carnivores, including lion, cheetah, spotted hyena, and endangered wild dog. Ranching and pastoralism are common throughout the region, and many San in the area still practice traditional methods of hunting and gathering (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011).

In addition to the eastern parts of the country, cattle ranching and wildlife-based land uses are common throughout much of central Namibia. Ranchland extends outward from the capital city, Windhoek, located amidst rolling hills, highland shrubland, and savanna. Heading north from Windhoek, the elevation drops and the landscape becomes flatter, punctuated by isolated inselbergs. This landscape in the north-central part of the county is dominated by often dense acacia shrubland, with areas of woodland savanna and grassland. This area has some of the highest quality grazing and browsing in the country, although bush encroachment is a serious problem. This area also has relatively high levels of overall terrestrial diversity and endemism, as well as high diversity and abundance of large game species (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 108-123). Many of the country's

cheetahs and leopards live on this land, most of which is privately owned. As I will explain in more detail, much of my fieldwork took place in the heart of this wildlife-rich ranching landscape.

Population

Namibia has a human population near 2.5 million.[12] Given its size, it is one of the world's least densely populated countries. The distribution and density of the population is very uneven. A considerable proportion of the population lives in the far north of the country where the availability of water is greatest (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 160). The rapid rate of urbanization is shifting the proportion of urban and rural populations, with 47 percent of people living in urban areas in 2015, compared with 18 percent in 1960.[13] Approximately 1.4 million international tourists visited Namibia in 2015, a figure which has increased sharply since independence.[14]

Namibia is incredibly diverse, not only ecologically, but also culturally and linguistically. There are approximately 28 different languages and numerous ethnic groups including some, such as the San and Nama (Khoekhoe), who identify as indigenous people (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011: 3). Many of the landowners I worked with spoke German, Afrikaans, and

[12] See https://data.worldbank.org/country/namibia, accessed 9/28/17.
[13] See https://data.worldbank.org, accessed 9/28/17, and the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) 2015/2016 Key Poverty Indicators (Preliminary Figures), www.nsa.org.na, accessed 9/28/17.
[14] See https://data.worldbank.org, accessed 9/28/17.

English, and many of the German-Namibians also spoke Otjiherero, which they learned through their childhood interactions with farmworker children. It was much more common to encounter German-speaking landowners who spoke Afrikaans than Afrikaans-speaking landowners who also spoke German. While only a small segment of the population speaks German, Afrikaans is widely spoken. In rural areas, in particular, Afrikaans continues to be used as a *lingua franca* among people from different backgrounds, especially among older generations. Many farmworkers I encountered spoke Afrikaans, in addition to various other languages, and some also spoke German. On many farms where I worked, it was not uncommon to hear six or more different languages spoken.

Another notable feature of Namibia is its socio-economic inequality, inherited from a history of colonialism and apartheid. Apartheid policies skewed income and wealth "toward the minority white elites, creating one of the most highly inequitable societies in the world" (World Bank 2009: 2). Biesele and Hitchcock (2011: 31) note that "the wealthiest 5 percent of the population controls 75 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), while over 50 percent of the population controls only 3 percent of the GDP." According to the World Bank, 16.1 percent of the population lived below the international poverty line of $1.90 per day in 2015, with 39 percent living below $3.10 per day.[15] The ownership of land in Namibia reflects this legacy

[15] See www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia. Accessed 9/27/17.

of socio-economic inequality.

Brief History and Land Tenure

In 1883, a process of land alienation by Europeans began when Adolf Lüderitz, a German trader, became the first European to acquire land in this territory (Werner 1993: 137). The following year, a German protectorate was declared, ushering in a period of German colonial occupation that lasted until 1915 (Werner 1993; Omer-Cooper 1994). German colonists acquired land through protection treaties and unequal trading relations, amplified by a rinderpest pandemic in 1897, which ravaged pastoralists' cattle herds and forced many into wage labor (Werner 1993: 138). As in other parts of the colonial world, a combination of natural factors, colonial oppression, and the destruction of local livelihoods devastated indigenous communities and their control over land (Davis 2002). Consequently, by 1902, less than 40 percent of all land in German South West Africa was controlled by blacks (Werner 1993: 138).

Following the outbreak of violent conflict, the German colonial administration established a Police Zone in 1907 that separated the area of white settlement and resource extraction from the unconquered Ovambo and Kavango territories in the north (Werner 1993: 139-140; Omer-Cooper 1994: 283). The demarcation of this area, in which dispossession and settlement continued, is reflected in the current distribution of private land

in Namibia. This period of German colonialization not only brought about a process of dispossession, it also introduced the private ownership of land (Werner 1993: 138), a defining feature of freehold conservancies today.

In 1915, during World War I, South African forces occupied German South West Africa and ended German colonial rule. After the war, the territory was granted to South Africa under a mandate from the League of Nations (Omer-Cooper 1994: 282). This mandate gave South Africa, under British control, authority over land allocation and legislation (Werner 1993: 138). Rather than returning dispossessed land, "The system for maintaining white domination and the exploitation of black labour developed in South Africa was simply extended to the new territory" (Omer-Cooper 1994: 282). With encouragement and significant financial support from the state, white settlement proliferated. Increasing numbers of Africans were also relocated or moved into more marginal areas and forced into the growing migrant labor system for white-owned farms and mines (Werner 1993: 143-145; Omer-Cooper 1994: 282-284). Much of this marginal land formed "native reserves" that the government allocated for blacks.

In 1962, the South African government appointed the *Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs*, sometimes called the *Odendaal Commission*. This commission, an extension of South African apartheid, reorganized native reserves into several ethnic "homelands" including Hereroland, Damaraland, and Ovamboland. According to Werner (1993:

146), "With the implementation of the recommendations of the *Odendaal Commission*, Namibia's distribution of land along racial lines was complete." The changes brought about by this commission also shaped the country's current distribution of communal and private land, as discussed below.

Following its independence from South Africa on March 21, 1990, Namibia inherited a racially-skewed system of land tenure. The new government led by SWAPO (South West African People's Organization)—the ruling party since independence—held a *National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question* in 1991. This conference provided the foundation for the country's land reform program, aimed at addressing the injustices of land dispossession and reducing poverty and inequality (Werner and Odendaal 2010: 3). Namibia's land reform program includes two main instruments: the first is the National Resettlement Programme (NRP), which involves allocating land to previously disadvantaged people, and the second is the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme (AALS), which provides subsidized loans (Werner 2015: 4). Beneficiaries of the AALS are generally better educated and possess greater wealth than beneficiaries of resettlement (Werner 2015; Werner and Odendaal 2010). The Communal Land Reform Act of 2002 addresses land reform in the communal, or non-freehold, areas. Until land expropriation began in 2004, land reform proceeded on a "willing-buyer, willing-seller" basis (Harring and Odendaal 2007: 2). Since 1990, approximately 25 percent of freehold land has been transferred to previously

disadvantaged Namibians (Werner 2015: 5). Still, the skewed distribution of land remains one of the country's striking features. A second land conference organized by the government was scheduled to take place in September 2017, but was postponed.

Nearly half of all land (approximately 43-46 percent) in Namibia is privately owned (Werner and Odendaal 2010; Harring and Odendaal 2007; Mendelsohn et al. 2009). This privately owned (freehold) land is divided into approximately 6,000 units or "farms" and is held under a system of freehold tenure by roughly 3,800 landowners (Harring and Odendaal 2007: 3)[16], which accounts for less than one percent of the total population. Much of the private land in Namibia is owned by whites (Harring and Odendaal 2007: 3). Communal land, which is owned by the government, accounts for between 36 and 41 percent of the total area.[17] It is shared by about one million

[16] As these authors note, these numbers are highly political and subject to interpretation. My observation is that while many landowners own only one farm, it is not uncommon for landowners to own multiple (2-3) farms. During my fieldwork, I also met a relatively small number of landowners who own significantly larger tracts of land. These differences in land ownership reflect a continuum of wealth among freehold landowners in Namibia.

[17] The exact distribution of freehold and communal land varies by source. Ministry of Environment and Tourism (2010b), for example, states that freehold land accounts for 46 percent and communal land 36 percent of the total land area; Mendelsohn et al. (2009: 143-144) have freehold land at 43.3 percent and communal land at 37 percent of the total land area. Moyo (2007: 66) lists freehold land at 44 percent and communal land at 41 percent. NACSO (2015) states that communal conservancies cover 162,030 km^2, representing 52.9 percent of all communal land and 19.66% of Namibia's total land area. These numbers mean that, according to NACSO, communal land accounts for 37.164 percent of the country. The

blacks (Harring and Odendaal 2007: 3). State-run protected areas cover between 14 to 17 percent of the country (Ministry of Environment and Tourism 2010a).[18] Table 1 shows the best available data on land tenure.

Freehold land in Namibia is at the center of ongoing, contentious debates about land reform.[19] Understanding freehold conservancies, which encompass more than three million hectares of private land (CANAM 2010), therefore requires consideration of the context of land reform and issues of race, inequality, and the distribution of resources.

Table 1: Land Tenure Zoning in Namibia

Land Tenure Category	**Size in square kilometers**	**Percentage of the country**
Communal Land	298,200 km^2	36.07%
Freehold Land	356,700 km^2	43.11%
Conservation Area (parks and game reserves, etc.)	116,000 km^2	14.03%
Other Government and Parastal Uses	32,400 km^2	3.9%
Urban Usage	7,200 km^2	0.87%
Other Uses	16,180 km^2	1.96%
Total	826,680 km^2	100%

Credit: Robert K. Hitchcock, data obtained from Mendolsohn et al. (2009), the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR) and the Ministry of

discrepancies between these sources illustrate the ambiguity of land tenure in Namibia.

[18] Although Ministry of Environment and Tourism (2010a) claims that state-run protected areas cover about 17 percent of the country, this number is disputed by some observers who argue that the exact percentage is lower. Mendelsohn et al. (2009) list state protected areas at 14.1 percent of the total area.

[19] For more on debates about land reform in Namibia, see for instance Alden and Anseeuw (2009); Harring and Odendaal (2007); Hunter (2004); Legal Assistance Center (2005); Moyo (2007); Werner and Odendaal (2010); Werner (2015).

Environment and Tourism (MET), Government of the Republic of Namibia

Research Locations

Otjiwarongo

Much of my fieldwork took place in the north-central part of the country, in and around the small town of Otjiwarongo. This town lies in the heart of Namibian cattle country and its name comes from an Otjiherero word reportedly meaning "a place where fat cattle graze." This rural landscape is characterized by large privately owned ranches, small towns, and scattered, dusty villages. It also contains a rich mosaic of shrublands, grasslands, savannas, and woodlands, as well as 'wide-open' vistas and world-renowned wildlife populations. Although I conducted research and travelled throughout much of the country—from the Angolan border to the South Africa border, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Zambezi River—Otjiwarongo and the area around it became the hub of my multi-sited study.

With a population around 28,000[20], Otjiwarongo serves as an agricultural, commercial, and social center for surrounding rural communities, as well as an important intersection for travel and transportation. I first visited this town in 2008 while traveling between research locations in the northwestern and northeastern parts of the

[20] According to the Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census Main Report, National Statistics Agency, www.nsa.org.na, accessed 9/28/17.

country. Its location and amenities make this town a crossroads for tourists and hunters, many of whom visit nearby game farms and guesthouses on private land. There are numerous freehold conservancies located nearby, and while some conservancy members live and work in town, many others come here to shop, socialize, and bring their kids to school. For many landowners in the area, Otjiwarongo is the place to stock up on farm supplies and groceries—including specialty German meats from the local butcher—or unwind at a café with a strong cup of coffee and an issue of Africa's only German-language newspaper.

In addition to the proximity to numerous conservancies, I also selected Otjiwarongo as my "home base" because of its active Rotary club. My year of fieldwork in 2009-2010 was funded by a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, and part of my responsibility was to maintain contact and take part in the activities of a host club. At the time, there were only a few clubs in the country to choose from, and most were in places that were not ideal for my research. I wanted to find a club located outside of Windhoek, close to freehold conservancies, and whose members could provide me with direct connections to conservancy members and other landowners. Fortunately, the Otjiwarongo Rotary Club was a perfect match. This small-town club graciously welcomed me as their first Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. Many of the members were landowners and freehold conservancy members. As I anticipated, Otjiwarongo offered an ideal hub for my research. The social

network that Rotary provided me played a significant role in my fieldwork, making it possible to quickly gain trust, build rapport, and become part of a close-knit rural community.

At the beginning of this year of fieldwork, I arrived in Otjiwarongo in a sleek, silver Audi. My local contact, a well-dressed businessman named Dietrich[21], picked me up in Windhoek after a long struggle to arrange an official government research permit. The trunk and backseat of his car were filled with an assortment of saltwater aquarium supplies for his stately home. We zipped along the main road that runs north and south through the country. As Dietrich complained about traffic (which seemed baffling to me as we passed an occasional car or slow-moving truck), I gazed out the window at the vast savanna landscape. There were baboons atop fence posts and warthogs scampering beneath the wires. It was these expansive ranchlands that I soon hoped to explore.

After arriving in Otjiwarongo that evening, I was treated to a steak dinner with wine and escargot at a game lodge on the outskirts of town. We were joined by one of Dietrich's friends, a local rancher, and after dinner we sat around his family's kitchen table drinking beer, talking about cattle, and swapping stories late into the night.

For the first few weeks I stayed in Dietrich's home. I immediately felt warmly welcomed as part of his family, consisting of his wife—a school

[21] Dietrich and other names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

teacher—and their three boys. They lived in a large two-story house in a pleasant neighborhood not far from downtown. Behind their house, a thatched roof *lapa* provided shade for *braais* on the patio by the pool. A lush, well-manicured garden surrounded the house, and a tall, imposing wall with a sturdy metal gate surrounded the garden. Beyond this wall was a vibrant small town, but one in which most people lived much differently. In many ways, Dietrich's home and the physical separation of domestic space from the hustle and bustle around it reflected the stark contrast of life and wealth in Otjiwarongo, and the inequality of Namibian society.

Directly in front of Dietrich's house there was a large grassy field with a well-worn and dusty path that intersected it. This path was an important pedestrian thoroughfare that connected the downtown business district to the impoverished informal settlement on the outskirts of town, often referred to as "Tin Town" because of its concentration of improvised metal houses and other structures. Closer to downtown was Orwetoveni, a former township—also called the "location"—once the required residence of blacks and non-whites during apartheid. This lively part of town remained home for a large segment of the population and included many shops, bars, and other businesses. In contrast to this former township, the residential areas around Dietrich's home were once reserved for whites and continued to reflect this history of forced segregation. These quiet streets were lined with colorful houses and green gardens, many surrounded by walls and gates. Each

morning, a migration of housekeepers, gardeners and other workers arrived, leaving again each evening.

At the center of Otjiwarongo was a bustling main street and a downtown business district teeming with energy during the week. There was a wide variety of businesses including banks, a hardware store, pharmacy, tractor and farm implement retailers, a "China shop" selling cheap consumer goods, and a hunting and safari-themed gift store that also sold guns and clothing for local farmers. In many ways, Otjiwarongo and other towns in the area felt remarkably similar to the rural small towns in the Great Plains where I grew up.

One of the busiest spots downtown was the Spar grocery store, located in a prominent location near the town's main intersection. This store was popular with both locals and tourists, who often stopped in town to stock up on provisions. Near the front of the store there was a small dine-in counter where one could order food and coffee. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I often sat at the counter to strike up conversations with local landowners. It was a successful strategy and helped me build my network. Over time, I would often pull up a chair and expect to see numerous familiar faces. When no one was around, the Damara woman who worked at the counter would cheerfully help me practice speaking Khoekhoe.

In addition to the counter at the grocery store, there were several other places in town that proved vital in my efforts to make connections, build

relationships, and become part of the community. One of these places was Café Carstensen, located on a busy downtown street corner. This café was particularly popular with German-Namibians and was frequented by many conservancy members and other landowners from the surrounding area. I often went there on Friday afternoons with members of the Otjiwarongo Rotary Club. Following their weekly meeting and lunch at the nearby Crocodile Ranch—a hatchery with a gift shop and small dining room—several of the German-speaking Rotarians proceeded to Café Carstensen for coffee and fresh apple strudel. It was always a lively atmosphere, and for many German-Namibians, Friday afternoon at the café was an important time for social interaction. I was often introduced to the conservancy members and landowners in town for the afternoon, and some of my first invitations to visit farms in the area started here.

Another important place was a small, eclectic café called Kameldorn Garten. Its shady patio was nestled behind a colorful house at the edge of a residential neighborhood near downtown. There were several tables on the patio, which was surrounded on three sides by a garden and was decorated with a pleasantly random mix of art, flowers, and old metal gardening implements. On the other side near the kitchen, there was a high, L-shaped counter where the locals sat. This counter was *the* place for local gossip and news, and its where I conducted numerous interviews and built many of the connections that shaped my research with conservancies. The welcoming

atmosphere seemed to invite openness and conversation. This atmosphere reflected the personalities of the German and Afrikaans-speaking owners—a warm-hearted, middle-aged woman with bright red hair and her daughter, a gregarious artist and musician. It often seemed as though they knew everyone, and most importantly, every farm and its owner. Their introductions, insight, and support for my research were invaluable.

After my brief stay in Dietrich's home, I decided to rent a room of my own at Otjiwarongo's German school hostel, where German-speaking children from the surrounding rural area lived during the week. My room was in a small, unused building, which I shared with the local American hockey coach. Roller hockey is incredibly popular among German-Namibian youth and the local community pitched in to hire a coach—a former collegiate athlete—who held celebrity status in town. As one young hockey player explained to me, "Hockey is for the Germans, rugby's for Afrikaaners, and soccer is for the blacks." My room at the hostel was simple, in fact, quite spartan. It had a concrete floor, bare walls, a small desk, and a tiny metal bed with a thin, worn out mattress. It also provided a suitable "home base" from which I could easily come and go until I moved onto a farm. I was invited to dine in the mess hall, and I occasionally joined the kids for breakfast or dinner. Meals were simple but satisfying: porridge for breakfast and light dinners that usually consisted of bread, cheese, sliced tomatoes and cucumbers, hard-boiled eggs, and canned fish. Fortunately, this

connection to the German-Namibian youth also resulted in relationships and a greater level of trust with their parents, many of whom were conservancy members. I often had conversations with the parents when they picked up or dropped off their kids, and many of these conversations led to invitations and interviews.

Within my first few weeks, I received my first invitation to visit and hunt on a farm outside of Otjiwarongo. Throughout my year of fieldwork, I hunted frequently, most often at the request of landowners to provide meat for their farmworkers. Accompanied by Dietrich's eldest son, I was invited by an old German farmer to come hunting and harvest a kudu for his workers—around 15 of whom lived with their families in a small village on the farm. His house was located on an expansive ranch, down a long sandy trail near the Paresis Mountains that rise from the plains. He led us out into the savanna, to a stone blind perched high on a rocky outcrop overlooking a waterhole. Wild guinea fowl and small antelope called dik-dik wandered around below, while hornbills squawked in the treetops. As we sat watch in the warm sun, a massive kudu bull with spiraling horns approached the water's edge. Soon, four females ambled forward for a late morning drink. It was a beautiful scene and I quickly snapped photos of the handsome animals. I then peered into the scope and pulled the trigger for a successful shot. We returned to the farmstead and several of the workers began to process the meat. The old farmer and his wife invited us inside for a home-cooked meal of chicken

and mushrooms with boiled potatoes. These mushrooms are a Namibian delicacy, sprouting once a year on the towering termite mounds after ample rain. As we ate and listened closely to the couple's stories, I gazed around the room at the impressive mounts and hides, collected over many years, that lined the walls.

Beyond Otjiwarongo

Soon, the "field" in my study began to expand beyond Otjiwarongo, and my research transitioned to living and working on land in and around freehold conservancies. One of the farms where I lived was a German-Namibian family farm in Kalkfeld Conservancy involved in livestock production, cattle breeding, and trophy hunting. The road to the farm, located to the west of Otjiwarongo, winded through thick *Acacia* savanna and passed over bluffs with vast views of the surrounding plains and rocky hills. Oryx, kudu, and warthogs often dashed across the road, and a herd of giraffes sometimes lingered not far from the farmstead. During my time on this farm, I observed and participated in the work and ordinary lives of the landowner, his family, and the community of farmworkers that lived and worked on the land. I took part in conservancy activities, including game counts and meetings. From this farm, I traveled to other farms in the conservancy. Sometimes I would visit for a day, and other times, I would stay longer. Some of these farms are profiled in Chapter Four.

My aim was to visit as many members of Kalkfeld Conservancy as possible, and to learn about differences in land and wildlife use. In doing so, I spent time on a variety of different farms and ranches. I visited some farms that were managed exclusively for livestock production, and others on which wildlife-based land uses such as trophy hunting and tourism took priority. Most landowners, however, practiced a mix of both. This mix of land and wildlife use, along with the wealth of landowners, spanned a continuum. Some farmsteads had simple, modest houses surrounded by sheds, barns, corrals, and other livestock-related infrastructure. I often interviewed landowners in humble settings, sometimes at kitchen tables in dining rooms with bare walls and cracking plaster, following long drives on the farm and hot, dusty work with livestock and machinery. There were also more opulent homes and guesthouses, particularly on farms geared toward wealthier hunters and tourists. On one guest farm where I stayed, nearly a dozen hunters and other visitors lounged near a pool in an immaculately manicured courtyard and garden. The main farmhouse and two guesthouses faced the courtyard, each lined with bright flowers and decorated with animal mounts. During the days, the landowner and several workers offered game drives and accompanied hunters, tracked animals, and processed carcasses. After dark, candlelit dinners featuring game meat and wine were served to guests under a thatched roof *lapa*.

In addition to Kalkfeld Conservancy, I visited and interviewed members

and attended meetings of other freehold conservancies. These included Black Nossob, Etosha, Hochfeld, Kaoko-Etosha, Loxondonta, Ngarangombe, Okawi, Ovipuka, Sandveld, Seeis, Swakoptal, and Waterberg Conservancies. Research took place on farms, although I also conducted numerous interviews with conservancy leaders and members in other locations including a hockey arena, a tourism expo, restaurants and cafés, and livestock auction pens. Conservancy meetings either took place on farms or in nearby towns at locations such as community buildings or lodges. In addition to the meetings of specific conservancies, I also participated in a meeting of the Greater Waterberg Complex—a partnership between freehold and communal conservancies, a state protected area, and various stakeholders—held at the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) and two meetings of the Conservancy Association of Namibia (CANAM) held in Windhoek.

Fieldwork also took place in the rural areas and small towns around freehold conservancies, including nonmember ranches and resettlement farms. During my year in Namibia, I made numerous visits to an area of resettlement farms north of Otjiwarongo, not far from Kalkfeld and Etosha Conservancies. I pitched my tent on the ground near the small brick house built by Adolf, a resettlement farmer and one of my trusted key consultants. We would travel together throughout the area of resettlement farms and he would introduce me to the other "emerging farmers," all of whom allowed

me to conduct interviews and observe and participate in their everyday lives. A more detailed profile of Adolf is presented in Chapter Four.

In addition to freehold conservancies and the areas around them, I visited several state-run protected areas in different parts of the country, the private NamibRand Nature Reserve, and numerous communal conservancies, along with multiple community-based campsites and enterprises. This wide range of experiences not only helped me better understand the differences and similarities between freehold and communal conservancies, but also the variations in nature-based tourism and wildlife management in Namibia. Apart from my fieldwork in communal conservancies in 2008, my most extensive visit to communal conservancies in 2009-2010 took place in Torra, =Khoadi-//Hôas, and Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancies, with a shorter visit to communal conservancies in the far north near Ruacana.

Occasionally, my research involved meetings or interviews in Windhoek, the capital city. My connections with Rotary also afforded opportunities to experience life in unique places including the southern mining town of Rosh Pinah and the coastal towns of Lüderitz and Swakopmund. These experiences contributed to a broader perspective on Namibian society.

Settling In

Three rituals illustrate my transition from outsider to insider status. The

first is the Otjiwarongo Karneval, a traditional German-style carnival which takes places each year in July. I was invited to attend this event shortly after my arrival in town, and the sights and sounds were mesmerizing. Karneval is an important event for German-Namibians. Students returned home from universities, farmers trekked in from surrounding rural areas, and German-Namibians descended on Otjiwarongo from other parts of the country.

Both young and old lined long tables in the municipal gymnasium, watching and laughing as local participants in elaborate costumes performed comical skits, music, and dances. We stood—often on top of chairs—and sang out loud in unison. We locked arms and swayed with the music, shouting *prost* as we tapped our glasses and bottles together. Several local men staffed a small bar, where the crowd clamored for beer and liquor, and which also served popular sliced bread rolls (*Brötchen*) with an assortment of toppings including cheese and raw ground meat (*Rohfleisch*). A Karneval king and queen sat on a throne overlooking the packed hall and a special group of girls in bright red skirts and white boots danced on stage and motivated the lively crowd.

After two nights of festivities, downtown Otjiwarongo was bustling on Saturday morning for the closing parade—reminiscent in many ways of the small-town parades I was accustomed to in Kansas. Floats, tractors, and school groups proceeded past families with children scrambling for candy. Together with a large group of local young men, I rode atop a flatbed trailer

pulled by a shiny red tractor, advertising the town's Massey Ferguson dealership. We rolled along drinking from a keg of Namibian beer, throwing candy to the crowd, and blasting German and Afrikaans dance tunes (along with quite a bit of Lady Gaga). The parade ended at the nearby fairgrounds, where the party continued with skewered meat cooked over a fire and a lot more beer.

A second ritual that illustrates my transition from outsider to insider status is the Otjiwarongo Oktoberfest. For weeks before this popular annual event, a large banner hung over the town's main street announcing its upcoming date. This banner, however, also symbolized the unique cultural context of Otjiwarongo because, while half of the banner announced the German Oktoberfest, the other half promoted SWAPO, the governing party and former independence movement. After hearing about the event and the excitement of many German-Namibians for weeks, I could feel the anticipation.

The Otjiwarongo Oktoberfest was held at the German school hostel where I had rented a room. There were long tables arranged in the yard and colorful Bavarian flags strung overhead. There was also traditional German music and food including sausage (*wurst*), smoked pork chops (*kassler)*, *sauerkraut*, and potato salad (*kartoffelsalat*). Dietrich, my first host in town,

was gleefully serving beer from behind a row of taps.[22] Some of the men wore *lederhosen* and several women dressed in traditional *dirndls*. There was also dancing and a two-man log-sawing competition. In the spirit of participant observation, I drank, sang, and danced throughout the evening. I was among friends and I was beginning to feel part of the community. By this point in the year, I knew many, if not most, of the revelers and I had visited many of their farms. I was now a familiar face. With every toast and the clinking sound of beer bottles, I became less of an outsider among the German-Namibians of Otjiwarongo.

The third ritual took place on Friday evenings at the Otjiwarongo Reitclub, a stable and horse-riding club located on the outskirts of town. This ritual involved meat, beer, and camaraderie. On Friday evenings, the Reitclub opened for dinner and drinks. There were long tables outside on a covered patio, and inside, several tables filled a small dining room along a bar with high stools. The atmosphere was always lively and filled with laughter. For many whites in and around Otjiwarongo, this was *the place* to be after dark at the end of the week. Beer was plentiful, and the thick-cut steaks and *Eisbein*—crispy, roasted ham shank—were exquisitely cooked.

I was first invited to attend by Theodor, one of my closest key consultants. I would often join him and his brother, and over time, this ritual

[22] Even Namibian beer reflects the country's German heritage. Two of the most popular beers, Windhoek Lager and Tafel Lager are brewed according to the German *Reinheitsgebot* (Purity Law) of 1516.

became an occasional, but highly-anticipated part of my fieldwork, especially after periods of travel or time on remote farms. I frequently encountered many of the landowners and conservancy members I visited, and often made new important connections and contacts. Within a few months, it was common for me to know almost everyone at the Reitclub on Friday nights. I would park my pickup in a row of other trucks, and as I walked toward the building I was often greeted by a long table of joyful locals, before entering the bar where other friends and beer awaited me. By the end of my year in Namibia, this Friday night ritual felt remarkably normal, reflecting my transition from an outsider to an insider in this rural, ranching community.

It was situations and places such as these—the town's cafés, celebrations, stores, sporting events, and livestock auctions—that proved vital for gaining acceptance and building relationships necessary to expand my research onto ranches and into the homes of conservancy members.

Data Collection

This research resulted in 1) an in-depth case study of Kalkfeld Conservancy, one of the largest and most active conservancies in the country, and 2) a rich collection of stakeholder narratives and observations on the interactions of a wide range of different actors. These data were primarily collected using participant observation, along with informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2006). I also

recorded observations in fieldnotes and thousands of photographs[23], and collected historical, government, and organizational documents, news and other media, maps and spatial data, as well as an assortment of ecological and agricultural information. Research participants included not only freehold conservancy members, but also a wide range of stakeholders including nonmember landowners, farmworkers, resettlement farmers, hunters and tourists, townspeople, government officials, and representatives of various NGOs.

Case Study: Kalkfeld Conservancy

During my research with Kalkfeld Conservancy, located to the southwest of Otjiwarongo, I lived for an extended period on a German-Namibian family farm. I conducted participant observation and repeated interviews with the landowner, his family, and the community of farmworkers and their dependents that lived on the farm. This opportunity provided me with farm-level insight into land and wildlife use, interactions with the environment, labor relations, and participation in the conservancy. Using participant observation, I also took part in the work and everyday lives of landowners and farmworkers throughout the conservancy. I attended conservancy meetings and social gatherings, took part in hunting and other

[23] Many of the photographic techniques I used, along with the benefits of photography as a research method in anthropology, are outlined in Collier and Collier (1986).

management activities, and interacted with tourists and hunters. I conducted informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews, recorded observations in fieldnotes and photographs, and collected a variety of conservancy documents. My approach involved attention to social dynamics and differences, power relations, tensions, and conflicting interests among the group, and between the group and other stakeholders. This included a focus on the interactions between both human and nonhuman actors, as well as the broader rural context in which the conservancy was situated. This combination of data has enabled me to present an ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy in Chapter Four. It also allows me to draw conclusions and raise new questions about freehold conservancies in general.

Stakeholder Narratives

In addition to my in-depth research with Kalkfeld Conservancy, I used participant observation, along with informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews to collect a variety of stakeholder narratives. As mentioned above, these stakeholders included freehold conservancy members from across the country, as well as a wide range of other people that may have affected, or been affected by, freehold conservancies. These narratives enhance my ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy in Chapter Four. They also form the basis for my analysis of the emergence of freehold conservancies in Chapter Three, and the disillusionment of

conservancy members and its relation to the politics of land in Chapter Five. The use of participant observation complimented my interviews with stakeholders, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of their everyday lives, viewpoints, and experiences. This collection of narratives not only helps to understand conservancies and their members, but also projects the voices of marginalized stakeholders including farmworkers and resettlement farmers who are seldom heard in discussions of wildlife management and conservation on private land in Namibia.

Positionality

The practice of critical self-reflection and situating oneself, as a researcher, in relation to the process and presentation of research is an important part of ethnography. Therefore, it is worth noting several ways in which my personal background and characteristics shaped this study.

First, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, this study was shaped by my interest in CBNRM and community-based approaches to conservation and tourism. It was also influenced by my interest and experience with environmental advocacy and conservation in Kansas and the Great Plains, including years of work with a non-profit conservation organization. When I began this study, I was particularly intrigued by the similarities between the Great Plains and parts of rural Namibia, and I wondered about freehold conservancies as a potential model for the Great Plains where, like Namibia,

much of the land is privately owned.

I set out, however, with an open-minded, critical perspective. I did not design this study with an agenda to advocate for freehold conservancies or portray them as either a success or failure. Instead, my intent was to "follow the ethnography", allowing my unfolding experiences and concerns of those involved to dictate the rhythms of my research. This approach was influenced by the advice, via Wesch (2006: 11), of Roy (Skip) Rappaport to Edward LiPuma. He told him that "the essence of fieldwork was to follow the ethnography, to be very attuned to what was happening at that historical moment in the lives of the people with whom I was living. Research plans and agendas were less important than letting the ethnography make the ethnographer" (LiPuma 2000: xi). My approach was also influenced by the insights of environmental anthropology and political ecology, contributing an awareness of the politics of conservation and a concern for the impacts on both people and the environment.

Second, this study was shaped by my position as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. This position meant that I needed to live near a Rotary Club, and as explained earlier, this influenced my choice of Otjiwarongo and my connection to Kalkfeld Conservancy. My affiliation with the Otjiwarongo Rotary Club provided important support and enhanced my ability to connect with a diverse network of landowners, conservancy members, and other people in this part of rural Namibia. With no affiliations

other than Rotary and Michigan State University, I also believe that my research was often seen by landowners as more neutral or less agenda-driven than if I had been affiliated with organizations such as the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) or the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Third, some of my physical traits and personal characteristics impacted my research. For example, in Namibia (like the United States), I was categorized as "white." My skin color likely provided me with access to white Namibian landowners and other situations involving whites that might have been more difficult or impossible for someone with darker skin. My German heritage and ability to speak some German also provided a point of connection to many German-Namibians. In my research with farmworkers and resettlement farmers, on the other hand, my skin color made me unusual and unique when I took part in their lives in ways in which most whites did not (see Chapter Four). This fostered a high level of trust and reciprocity.

As a male researcher, my presence and participation in male-dominated activities related to ranching, hunting, and conservancies was commonplace. Since much of my data was collected through participant observation and interviews that took place during ordinary social interactions, my gender likely affected my access to men and the duration of these interactions. While men generally outnumbered women in conservancy-related activities and events, numerous women actively served in leadership roles within

conservancies. Some served as conservancy secretaries, and a few held higher positions as chairpersons or council members. Although much of my time was spent with men due to the gendered dimensions of labor on farms, I actively worked to interview and include the voices of women involved in conservancies, along with women in farmworker communities.

Furthermore, my familiarity and abilities related to hunting, ranching and farm-related work enhanced my research and lent credibility. I was sometimes asked to hunt for meat, for example, and often took part in the work of landowners and farmworkers. I often engaged in conversations about ranching, hunting, and wildlife and told stories or shared photos of my family's ranchland in Kansas. Not only was I a white, blonde-haired, stocky "corn-fed" man without an affiliation to any organization other than Rotary and my university, I was also an accurate shot with a rifle, comfortable around cattle, and enjoyed drinking beer and eating meat—all factors that played a part in this study.

Limitations

Reflexivity also involves consideration of limitations, and there are several limitations of this study. First, my rural-oriented approach and selection of Otjiwarongo and the surrounding area as the hub of my research limited my opportunities for interaction with Windhoek-based stakeholders including state officials and NGOs such as WWF. Although I attended

meetings and conducted several interviews in Windhoek, I prioritized my time on land in and around freehold conservancies. Arranging interviews with these Windhoek-based stakeholders was also often difficult and some of my attempts were either ignored or rejected. Further research is needed to fully account for the interests and perspectives of state officials and other Windhoek-based stakeholders.

A second limitation results from the research design and kinds of data that I gathered. This study did not systematically collect quantitative data or include large surveys or questionnaires in freehold or communal conservancies. Instead, my ethnographic approach prioritized the collection of qualitative data through participant observation and interviews, and focused on the depth of research rather than breadth. The vast distances and time required to travel within and between freehold conservancies also presented a limitation in this respect. Collecting comparable data across all freehold conservancies would be beneficial, although conservancies and their umbrella organization, CANAM, struggle with this task themselves. Further comparative research is also needed to better understand the similarities, differences, and opportunities for collaboration between freehold and communal conservancies.

Third, although my research included women involved in conservancies, my interaction with women less directly involved in conservancies or land and wildlife management was relatively limited. On some farms, this was

partially a result of the physical separation of domestic work in or around the homestead, which was generally dominated by women, from other work related to livestock production, land and wildlife management, hunting, and infrastructure, which was generally dominated by men and in which I often took part. Further research on freehold conservancies would benefit from conceptualizing and incorporating more women as research participants, regardless of direct involvement or leadership roles.

Fourth, this dissertation is limited to the data I collected between 2008-2010. Although I intended to return to Namibia for follow-up research, further fieldwork was not conducted.

This chapter described the ethnographic setting of this study, including an overview of Namibia, Otjiwarongo, and other research locations beyond this small, rural town. It described my multi-sited, ethnographic approach including research design, participants, methods, positionality and limitations. The next chapter explores the emergence of freehold conservancies. It challenges conventional wisdom and contributes to a new understanding of freehold conservancies made possible by the strengths of the ethnographic approach described in this chapter.

Chapter Three

THE EMERGENCE OF FREEHOLD CONSERVANCIES

Why, since the early 1990s, have groups of white landowners in Namibia worked together to manage and conserve wildlife? What explains the emergence of freehold conservancies? While conducting fieldwork in Namibia, as described in Chapter Two, I often talked with freehold conservancy members about the history of these groups and their motivations for joining. I heard about optimistic visions of an alternative to game fencing and the benefits of collaboration for wildlife management, sustainable utilization, and anti-poaching. These motivations were expected, based on the literature, but what was surprising was how often I heard about the motivating role of rumor, fear of government, and the threat of land reform. I quickly realized that understanding the emergence of freehold conservancies required me to listen closely to the narratives of both conservancy leaders and ordinary members, and to "follow the ethnography".

As the Zimbabwean geographer, Brian Child, has pointed out, the political economy of wildlife in southern Africa has evolved through three distinct phases since the arrival of Europeans: 1) a frontier economy in the 18th and 19th centuries, 2) the emergence of protected areas, centralized control, and banning of commercial use, and 3) a shift toward devolved, incentive-led conservation based on the principles of sustainable use (Child

2009). Freehold conservancies emerged, in part, from the conditions created during this third phase, including legislative and policy reforms that reshaped landowners' rights and relationships to wildlife. By giving wildlife "value," it is widely believed that these reforms provided landowners with incentive to sustainably manage and conserve wildlife, and conservancies are simply the result of a recognition of the benefits of working together. As my findings suggest, this dominant narrative does not tell the whole story. An additional narrative involving rumor, fear, and the politics of land must be considered.

This chapter outlines this additional narrative, illuminated by the insights of ethnographic research and the words of ordinary conservancy members. It begins by discussing the historical background of freehold conservancies, followed by their emergence and the dominant narrative presented in the literature. My argument is not that the dominant narrative is incorrect, it is just incomplete. By including the many voices of those motivated by factors other than economic or ecological benefits of collaborative wildlife management, we gain a more complete—and complex—picture of freehold conservancies. I argue that freehold conservancies emerged not only as a tool for conservation, but also as a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa.

Political Economy of Wildlife in Southern Africa

Following the arrival of Europeans, the first phase in the political economy of wildlife was a frontier economy of European exploration and settlement during the 18th and 19th centuries (Child 2009: 5). This period was characterized by agricultural expansion, unregulated hunting, and the mass killing of wildlife throughout southern African. The rapid spread of ranching and agriculture decimated wildlife populations and their habitat. This killing was driven in part by the introduction of new technologies including "firearms, medicine, fences, railways and markets," which "increased the profitability of hunting in an economy lacking the institutions to control the use of increasingly scarce resources" (Child 2009: 5). As in North America, the institutions and systems of wildlife use of indigenous people were also decimated, along with their populations and ways of life, creating the conditions of open-access.

Declines in wildlife populations during this period were also exacerbated by outbreaks of disease, including bovine pleuropneumonia (1850s) and rinderpest (1896-97). By the end of the 19th century, millions of animals had been killed throughout the region due to these epidemics, agricultural expansion, and overexploitation by "slave traders, hunter explorers, prospectors and adventurers" (Bond et al. 2004: 30). Numerous species faced extinction or extirpation from land across the region. For example, the quagga—a South African equid that was once widespread

across the plains south of the Orange River—went extinct by 1883 (Faith 2014: 114) The last great trek of springbok across the South African Karoo took place in 1896-7, giving way to settlement and agriculture (Roche 2008). In North America, a similar process of European expansion brought about the slaughter of millions of American bison, the extirpation and extinction of many different species, and the ethnocide of indigenous people.

Following the widespread loss of wildlife and amidst growing concerns about environmental degradation, a second phase of centralization and protectionism began to emerge—paralleled by similar changes in North America. Colonial administrations responded with protectionist conservation legislation, bans on commercial and subsistence use, and the establishment of protected areas and national parks (Bond et al. 2004; Child 2009; Hitchcock 2002; Murombedzi 2003). These new protectionist policies and bans centralized control over wildlife and alienated both private and communal landholders from this resource (Bond et al. 2004: 30).

During this period, the continent's first systematic conservation legislation was put forth in the 1886 Cape Act for the Preservation of Game (Child 2009: 6). Four years later, colonial powers assembled the 1900 London Convention Concerning the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds and Fish in Africa, followed by the 1933 Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State. These conventions promoted centralization of wildlife management, including the creation of large

protected areas, laws and regulations, and limits on commercial and subsistence use. By the middle of the twentieth century, colonial governments established a network of national parks and large, state-run protected areas including Kruger, Serengeti, and Etosha National Park in South West Africa. The creation of these parks often resulted in the exclusion and forced removals of blacks and indigenous people (Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo 2005; Hitchcock 2011).

On land outside protected areas, bans on commercial use undervalued wildlife and made it a burden for landowners (Child 2009; Lindsey et al. 2013). As Child (2009: 6) explains, "Commercial utilization of wildlife was roundly rejected, presumably because it was associated with pictures of greed and slaughter, but hunting by sportsmen for non-commercial reasons remained acceptable. New laws disenfranchised landholders, both white and black, from using wildlife sensibly." Wildlife on white-owned land was owned and controlled by the state, and although hunting by white settlers and sport hunters was permitted, customary forms of wildlife use by blacks became illegal (Jones and Murphree 2001: 41).

In South West Africa, as elsewhere in southern Africa, colonial regulations and the centralization of control failed to end the loss of wildlife. The expansion of settler agriculture, along with overexploitation and outbreaks of disease, had taken its toll on local fauna. Still, despite protectionist legislation and state control, "wildlife populations continued to

wane because of illegal hunting, persecution by landowners, state-sponsored hunting to remove tsetse fly *Glossina* spp. hosts, and construction of veterinary fences" (Lindsey et al. 2013: 41). As my research findings confirm, many ranchers viewed large herbivores as unwanted competition and carnivores as an unnecessary threat. Some landowners actively sought to remove wildlife from their land; others turned a blind eye to illegal hunting and overuse.

During my fieldwork, many landowners commented on the dearth of wildlife on farms during this period, as well as a pervasive desire to eliminate herbivores believed to compete with cattle. Farms put up for sale were sometimes advertised as "game-free farms," which reportedly garnered higher prices. As one landowner explained, the idea was to "shoot, shoot, shoot when there was an oryx". Another landowner described that, "In the old days, game belonged to the government. Everything was shot and killed, but since then there is much more game." According to many landowners that I interviewed, the problem boiled down to economics: wildlife lacked "value". The ownership and control over wildlife rested in the hands of the state, leaving private landowners with little incentive to protect or conserve species on their land.

Eventually, a new approach to conservation began to emerge. This new approach recognized the limitations of state protected areas and the need to conserve wildlife on land beyond the boundaries of national parks.

As Child (2009: 7) explains, "The problem was that the wildlife outside parks was rapidly replaced by the cow and the plough; wildlife could neither be owned nor utilized for profit, and could therefore not compete commercially against crops and livestock, and the state could not regulate nor police this problem away." By turning away from centralization and protectionism, this new approach led to a third phase of inventive-led conservation based on the devolution of wildlife rights and a paradigm of sustainable use. Two phrases, which I often heard in interviews with Namibian landowners, sum up this paradigm: "use it or lose it" and "if it pays, it stays." In several countries throughout the region, legislative and policy changes granted private landowners rights to utilize and benefit from the wildlife on their land (Bond et al. 2004; Jones and Murphree 2001).

Following these changes, landowners rapidly began to switch from livestock production to wildlife-based land uses, leading to the development of a thriving wildlife-based economy on private land in much of southern Africa (Bond et al. 2004; Lindsey 2011). This shift in land and wildlife use had significant economic and ecological impacts, including considerable benefits to wildlife and habitat conservation (Bond et al. 2004; Lindsey 2011).[24] Not only did this turn toward the devolution of rights and

[24] Lindsey, Romañach, and Davies-Mostert (2009) have also argued, however, that this shift from livestock to game ranching "was not entirely positive for conservation." Some problems have included a lack of monitoring and information, the translocation of exotic or invasive game and a disregard for historic distributions, the manipulation of genetics, and

sustainable use lead to the expansion of wildlife-based land uses and the recovery of wildlife populations on private land, it also contributed to the evolution of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) on communal land through the region (Child 2009; Jones and Murphree 2001). The following section describes this transformation in Namibia, which in part, created the conditions for the emergence of freehold conservancies.

Devolution and Sustainable Use in Namibia

In the 1960s and 1970s, the white-controlled administration of South West Africa enacted policy reforms that granted (white) freehold landowners extensive rights and conditional ownership over wildlife on their land. A limited form of proprietorship was first provided by a 1967 ordinance, and these rights were reinforced through legislation in the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975 (Joubert 1974; de Jager 1996; Jones and Murphree 2001; Bond et al. 2004; Barnes and Jones 2009).[25] This legislation granted landowners user rights over "huntable game" and limited access to "protected" and "specially protected game" after meeting certain fencing requirements.[26] In doing so, it permitted various forms of consumptive

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ethically questionable hunting practices. One strategy for improving the conservation value of game ranching, they argue, is the formation of conservancies.

[25] It is worth noting that some of these authors list 1968, rather than 1967, as the year of this first ordinance.

[26] Huntable game included bushpig (*Potamochoerus porcus*), buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), eland (*Taurotragus oryx*), oryx (*Oryx gazelle*), kudu

wildlife use that were previously prohibited. By reshaping incentives, these legislative changes contributed to significant shifts in landowner-wildlife relations, the expansion of wildlife-based land uses, and increases in wildlife populations on private land (Barnes and de Jager 1996; Barnes and Jones 2009; Jones and Murphree 2001; Bond et al. 2004). As one landowner told me, this legislation was "generally a huge success, even for the damn cheetah."

Results from a 1996 study by Barnes and de Jager (1996), for example, indicate that wildlife numbers on private land in Namibia increased approximately 70 percent between 1972 and 1992, and the biomass of game 84 percent. The diversity of species rose roughly 44 percent. During this same period, the aggregate economic value of wildlife on private land increased by approximately 80 percent in real terms. This study also suggests that there are financial incentives for private landowners to form conservancies. Numerous other authors have also detailed the expansion, viability, and impacts of wildlife-based land uses on private in Namibia (Barnes and Jones 2009; Humavindu and Barnes 2003; Joubert 1974; Lindsey 2011; Lindsey et al. 2013). According to one landowner who has transitioned from livestock production to wildlife-based uses, which account

(*Tragelaphus Strepsiceros*), springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) and warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*).

for 60 percent of his total income, "We tolerate so much game because we make money."

Private land in Namibia now provides critical habitat and supports much of the country's wildlife. Jones and Murphree (2001: 42) estimated that 75 percent of Namibia's wildlife occur outside protected areas, and much of it on private land. This number may be much higher, however, with over 90 percent of large game species and 80 percent of their numbers reportedly occurring outside protected areas (Ministry of Environment and Tourism 2010b). Barnes et al. (2013) state that 88 percent of Namibia's wildlife numbers are on private land.[27] This land also supports relatively high levels of overall terrestrial diversity, endemism, and the abundance of large herbivores and carnivores (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 108-123). The world's largest wild population of cheetahs is found in Namibia and rely on the connectivity and vast expanses of habitat that private ranchland provides (Marker 2003).

The experience of private landowners in Namibia also influenced the devolution of wildlife rights to communal landholders, leading to the development of communal conservancies. Following Namibian independence

[27] Interestingly, however, these authors report that while private land contains 88 percent of the country's total wildlife stock numbers, it only contains 69 percent of the total wildlife asset value. They explain that, "The asset value per head of wildlife on protected and communal land was three times higher than that on private land. Although there has been a lot of investment in wildlife on private land, this has mostly involved plains game and not high-value key species" (45).

in 1990, the government and other stakeholders sought to provide communal-area rural communities similar rights to use and benefit from wildlife as private landowners (Jones and Murphree 2001: 42). The Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 made this possible by granting communal landholders conditional wildlife rights through the formation of communal conservancies. Prior to the formation of Namibia's first communal conservancy in 1998, groups of private landowners had already been experimenting with similar institutions for the management of common-pool wildlife.

Emergence of Freehold Conservancies

After gaining proprietorship over wildlife on their land, private landowners still faced the challenge of managing this "fugitive" common-pool resource. As explained in Chapter One, common-pool resources are shared and valued resources that exhibit two important characteristics: excludability and subtractability. This means that their use is often difficult or impossible to regulate, and each time someone uses the resource, it limits or subtracts from others (Ostrom 2000: 337). Wildlife is also a "fugitive" resource, meaning that it migrates and moves across the boundaries of individually owned land. Although private landowners held extensive rights to the wildlife on their land, the risk of overexploitation remained.

In response to concerns about overuse, some landowners began to erect high game fences, but this approach impedes migration and fragments habitat. As an alternative to enclosure, some landowners agreed to work together. Others pursued collaboration for anti-poaching, improved wildlife management and conservation, a reduction in conflict, along with enhanced opportunities for hunting and tourism. In 1992, a voluntary association of neighboring landowners established Namibia's first freehold conservancy, drawing on a model developed on private land in South Africa (de Jager 1996; Wels 2003). Called Ngarongombe Conservancy, its name derived from the Herero word for eland—the species at the center of collective action. More detail on the emergence of this conservancy is provided in Chapter Five.

Since the early 1990s, Namibian landowners have established 23 conservancies, comprising more than three million hectares of privately owned land (CANAM 2010). Most of these conservancies are in the central and north-central parts of the country (see Figure 4). In 1996, an umbrella organization known as the Conservancy Association of Namibia (CANAM) was established to support the growing number of conservancies. Table 2 lists the freehold conservancies registered with CANAM in 2010.

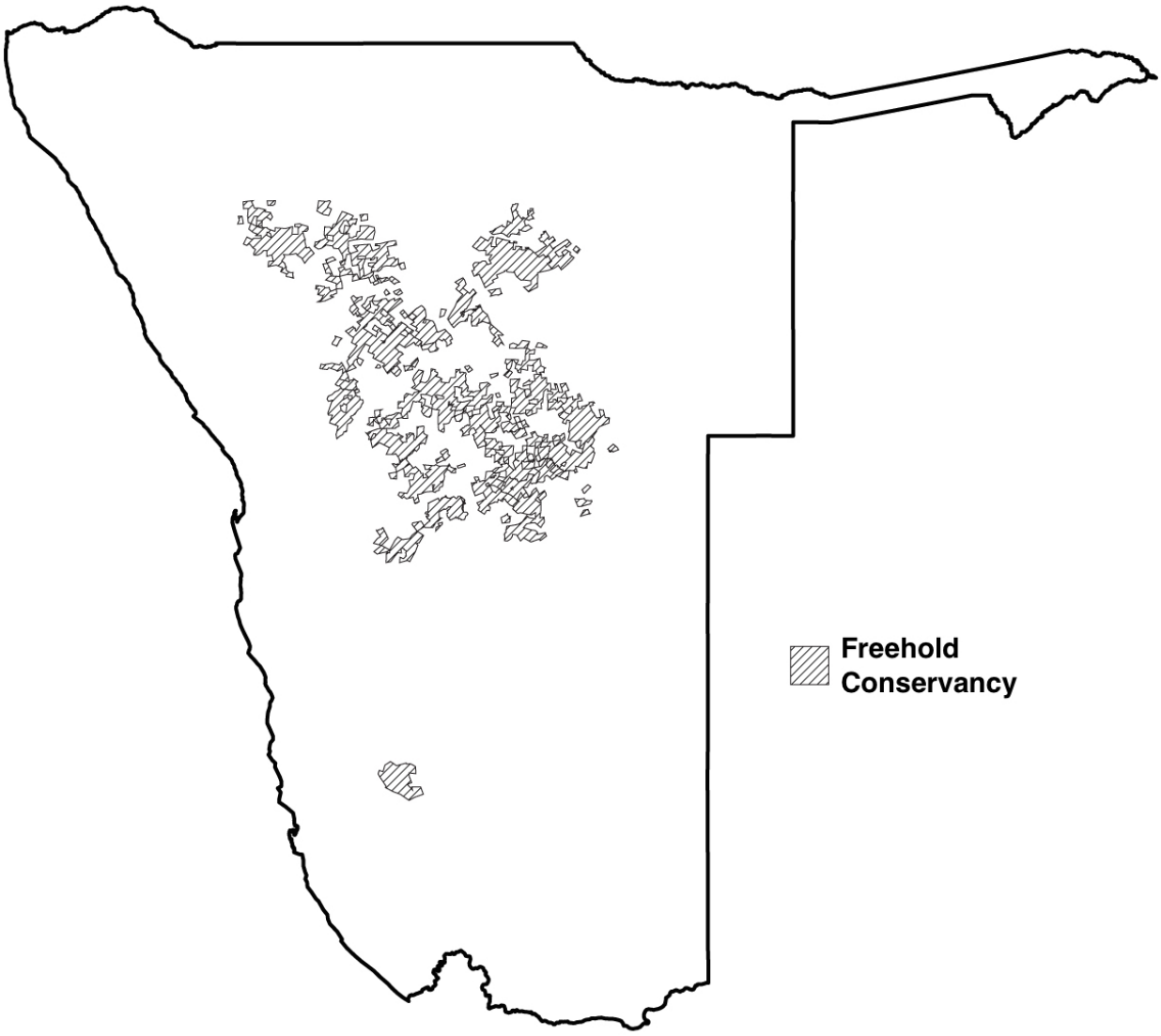

Figure 4: Location of Freehold Conservancies in Namibia*, source: EIS of Namibia, the-eis.com*

Table 2: Freehold Conservancies in Namibia[28]

Conservancy Name	Size (hectares)	Number of Members	Number of Farms
Auas Oanab	105,664	16	14
Black Nossob	209,192	28	38
Dordabis	169,353	20	24
Etosha	442,574	56	85
Hochfeld	97,261	16	16
Kalkfeld	449,974	59	86
Kaoko-Etosha	70,995	12	13
Khomas-Hochland	150,467	19	20
Namatanga	126,550	17	20
Ngarangombe	78,967	12	16
Okawi	153,000	19	24
Omitara	114,784	13	24
Otavi Mountain	79,178	12	12
Ovipuka	102,829	13	17
Sandveld	94,903	12	23
Seeis	283,344	31	57
Swakoptal	132,714	21	25
Tiras Mountain	98,237	4	6
Waterberg	196,449	8	35

Source: Data from CANAM (2010).

By working together, freehold conservancy members have the potential to increase the scale and coordination of resource management, allowing for greater connectivity and heterogeneity of habitat, a wider range of species, higher value land and wildlife uses more conducive to conservation, greater ecological resilience, reduced reliance on primary production, along with opportunities for wildlife-based economies of scale

[28] This list only includes conservancies registered with CANAM and included in CANAM (2010). Some freehold conservancies choose not to join or choose to leave CANAM.

(Lindsey, Romañach, and Davies-Mostert 2009; Bond et al. 2004). Although some conservancy founders recognized this potential and established conservancies to improve wildlife management and conservation, this is not why many other landowners chose to join. Their motivations—related to rumor, fear, and the politics of land—must be considered to fully understand the emergence of freehold conservancies.

Dominant Narrative

The dominant narrative about the history of freehold conservancies is that collective action emerged as a rational response to the devolution of wildlife rights. Freehold conservancies are portrayed simply as the result of a recognition of the financial, economic, and ecological benefits of working together. This narrative, found throughout the literature on wildlife use and conservation in southern Africa, explains that by giving wildlife "value", the devolution of wildlife rights provided landowners with incentive to manage and conserve the wildlife on their land, thereby creating the conditions for the emergence of freehold conservancies. My argument is not that this dominant narrative is incorrect, it is just incomplete. After outlining this dominant narrative, I draw attention to additional factors illuminated by an ethnographic approach to research.

One of the first and often cited articles on freehold conservancies explains their emergence as the result of landowners' recognition of the

benefits of working together. De Jager (1996) states that "individual farmers have realised that it would be advantageous to pool natural and financial resources to form a larger unit of land on which to carry out integrated management practices." The main objective of a conservancy, according to the author, a former game ranger and "conservation scientist," is the "conservation of wildlife on combined land." He explained that, "on commercial farmland, especially in the northern regions, farmers are experiencing problems with migrating game populations. Migratory species like oryx, springbok, warthog, hartebeest, eland and kudu are not restricted by ordinary stockproof fencing. This results in over- and underutilisation, causing friction between farmers about the ownership, use and financial benefits from game. These problems can often be overcome with a combined wildlife management and utilisation strategy."

According to Bond et al. (2004: 33), "the fact that highly individualist landholders are overcoming the transaction costs of working together reinforces the importance of scale, and points to the sub-optimal nature of fragmented and fenced wildlife properties." As these authors explain, conservancies are a response to conclusions about the problems associated with fencing including habitat fragmentation, limits on wildlife mobility, and burdensome cost.

Child (2009: 106) suggests that, "collective action by landholders through the formation of conservancies is a rational financial response" to

the potential for increased profit from economies of scale and increases in the number and diversity of wildlife. In the same volume, Barnes and Jones (2009: 119) cite de Jager (1996), explaining that, "in the late 1980s, a number of individual freehold farmers realized that their individual farm units were not large enough for successful game farming in Namibia's arid environment and began to discuss the possibility of pooling the management of their land, human, financial and wildlife resources to improve wildlife production." These authors imply that freehold conservancies emerged from a recognition of the importance of wildlife mobility and flexibility over large tracts of land in arid, unpredictable environments.

This dominant narrative applies to the initial formation of Namibia's first freehold conservancy, and while some conservancy founders were motivated by the benefits of collaborative wildlife management and conservation, many other landowners joined conservancies for reasons seldom discussed in the literature. These reasons are at the center of an additional narrative about the emergence of freehold conservancies.

Additional Narrative

This additional narrative is that collective action among landowners was driven not merely by policy change, incentives, or ecological concerns, but also by rumor, fear of government, and the politics of land. Incorporating this narrative into the story of freehold conservancies helps to

provide a more complete, yet also complex, picture of these groups. It also helps conservancy members tell *their* story, a story with reverberations and implications for the future.

My claim about an additional narrative is based on participant observation and interviews with freehold conservancy members over a year of ethnographic fieldwork. These interviews took place not only with conservancy founders, leaders and outspoken proponents, but also ordinary members who are oftentimes much less involved, prioritize livestock production over wildlife-based lands uses, and are less connected to the broader conservation community. These were often the landowners who were motivated to join by factors other than a recognition of the benefits of collaborative wildlife management and conservation. I believe that their motivations, experiences, and voices are underrepresented in the literature.

By cultivating trust and rapport over an extended period, which often involved repeated interviews and interaction in the everyday lives of landowners, I also believe that my ethnographic approach to research facilitated discussion of highly sensitive, politically-charged topics such as land reform. This approach contrasts with the relatively quick, formal interviews and highly structured questionnaires used by other researchers that I observed during my fieldwork. Unlike these researchers, my lack of affiliations with wildlife conservation organizations (as discussed in Chapter

2) likely contributed to opportunities to hear another narrative[29]. In contrast to the dominant narrative in the literature, I repeatedly heard a different story from landowners about the emergence of conservancies. This story begins with a rumor.

Around the time of Namibian independence in 1990, a rumor began to spread among white landowners. This rumor claimed that the government was planning to "take back" the ownership of wildlife on private land. According to this rumor, landowners could protect their land and wildlife rights by joining a conservancy.

As one conservancy member explained, as we drove around his farm in an old pickup, "I joined the conservancy to conserve the game, but there was also a rumor of a law that government was going to pass that said all game will be owned by the government, and the government would give permits to anyone. We were afraid of blacks with permits hunting on our land, and later whites too. Someone from [the Directorate of] Nature Conservation advised us to form a conservancy."

[29] For these reasons, I am skeptical about findings in Lindsey (2011: 22) on the reasons respondents reported joining conservancies. Nearly three quarters of all respondents claimed to join either "for improved/co-ordinated wildlife management" or "to conserve wildlife," while little more than five percent reportedly joined "due to fear that government would take over ownership of wildlife on isolated farms" or "due to a belief that membership of a conservancy would provide protection from loss of land during land reform." These results not do not reflect my findings and experience, and possibly underrepresent these latter reasons due, in part, to methods and affiliations. This skepticism is also based on several days spent accompanying and observing one of the study's interviewers.

Our conversation also emphasized the importance of considering the social and political context in which this rumor emerged. We stood along a railroad line that runs through his farm, on which he has lived since the early 1980s. “It was turning the time when there were terrorist attacks and the land prices were low.” Pointing down the tracks, which vanished into the distance, he explained, “There was a group of terrorists that walked down along the railroad tracks and the other farmer before me decided he had enough, so he sold it for a really cheap price.”

As this story suggests, the 1980s and early ‘90s were particularly tense times for white landowners in Namibia. The collapse of apartheid and the emergence of a black majority state left many whites feeling vulnerable, fearing the possibility of armed conflict and a violent, race-based land reform process. Some landowners began to prepare for this conflict by building guard towers, erecting tall barbed wire fences, and stockpiling weapons. On one farm, for example, after a hearty lunch the farmer asked me to have a seat in the living room because he wanted to show me something. He returned from a back room and handed me a heavy automatic rifle, which he proudly explained was one of the many weapons he planned to use to defend his land. On this and many other farms, the defensive infrastructure stands as a reminder to the tensions and fears of the past. These fears, however, have not entirely gone away.

During my fieldwork, landowners frequently spoke about the impact of this powerful rumor and the role that fear played in their decision to join a conservancy. A member of Kalkfeld Conservancy's management council explained to me that, "After independence, there was a rumor of a new law that said game would belong to the state unless people were in a conservancy. We formed the conservancy for self-protection against the government. With that law, Sam Nujoma [a former revolutionary leader and first President of Namibia] could come and hunt, and anyone could apply to hunt and come onto the farm."

A member of Black Nossob Conservancy stated that, "It's difficult to say why the conservancy was founded." He speculated that some landowners involved in trophy hunting wanted to hunt on other farms in the area. Although he was unsure about the motivations of other landowners, his own reason was clear. He said, "I joined because of fear of government taking rights." This landowner, like many others I interviewed, continued in our discussion to express his disillusionment with conservancies and the problems caused by a lack of legal recognition (this topic is detailed in Chapter 5).

While some landowners were motivated to join conservancies for reasons related to resource management and conservation, many others were driven by the politics of land and wildlife. This combination of factors in the emergence of conservancies was often mentioned by conservancy

leaders. For example, I interviewed a conservancy leader in Kamanjab, accompanied by an ordinary member who described himself as "*just* a cattle farmer" whose main interest in the conservancy is protecting game from the government. The conservancy leader explained two reasons why their conservancy was started. "One is that a few years ago we had an elephant problem and we wanted to figure out how to manage it. The second is that there was a proposed government bill to take wildlife back. We don't want to give ownership back to the government. Since the ownership of game went to landowners, the price for game has gone up."

In another interview with a conservancy founder and leader, he questioned whether his conservancy would have grown in membership without the influence of rumor and fear. He explained that, in the mid-1990s, he became concerned about overexploitation of game and wanted to promote sustainable utilization in his community. Although an improvement in wildlife management was his aim, he recognized that it was not the motivating factor for many neighboring landowners. "There was a lot of fear that government was going to take back the ownership of game," he said. "If there wasn't pressure, I don't think people would have joined."

In this conservancy and others across the country, many ordinary members were motivated by rumor, fear, and politics, contributing to the widespread disillusionment detailed in Chapter Five. Insecurity and the politics of land, therefore, contributed to the emergence of freehold

conservancies and form an important part of their story. As this last conservancy member articulated, “It’s very difficult in Namibia to have a long-term vision with government like this. I don’t know as a white farmer if I will be here in 10 years.” These sentiments reflect an additional narrative that must be taken seriously.

Chapter Four

KALKFELD CONSERVANCY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

As I traveled around the country conducting interviews and visiting conservancy members, I would explain that I was based in Otjiwarongo and spent much of my time in Kalkfeld Conservancy. Their responses were often very similar. Kalkfeld Conservancy is working well, a model conservancy, the best conservancy in Namibia they would say. Although conservancy members often expressed their disillusionment and disappointment in conservancies (as detailed in Chapter Five), they also held the members of Kalkfeld in high regard. One landowner told me, "Kalkfeld is going well, but they're conservationists anyway." He added, "Kalkfeld Conservancy is one of the successes because people get along and get together. They don't prescribe too much, there is still a lot of freedom, and they're conservationists anyway." Another landowner explained that his conservancy looks at Kalkfeld as a model for collective action. "We say, 'Kalkfeld Conservancy is quite active and going well'." In contrast to his conservancy, in which growing disillusionment has stifled cooperation, Kalkfeld presents an alternative. Landowners often attributed its success to a tightly woven social fabric and a strong sense of shared German-Namibian identity. For many conservancy members that I interviewed, Kalkfeld Conservancy represented, as one landowner exclaimed, a "conservation success story".

Kalkfeld Conservancy is one of approximately 23 freehold conservancies in Namibia. Although I conducted research with members of many of these groups, I also carried out an in-depth, extended case study of Kalkfeld Conservancy. This conservancy is one of the largest and most active conservancies in the country. As these comments of conservancy members attest, Kalkfeld is unique in its level of participation, cohesion, and cooperation. Yet, it also faces many of the same challenges as other freehold conservancies across the country.

This chapter begins by describing the land and wildlife resources of the conservancy. It describes the attributes of the community and their patterns of land and wildlife use, followed by an overview of the conservancy structure, decision-making arrangements, activities, and debates. It then documents patterns of interaction through a series of profiles of conservancy members and other stakeholders including farmworkers, a nonmember neighboring landowner, and a nearby resettlement farmer. This chapter focuses on the narratives and ordinary lived experiences of conservancy stakeholders, prioritizing insights gained throughout long-term participant observation.

By presenting an ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy, this chapter illustrates how freehold conservancy members have transformed their relationship to wildlife and each other. It shows how neighboring landowners have used common property as a tool for the management and

conservation of common-pool wildlife on privately owned ranchland. It also demonstrates, however, that there are important stakeholders who do not fully share in the benefits of conservancies.

Kalkfeld Conservancy

Kalkfeld Conservancy is located in the north-central part of Namibia, near Otjiwarongo (see Figure 5). In 2010, it comprised 59 members, 86 farms and 449,974 hectares, spanning the boundaries of Erongo, Kunene, and Otjozondjupa regions. Notable geographic features include the Paresis Mountains and the ephemeral Ozomgombo and Erundu Rivers. Dinosaur tracks and San rock art are also located within the conservancy. Kalkfeld Conservancy gets its name from the small nearby settlement of Kalkfeld. This German place-name, of which there are many throughout this part of Namibia, literally means "lime field".[30]

[30] See Walther (2002: 87) for more information on German place-names in Namibia.

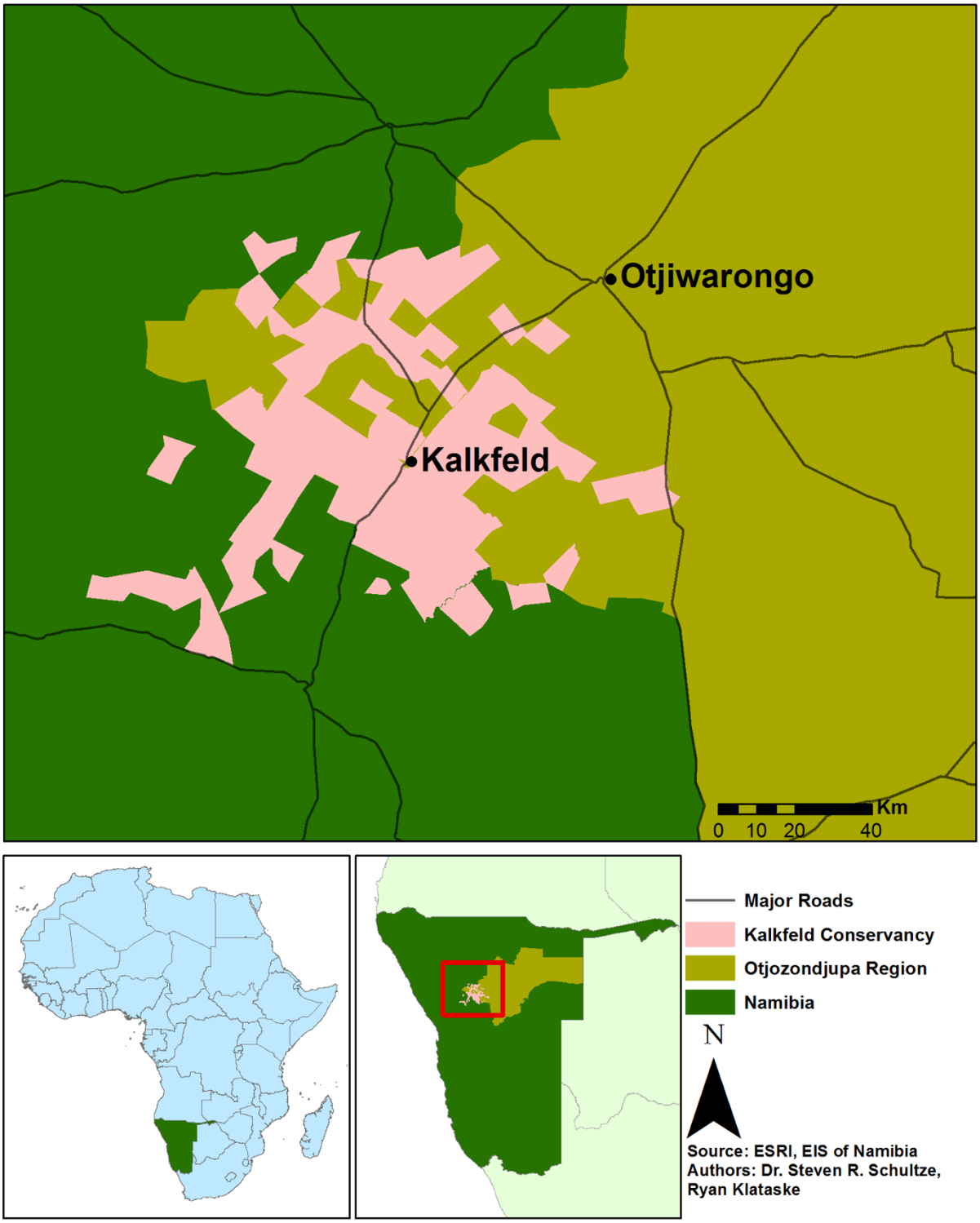

Figure 5: Location of Kalkfeld Conservancy

The landscape of Kalkfeld Conservancy is characterized by *Acacia* tree-and-shrub savanna, with good availability of grazing and browse (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 98-104). Bush encroachment is relatively severe. Many landowners report that the density of woody plants has dramatically altered the landscape during their lifetimes. One conservancy member noted that the name of his farm, on which he constantly battles bush encroachment, translates to "can't get a stick to make a *kraal*". He exclaimed, "It used to be wide open, with springbok everywhere." Much of the art hanging on the walls of farmhouses also sheds light on this landscape transformation.[31] For cheetahs, which rely on open habitat and can suffer eye injuries from thorns, bush encroachment is also a serious problem.

Yet, most of Namibia's cheetahs (the world's largest population) are found on private land in the north-central part of the country (Marker 2003; Marker et al. 2010), including Kalkfeld Conservancy, which supports a wealth of wildlife resources. Oryx, kudu, and warthog are abundant game species and commonly utilized by conservancy members. Table 3 shows the estimated density of key game species in comparison to other conservancies. Other game species include hartebeest, eland, giraffe, springbok, and impala[32]. An occasional elephant also wanders through the

[31] The analysis of landscape paintings, historical photography, and other art could be a useful avenue for research in the study of bush encroachment and landscape change in Namibia.

[32] The full list of game species for which the conservancy tracks population estimates and utilization data include: kudu, oryx, hartebeest, springbok,

conservancy, sometimes causing damage to fences and other infrastructure. Some of the highest concentrations of oryx and kudu in the country are found in this area, along with relatively high densities of cheetah and leopard. The overall diversity and abundance of large herbivorous mammals, as well as overall terrestrial diversity, are also relatively high (Mendelsohn et al. 2009: 118-123). Figure 6 shows the relative abundance of oryx (gemsbok) and kudu, along with the overall abundance of large herbivorous mammals, in relation to freehold conservancies.[33]

Table 3: Estimated Density of Key Game Species in Kalkfeld Conservancy in Comparison to Other Freehold Conservancies

Species	**Kalkfeld Conservancy Density / 1000 ha**	**Conservancy Average Density / 1000 ha**
Oryx	26.01	25.50
Hartebeest	7.38	15.31
Warthog	20.46	11.96
Eland	2.78	3.37
Kudu	21.29	14.81

Source: CANAM (2010), note: Kalkfeld Conservancy data is from 2007, while the average is generated from data reported for 2005-2008. Data are available from 13 conservancies, which does not account for all freehold conservancies. Averages include oryx, hartebeest, and kudu numbers from all 13 conservancies, but only 11/13 and 8/13 reported warthog and eland numbers respectively.

warthog, eland, steenbok, Damara dik-dik, duiker, klipspringer, Burchell's zebra, Hartmann's zebra, common impala, blesbok, waterbuck, giraffe, ostrich, blue wildebeest, black wildebeest, leopard, cheetah, caracal, jackal, hyena, and baboon.

[33] The overall abundance is formed from data on springbok, kudu, elephant, hartebeest, mountain zebra, Burchell's zebra, giraffe, and gemsbok, as described in Mendelsohn et al. (2009).

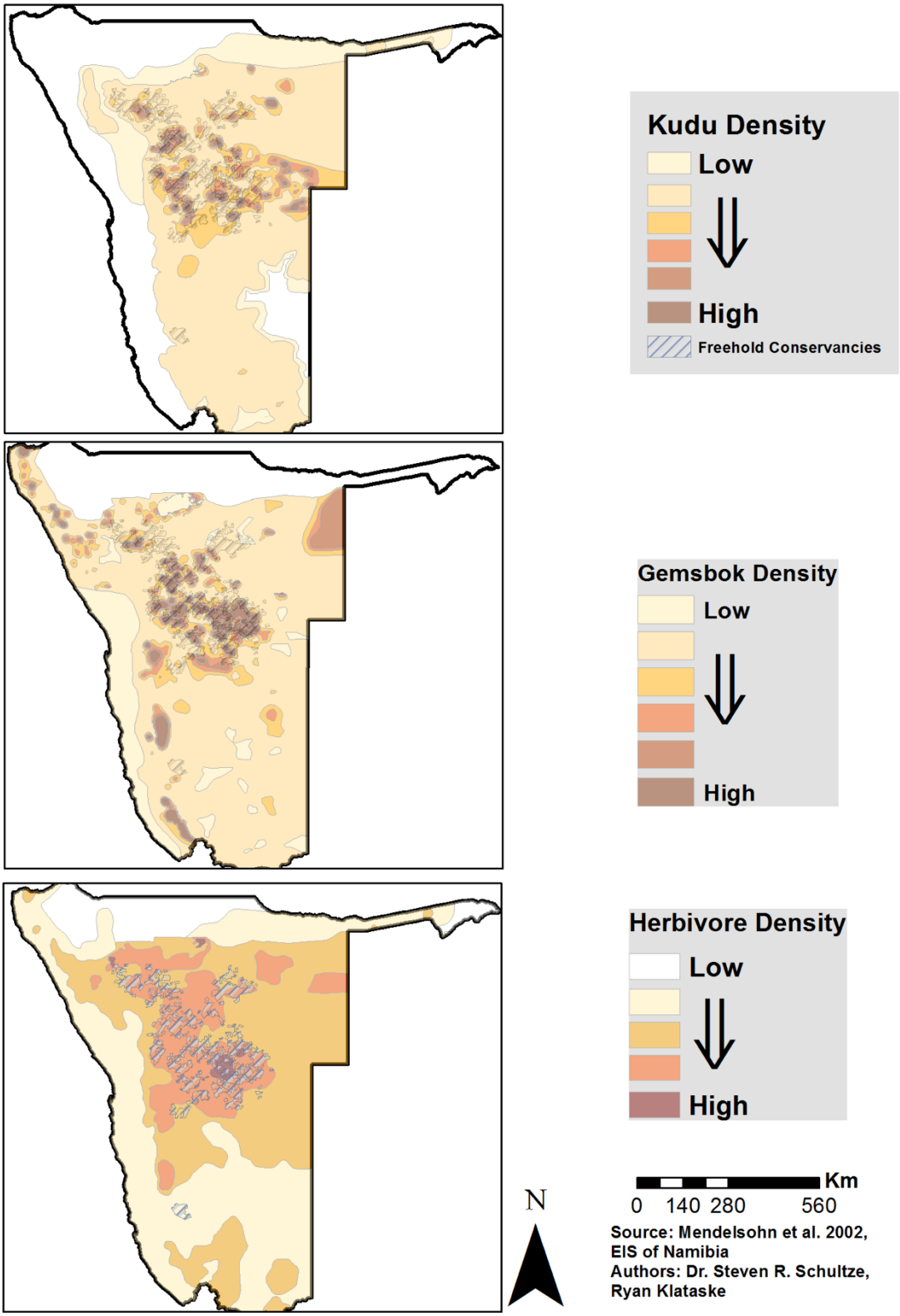

Figure 6: Animal Abundance in Relation to Freehold Conservancies

Like most other freehold conservancies, Kalkfeld Conservancy consists entirely of European-descended private landowners. A considerable proportion of these landowners are German-speaking ranchers whose claims to land often stretch back to German colonialism and the arrival of the *Schutztruppe*.[34] There are also several Afrikaans-speaking members who do not speak German, and although the rest of the members make an effort to conduct meetings in Afrikaans, the conversations sometimes switch to German. At one meeting I attended in which this became a problem, the Afrikaans speaker repeatedly asked for Afrikaans to be spoken, and the group willingly obliged.

Land use in Kalkfeld Conservancy is similar to other freehold conservancies. It involves a mix of extensive livestock production and wildlife-based lands uses including trophy hunting and tourism, game ranching, live sales, and meat production. This ranges from exclusively livestock production on some farms to predominately wildlife-based land uses on others. Most landowners practice a mix of both. Some landowners also produce hay and engage in charcoal production as a means of combating bush encroachment.

Kalkfeld Conservancy is governed by a management council and is structured into four regional, semi-autonomous sub-conservancies, each with their own management committees. Figure 7 shows a map collected

[34] The *Schutztruppe* was the name for German colonial armed forces.

from the conservancy in 2010 that highlights some of its member farms and four sub-conservancies. There is an annual general meeting (AGM) for the conservancy as a whole, along with sub-conservancy AGMs and both council and committee meetings. The conservancy also hosts occasional workshops on topics such as game counting, elephant behavior, and vulture conservation.

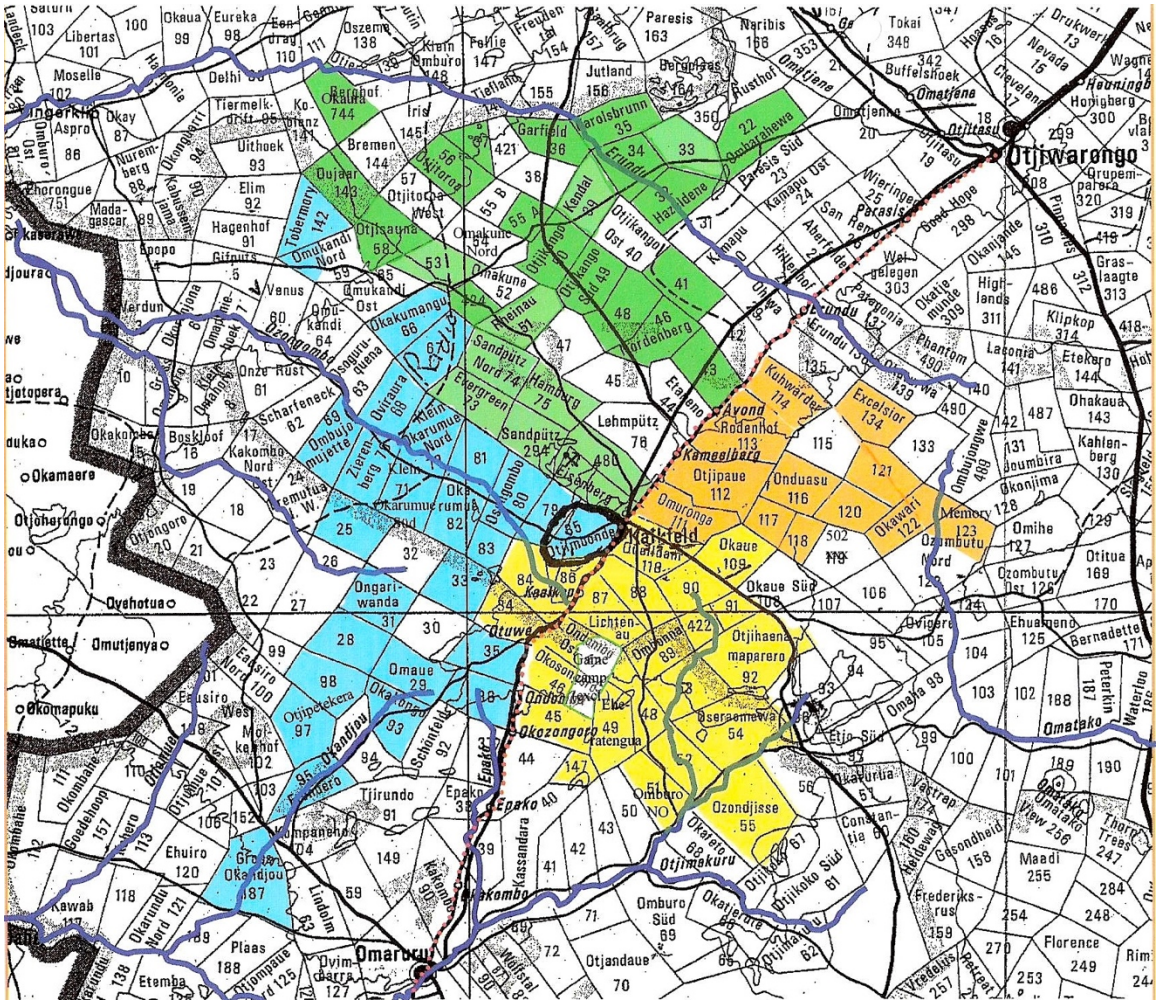

Figure 7: Kalkfeld Conservancy and its Farms and Sub-Conservancies

The conservancy was established in 2002 with a constitution that states "that in order to improve the commercial viability of our farms as the basis of our livelihood, we need to diversify our income through the promotion of an extensive, co-operative and long-term nature conservation and sustainable utilization strategy, we need to maximize efficiency through joint action and we need to safeguard and consolidate our freedom of decision-making, and therefore we agree to establish a conservancy." The objectives of the conservancy, as specified in the constitution, include:

1. To establish a sustainable and co-operative conservation and utilization strategy of wildlife and other natural resources in the conservancy area;
2. To protect, regulate and improve the status and diversity of fauna, flora and environment;
3. To initiate the re-introduction into the conservancy of wildlife which was indigenous to the area or which can adapt to the area;
4. To manage all wildlife within the area, especially the rare or endangered species;
5. To co-ordinate the sustainable utilization of fauna, flora and water in the conservancy area;
6. To generate interest and active participation by all inhabitants of the conservancy area in wildlife conservation, wildlife and other natural resource management;

7. To draw up a dynamic management plan for the conservancy to deal with the objectives of the conservancy
8. To liase [*sic*] and co-operate with the ministry responsible for nature conservation;
9. To co-operate with and to assist, financially or otherwise, any organisation in furtherance of the conservation of wildlife.

This document also specifies conservancy membership, management, powers of the council, powers and responsibilities of the management committees, finance and funding, meetings, and dissolution. The first annexure outlines rules for cooperative game management and coordination of wildlife management, settlement of game, fees, levies on utilization, quotas, and the utilization of natural resources other than game. Two additional annexures address discipline and crime prevention.

Members fund the conservancy through one-time registration fees, annual membership fees, levies on utilization (e.g. N$30 per trophy), and raffles for the use of conservancy-owned free-roaming game. Most of these funds are used to conduct annual game counts and to purchase and translocate game. For example, the conservancy has established a thriving herd of impala and introduced eland bulls. In 2009, I took part in a conservancy game count in which several members worked together with pilots of an ultralight airplane to conduct an aerial survey. Funds are also

occasionally allocated for special projects such as the tracking of oryx to establish migration patterns.

Conservancy meetings often begin with mention of rainfall, an important topic to farmers all around the world, but especially so for landowners in a highly unpredictable environment that receives on average 250-450mm of rainfall annually. Based on my observations and review of reports, the methods and results of game counts are one of the primary topics of discussion. There is often a report on wildlife population numbers and the impacts of diseases including rabies, intestinal worms, and malignant catarrhal fever. Debates commonly center on conservation and utilization of both game and non-game species. This includes debates about hunting restrictions and rest periods, game fencing and connectivity, translocation and reintroduction, and the issues of problem animals and human-wildlife conflict. Ethics and hunting practices are other common areas of concern. In 2010, for example, conservancy members addressed the issue of a new national moratorium on cheetah and leopard hunting. As the chairman explained, this moratorium resulted from increasing concerns over unethical hunting practices—including the use of dogs—which threatened Namibia's international reputation for ethical trophy hunting. He wrote in his report, "This is one more example of certain individuals [*sic*] greed for personal short term gain, hereby ignoring the wellbeing of a whole industry. The result will be the indiscriminate killings of our valuable spotted cats,

because the economic benefits of utilization are cut. I sincerely hope that these new regulations can be streamlined in a way, that it benefits particularly these vulnerable populations."

Finally, it is important to mention that another prominent topic of discussion among members is the contentious issue of legislation and legal recognition. Without legal recognition for freehold conservancies, many members believe that their efforts are failing or falling short, leading to disillusionment and declining participation. This issue and its impact on conservancies is outlined in more detail in Chapter Five. As Kalkfeld Conservancy's secretary wrote—in all capital letters—in a report to the Conservancy Association of Namibia (CANAM), "IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR A CONSERVANCY TO INSPIRE MEMBERS TO PUT IN MORE OF AN EFFORT, AS THERE IS NOT LEGISLATION IN PLACE TO HELP AND GUIDE THE CONSERVANCIES."

The next section of this chapter profiles a series of conservancy stakeholders including members, farmworkers, a nonmember neighboring landowner, and a nearby resettlement farmer. It begins by introducing Ulrich[35], a conservancy member whose land I lived on for several months and visited frequently throughout my year in Namibia. Figure 8 provides a simplified visual diagram of the complex relationships between Kalkfeld Conservancy and other stakeholders mentioned in this chapter.

[35] Ulrich and other names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

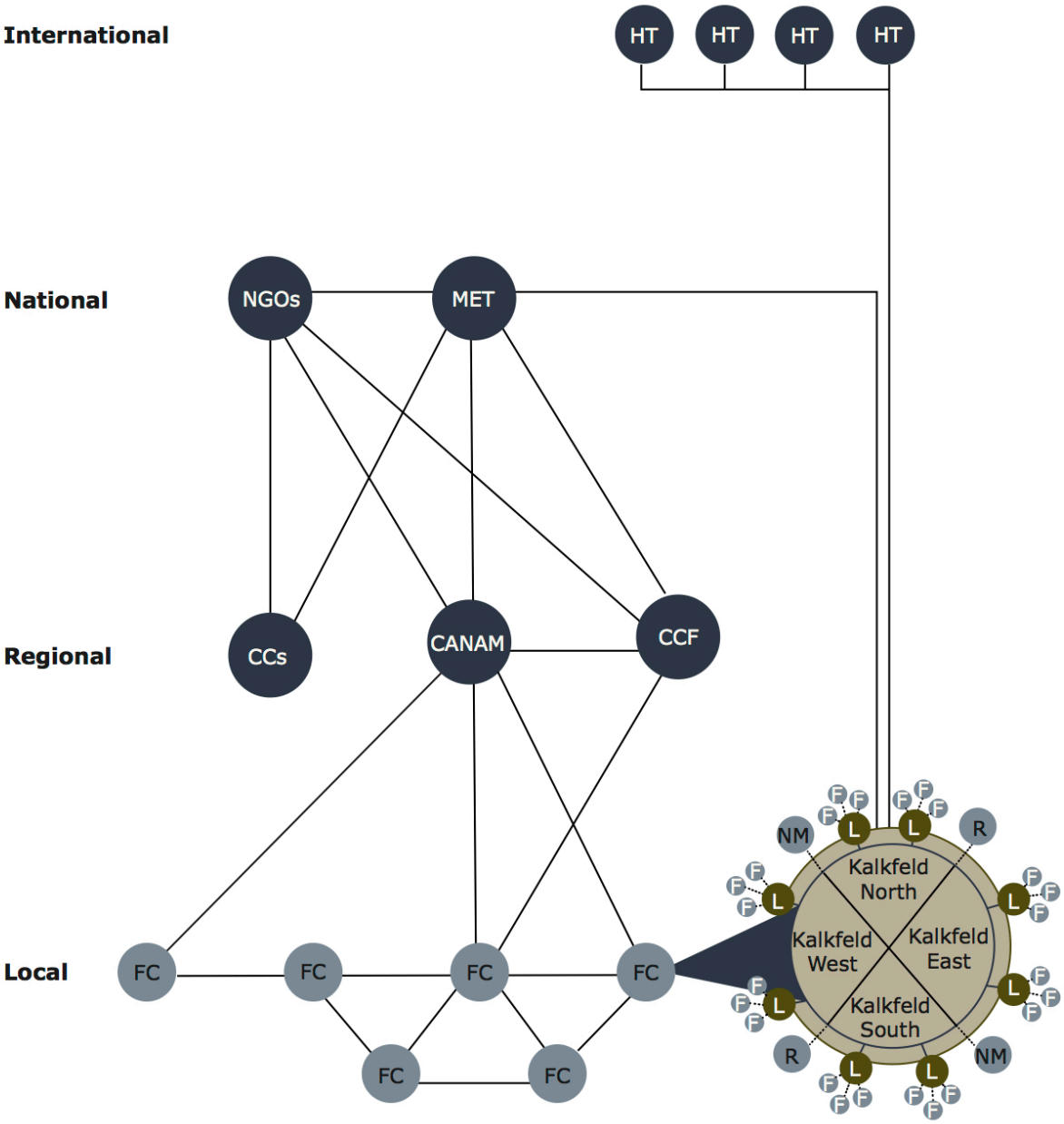

Figure 8: Kalkfeld Conservancy and its Relationship to Stakeholders[36]

Profiles of Conservancy Stakeholders

Ulrich: Kalkfeld Conservancy Member

I sat on Ulrich's front porch almost every evening watching the sun go down. It was a small porch on the front of a house, separate from the main farmhouse located at the center of the farmyard. A rough, rocky driveway passes through a gate and circles around a towering eucalyptus tree. The farmyard forms a large square with several buildings including a machine shop, a shed for tractors and trucks, a small guesthouse, and a gas tank.

[36] This diagram attempts to illustrate the structure of Kalkfeld Conservancy and its relationships to other stakeholders. This is a simplified representation, which focuses primarily on the stakeholders described in this chapter and does not necessarily include all stakeholders or relationships. In the bottom right corner, it shows Kalkfeld Conservancy, which is divided into four sub-conservancies. The conservancy is formed from the interaction of individual landowners, all of whom are interconnected. Each landowner is connected to farmworkers. In contrast to landowners, dashed lines leading to the conservancy indicate unofficial connections, highlighting one of the points of this chapter, which is that conservancies have not incorporated important black and indigenous stakeholders including farmworkers and resettlement farmers. The conservancy is then connected to other freehold conservancies. Kalkfeld Conservancy and some (but not all) other freehold conservancies are members of CANAM. CCF is an influential and controversial stakeholder in the area, which participates in a conservancy and takes part in CANAM. While most conservancies do not necessarily have a direct connection to CCF, many members—particularly in nearby Kalkfeld Conservancy—have strong opinions on cheetahs and the efforts of CCF, which impact their interactions with cheetahs and other predators. In my observations, other nongovernmental organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) interact with CANAM and play a much larger role with communal conservancies than freehold conservancies. Freehold conservancies, CANAM, and individual landowners interact with MET for various reason including permits, policy issues etc. Finally, international hunters and tourists visit and stay with individual landowners and provide a vital source of wildlife-based income.

There is a place for hanging and slaughtering game or livestock, and near the front of the main farmhouse is a cold room built by forming two brick walls filled with charcoal through which air can pass through. A small pool, clothesline, and the guesthouse where I stayed are situated to the side of the farmhouse. Past the guest house stood an old, massive elephant skull.

Our daily porch-sitting ritual usually began in the early evening after all the day's work was complete. Ulrich would sit in his chair and turn on a small radio to the evening German-language newscast. I would get a small woven basket and head to the cold room to grab us each two tall Tafel lagers. I would bring back the basket and sit in my chair next to Ulrich. From the basket, I would use a springbok horn bottle opener to open the bottles of beer while Ulrich lit his cigarette. At first, we would sit quietly and just listen to the newscast, and then we would talk, drinking our beers until his wife or daughter called us for dinner.

From this spot on the front porch I could look out at the open field where the warthogs often scampered about and baboons ambled along in the distance along the fence line. Doves flew around us and settled into the eucalyptus tree. I would often watch the smoke rise up from the fires of the farmworkers and their families in their small village just beyond a meadow outside the farmstead. I would listen to the children laugh and take pleasure in their sounds of joy. Sometimes, Ulrich would ask me to fetch us a couple more beers.

Ulrich is middle-aged and has lived on this farm his whole life. His farm is one of the oldest white-owned farms in Namibia, originally acquired by an ancestor in the *Schutzstruppe*. During World War II, his father was taken from the farm like some German landowners and temporarily interned by the South African government. Ulrich later took over the farm from his father. Growing up on the farm, Ulrich played with the farmworker children and like many Germans growing up on farms, Ulrich learned to speak fluent Otjiherero. One of the interesting dynamics of farm life in Namibia is that white children often grow up playing with and befriending farmworker children but then, at a certain age, the relationship drastically changes when the white landowner becomes the boss and the black workers become subordinate. In total, Ulrich speaks four languages fluently—German, Afrikaans, English, and Otjiherero. With his family and some of his workers he prefers to speak German. Ulrich speaks in a deep raspy voice and his skin shows his years of life and work on the farm. It is dark and wrinkled and looks like leather. He wears a short sleeve shirt tucked into shorts and high, thick socks inside his leather boots. Almost always there is a cigarette resting between his fingers.

Like many Kalkfeld Conservancy members, Ulrich makes a living from both livestock production and wildlife-based land uses. He is widely known as a breeder of Simmental (known in Namibia as Simmentaler) bulls and he

hosts hunters and other tourists on his farm. Trophy hunting constitutes an important part of his livelihood.

During the months I lived on Ulrich's farm, I took part in these activities and his everyday work. I would often wake up early and join him in the kitchen for coffee while he smoked a cigarette. We would then go out in front of the farmhouse where he would address his workers and assign jobs for the day.

I often joined Ulrich and his workers to tend cattle and related tasks. This included vaccinating, castrating, tagging, and milking cattle, as well as providing supplements, fixing fence, checking water points, and delivering a bull to a farm northwest of Otjiwarongo. After we loaded up the bull into an open-sided trailer, we drove slowly down the main street in Otjiwarongo so that, as Ulrich explained, we could show off his prized bull to the town's Herero people. As we drove down main street, I watched as men stopped in their tracks and turned to stare at the bull, pointing and chatting to each other. Other men came out from inside stores to watch as we drove by.

One day after weeks on the farm, Ulrich and his family had to travel to Windhoek and decided to put me in charge of the farm for their four-day trip. I was told that I was the boss and the only person allowed to drive his old Toyota farm truck. By that time, I had already developed close friendships and a high level of trust with most of the farmworkers. Even

though I stressed my role as a researcher, I still became sought out as a source of approval and authority.

One of the workers and I traveled to Otjiwarongo to load up fence posts at the local farm store, and I helped the workers fix machinery and deliver feed to bulls in remote pastures. Many of the workers begged to go to town, so one day I filled up the front bench seat and bed of my truck with workers and we drove to town. Some visited friends or family and most returned with bags of goods from local stores. Over these four days, I experienced a new level of participant observation. During these two trips to town, in particular, I gained new insight into what it might feel like to be a white Namibian landowner, as well as greater empathy and understanding for farmworkers. When I pulled up to the farm store in an old Toyota pickup truck with the farm's cattle breeding logo on its door, wearing my dusty boots and with a worker at my side, I had an odd, and somewhat uncomfortable feeling, that I fit in.

I often asked Ulrich about the conservancy but he always gave me a similarly short and gruff response. He would say something like, “It's just a gentleman's agreement,” “it has no power,” or “it’s just a handsake.” He would often complain that conservancies cannot do anything without legal recognition, yet his words seemed to contrast with his actions. Ulrich was actively involved in his conservancy and he invited me to all the meetings,

which he never missed. He also seemed to deeply value the sense of community and reciprocity that the conservancy represented and entailed.

When a frantic call came in over the CB radio about a nearby wildfire, Ulrich and I jumped in his truck with workers in the back to go join in the collective effort of neighboring landowners. When the conservancy decided to hire pilots with an ultralight plane from South Africa to conduct a game count in the conservancy, Ulrich and I were there to help plan and carry out the count. Ulrich contributed his time and effort to the conservancy, and his approach to wildlife management benefits the collective good of the group. He never erected high game fences and believed that game should roam free. Decades earlier, his father reintroduced giraffes onto the farm and now, through his management, the herd has grown and the population has spread throughout much of the conservancy. Many other members feel pride in this free roaming giraffe population and the conservancy has similarly worked to reintroduce impala in an area of neighboring farms. Like many conservancy members, Ulrich believes that the conservancy is politically powerless, although it is clear that he also believes in the value of working together and has embraced a conservation ethic that fundamentally shapes the way he manages his land and wildlife.

For Ulrich and many other members of Kalkfeld Conservancy, cattle are central to their identity and way of life, yet wildlife-based land uses like trophy hunting and tourism are increasingly essential to making this way of

life possible. Ulrich chooses to manage his land for both cattle and wildlife and values the ecological diversity around him. Although hunting is an important part of his income and the food security of his farm, he sometimes finds himself in conflict with the values and desires of the hunters that help sustain his livelihood. For example, while sitting in a blind with a wealthy Russian trophy hunter, he became very upset when this hunter wanted to shoot a mother baboon carrying its infant on its back. Ulrich also becomes sad, he told me, when trophy hunters pay to shoot a giraffe. For the hunter, it might seem like a thrilling challenge, but for Ulrich, he knows each animal and observes their social interactions.

Many evenings on the farm, Ulrich and I would drive up the rough, rocky driveway from his farmhouse and turn down the sandy country road until we reached a well-worn path that led into the thick thornbush savanna. Eventually, this path led to a large clearing on top of a hill where we would almost always find a group of giraffes. We would turn off the truck and just sit and watch them quietly. They were never startled or skittish, and Ulrich always seemed delighted to see them. We would then return to the house in time to drink a beer and watch the sunset from the porch.

Theodor: Kalkfeld Conservancy Member

I first met Theodor on a float in Otjiwarongo's Karneval parade, mentioned in Chapter 2. We are about the same age and he quickly became

one of my closest friends and trusted key consultants. Theodor is a third-generation German-Namibian. He was born and raised in Otjiwarongo and is incredibly proud to call himself an African and a Namibian. He studied at a university in Germany and immediately discovered how different he felt from his German classmates, and how unique his life was in rural Namibia. Some students would criticize and condemn him as a white African landowner. After living in Germany and briefly in Brazil, he returned to Otjiwarongo, to the family farm he loves and the country he calls home.

Theodor and his family run a tractor dealership in Otjiwarongo. He lives in town but spends most weekends on the farm. Along with his father, he is active in the management of the farm, totaling around 5,000 hectares and managed for both cattle and wildlife. Theodor is also an active member of the conservancy.

Theodor's land is uniquely scenic, with lush open savanna, abundant wildlife, and a view of the Paresis Mountains. It also hosts a small herd of wild donkeys—a legacy of early settlers. The main house and farmstead are located close to the road, which like many farms, is surrounded by a tall barbed wire fence. Bright flowers cover a trellis which welcomes you to the front of the house where there is a large covered porch and a round stone fire pit. A wood-burning stove is built into the corner of the house which heats the water for the day’s use. Near the house, there is a large pigeon coop, cared for by their full-time farm manager—a gruff and fiery old

German-speaking military veteran, who often told stories about his time at war in Angola. Next to the pigeon coop is a pen with ducks and geese that provide eggs for the farm. Beyond the fence, there is a cultivated field where Theodor plants sunflowers. Nearby, an old stone grave marks the remains of a soldier in the German *Schutzstruppe*. A farmworker village is located approximately a quarter mile down the road.

I spent many days and nights on Theodor's farm, mostly on the weekends when his family would leave Otjiwarongo. The farm contributed to the family's livelihood and there was always work to be done, but it also provided an important retreat. It was a place for work and for leisure, for enjoying friends and family, and the wildlife and diversity of habitats they helped shape. Theodor took pride in this wildlife and his stewardship of the land, and in this way, the land played an important role in shaping his identity. While most days we took care of work around the farm, much of our time together was spent watching wildlife, sunsets, and the flames of a fire.

Theodor and I would often drive around the farm checking on cattle, fences, and other infrastructure. Most older landowners took a worker with them to open and close gates, but with Theodor, that was my job, something I was used to from working on a farm with my father. We would stop to check on the old greasy pumps that provided water around the farm, and sometimes, we would open enclosures in the pump to search for

pythons. We sprayed thorn bush with poison, an example of one of his family's habitat management practices. One afternoon, I shot a massive kudu bull with one horn and a gaping hole its side from a poacher’s spear. I also observed other cattle related tasks including vaccinations and pregnancy checks conducted by a visiting rural veterinarian.

Theodor enjoyed this type of farm work but he also loved to explore his farm to look for wildlife and to share this wildlife and the scenic landscape with friends and family. We rode dirt bikes along narrow cattle and game trails allowing us to ride amongst herds of oryx and pass by warthogs and tortoises. There was a dam and a large pond not far from the house. In the evenings, we would often sit in a tower blind on the edge of the pond and watch a herd of springbok graze at the water’s edge. Watching the springbok and working to provide habitat for them gave Theodor immense pride. He would often invite other friends from town and he once hosted extended family from Germany. On these occasions, the farm felt like a party. At sunset, we would often drive to a high hill for a sundowner—a term for drinking a beer while watching the sun go down. We also went for many drives to look for wildlife, both during the day and at night. Theodor had an old bench seat that could be attached to a rack in the bed of a pickup truck which provided a high perch for visitors to sit and look out as we drove around the farm. Many evenings ended around a bonfire, cooking meat, telling stories, and listening to the howls of jackals in the distance.

Herr Sternberg: Kalkfeld Conservancy Member

I first met Herr Sternberg, as I called him, at the Otjiwarongo Rotary Club. He is an old man—in his 80s—and we immediately had a special bond. He was the first person to invite me to his farm, as I described in Chapter 2, and he frequently invited me back during my year in Namibia. We could easily sit and talk for hours, although he was very hard hearing and spoke in a slow, loud voice. His English was limited, and in contrast to the Südwest Deustch spoken by German-Namibians, he explained that he spoke Plattdeutsch from his original home in northern Germany. As a young man, Herr Sternberg sold his dairy farm in Germany and settled with his wife on a much larger ranch north of Otjiwarongo. Coincidentally, around this time, he also visited Chase County, Kansas—near my home and family ranchland—where his friends played piano on a high hilltop in the Flint Hills.

Herr Sternberg's home and farmstead is located down a windy sand road, and his house is surrounded by colorful flowers with the Paresis Mountains as a scenic backdrop. The house is relatively small compared to other landowners, and the front door opens into a narrow living and dining room, with old arm chairs on either side of a radio, and a long wooden table. All around the room, the walls are covered in European-style mounts, horns, and skins. There are several outbuildings beside the house, and further down the road, there is a farmworker village in which sheet metal shacks

face each other in two long rows across the road, like a tiny town's main street.

After my first visit to Herr Sternberg's farm, he learned that I was skilled with a rifle and often invited me back to hunt. Game meat was essential to the food security of his workers and their families and he needed to provide them with an animal every other week. Hunting was becoming increasingly difficult for him, and I was happy to help. Not only was the hunting enjoyable, but it also game me a chance to observe and participate in wildlife use and the ordinary dynamics of life and work on the farm. Herr Sternberg would hand me his old German military rifle, with a worn leather strap and a hazy scope, and I would head off to the same spot each time—a stone blind perched high up on a rocky hillside overlooking a waterhole.

Herr Sternberg managed his land for both cattle and wildlife, and the scene from the blind reflected his approach and their coexistence. The blind looked down upon the waterhole, which gave way to a wide, low-laying plain that stretched around the base of the hill. The grand Paresis Mountains rose in the background. A barbed wire fence ran along the dam on one side of the waterhole, beyond which was a corral and a livestock watering tank. On one side of the fence, cattle often grazed in the tall grass, while on the other side, the waterhole teemed with wildlife. Herds of kudu visited the waterhole, along with dik dik, duiker, warthogs, and baboons. The baboons also sat on fence posts like sentinels on watch, or climbed on the rocks

above the blind, sometimes fervently expressing their displeasure with my presence. Guinea fowl scampered along the water's edge and hornbills squawked in the treetops. One evening, while my father was visiting and sitting next to me in the blind, we watched as a cheetah entered the scene from the tall grass near the livestock tank and stopped to sit on top of the dam, peering out across the waterhole. The cat eventually continued down into the plain, stopping at a "play tree" along the edge used for scent marking. As the cheetah passed by the waterhole, the surrounding landscape was quiet and still.

Dorothy and Philip: Kalkfeld Conservancy Members

I arrived at Dorothy and Philip's farmhouse, surrounded by colorful flowers and shaded by tall trees, and the friendly German-Namibian couple invited me inside[37]. After a cup of coffee together, Philip put on his wide-brimmed hat and we hopped in his pickup truck to tour the farm. One of his farmworkers stood in the bed of the truck and jumped in and out to open and close gates. We stopped to look out over a vast grassland, the result of Philip's ongoing fight against bush encroachment. We walked out into the pasture and Philip proudly described his restoration efforts. There used to be very little grass, he explained. He grew up on this farm and inherited it from

[37] Like many German-Namibians, Dorothy proudly identifies as African. As she explained, "I speak German, but I'm definitely no German!"

his father, who overgrazed it with sheep. Since taking over the farm, Philip has implemented various conservation measures, reduced grazing, and emphasized wildlife-based land uses.

After touring their land, we returned to the farmhouse for lunch. Following a hearty meal, Philip retired to a comfortable chair in the living room to watch tennis and take his routine afternoon nap. This gave me a chance to talk with Dorothy, a member of the conservancy's management council. We sat at the kitchen table and she laid out several photographs and books on Namibia's environment. She pointed out the open landscape of the past and the transformation caused by bush encroachment.

Dorothy described Kalkfeld Conservancy as a "conservation success story", but after many years on the council, she sees many ways that the conservancy can improve. She voiced her opposition to game fences and explained that working together provides an alternative. Dorothy also stated that, in contrast to Philip’s father, wildlife-based land uses now form an integral part of their livelihood.

Sometimes we virtually live off of hunting income.

I asked if they could live off their land without the income from hunting and tourism.

No, but it depends on what you call ‘living’.

Dorothy spoke about how their perceptions of wildlife have changed, and how wildlife is now valued. This shift in the value of wildlife was a

common narrative in my interviews with conservancy members and was often attributed to the legislative changes (discussed in Chapter 3) that granted wildlife rights to private landowners. She also repeated the narrative that freehold conservancies emerged, in part, as a defense mechanism against the state (discussed in Chapters Three and Five).

In the past, the vets would just say 'shoot, shoot, shoot' when there was an oryx because of competition. Now we see them differently. After independence, there was a new law that said game would belong to the state unless people were in a conservancy. We formed the conservancy for self-protection against the government. With that law, Sam Nujoma [a former revolutionary leader and first President of Namibia] could come and hunt, and anyone could apply to hunt and come onto the farm.

Like many conservancy members, Dorothy is frustrated with the pace of change and lack of participation. The conservancy changes too slow, she complains, and there are too many people who still have the idea that "bulls and windmills work."

I'm trying to scale down my involvement in the conservancy. It's a big machine. I tried to push but you can't push too fast. It's just machinery and moves slow. The people who don't participate need to get their ass in gear. If you live well, why change?

We spoke about potential opportunities for the conservancy, including non-consumptive tourism and the possibility of a community-managed

lodge. Dorothy favors a more centralized approach to tourism. She also believes that the conservancy could give jobs to people in the impoverished, nearby town of Kalkfeld. The problem, she explained, is the reluctance and mindset of some conservancy members.

People still live in apartheid time. People are so racist that they don't give people a chance. I want to have more centralized and organized tourism—mountain biking, birding on one farm, et cetera. We should work together more. When I say that we should get blacks in the conservancy, people go nuts. I tried to bring in black farmers. There are some in the Farmers Association but why not in the conservancy? I want to do crafts in Kalkfeld, but it's a long way for people to drive every day. We live too well. You don't want to wish it on us, but if things get bad, then they'll move.

According to Dorothy, there are currently three main objectives in the conservancy: 1) managing wildlife, 2) protecting flora and fauna, and 3) keeping the status quo. As discussed in Chapter 3, many landowners joined conservancies based on the belief that it could help protect their land and wildlife rights and preserve their way of life—in Dorothy's words, to keep the status quo. Without specific legislation or legal recognition, disillusionment is growing among Kalkfeld Conservancy members.

We haven't gotten the law. There is still no law that says conservancies are legal. I can't blame them [the disillusioned members], there is nothing to cling too.

Despite this growing disillusionment, Dorothy continues to view Kalkfeld Conservancy as a conservation success story. The challenge for the future, she explained, is to work together for more than just hunting and the management of game. To Dorothy, the conservancy should also focus its attention on the broader conservation of biodiversity, including non-game species and other shared natural resources.

The primary goal should be about conserving fauna, flora, water—the whole ecosystem. There is a perspective to only conserve what you can see up to your fence.

Farmworkers

According to Harring and Odendaal (2007: 27), approximately 220,000 farmworkers and their dependents live in Namibia. Many of these people live on privately owned farms, and many of these farms are in conservancies. Not all farmworkers in Namibia live on white-owned farms, but most farms in freehold conservancies are owned by whites. Farmworkers are culturally and linguistically diverse. On most farms I visited, it was common to hear multiple languages spoken among the farmworkers. These languages often included Otjiherero, Damara and Nama Khoekhoe, Oshiwambo, and occasionally Kavango, San, or Caprivian languages. Many farmworkers spoke Afrikaans, and some in Kalkfeld Conservancy spoke German. In 2009, 30,000 farmworkers and their dependents in Namibia were indigenous

people (Hitchcock et al. 2010: 549).[38] These "indigenous farm workers are often the last ones hired and the first ones fired in times of economic uncertainty" (Hitchcock et al. 2010: 549). Gordon (1992) has referred to indigenous farmworkers as a part of a rural "underclass". Throughout Namibia, farmworkers are an impoverished and marginalized segment of society, and freehold conservancies do little to alter this system of rural inequality.[39]

During my research with freehold conservancies, I spent a considerable amount of time with farmworkers. I felt that farmworkers were important stakeholders and should not be overlooked or excluded from a study of conservancies. These people greatly outnumber landowners in rural Namibia and are integral to the functioning of most farms. They are also directly impacted by decisions related to land and wildlife use. Therefore, I wanted to understand the extent to which farmworkers are involved, impacted by, and benefit from conservancies. In my case study of Kalkfeld

[38] One member of Kalkfeld Conservancy reported that he travels to Tsumkwe specifically to hire San as anti-poaching trackers. Many landowners I interviewed believe San are the best trackers, and think that each ethnic group possesses certain skills or strengths. For example, I heard the following generalizations: "Damara are good at building fences, Kavango are good at chopping wood, but the Kavango can't build fences. Look at this fence. It was built by a Kavango and it is falling apart." As farmworkers, some groups are believed to be better with cattle, others with crops, hunting, woodworking, machinery, etc. For this reason, some landowners purposely hire workers from multiple ethnic groups.

[39] See Suzman (1995, 2000); Sylvain (2001, 2003) for anthropological discussions of farmworkers in Namibia.

Conservancy, I also wanted to observe and participate in their ordinary work and everyday lives to gain deeper insight into what it is like to be a farmworker in this part of Namibia.

On one farm in Kalkfeld Conservancy, I developed a particularly close relationship and high level of trust with the community of farmworkers. This began by simply greeting them, shaking hands, and asking questions—things that many visitors to farms do not often do. I tagged along with them on their jobs and, most importantly, I spent time with them at their homes in the evenings after work. We ate together, drank beer together, and laughed together. They often exclaimed how unusual it was for a white person to come sit at their table and visit with them in their homes. One worker, Moses, became one of my closest key consultants and told me that I was his first and only white friend. Others remarked how different and unusual I was from most white people. Unlike the white people in their lives, I was neither their boss nor a trophy hunter for them to cater. I assured them that our conversations were confidential, I would not report back to the landowner, and I truly yearned to hear their stories. Quickly, I began to earn their trust.

On most farms that I visited in Namibia, farmworkers lived in small villages, located relatively close to the main farmsteads. Houses were generally constructed out of sheet metal and other repurposed materials, and often stood in contrast to the landowners' houses, which were

sometimes simple and bare, but other times rather opulent. On the farm where I lived, there were usually around 15 workers. These workers lived with their families in an L-shaped village facing a large meadow. Several cattle grazed in the meadow, which the landowner allowed the oldest woman to keep. In the shade of trees along the row of houses, workers harvested wild spinach. Some of the houses, or additions to houses, were made from common sheet metal, but others were higher quality, built from bricks, wooden beams and concrete. Most houses had an outdoor cooking area, as well as outdoor seating. Several dogs wandered throughout the village. There was also a small dim church with an assortment of chairs and a single candelabra. I attended this church, which was led by one of the older workers, on a couple of occasions. This preacher gave a lengthy sermon and the congregation sang numerous songs. Many of the people would dress up for church, and one Sunday I offered to photograph the congregation and their cheerful children. I then returned the next week with much-appreciated prints for everyone. On most occasions, this village was a pleasant place with children playing, people chatting, smoke rising from cooking fires, and birds singing in the surrounding trees.

Farmworkers in Kalkfeld Conservancy are involved in a variety of tasks related to livestock production, wildlife use, and domestic work. Based on my observations, most of the manual labor involved in livestock production is carried out by farmworkers. Landowners are often involved but generally

perform less strenuous tasks and oversee the workers. When landowners drive around the farm to check cattle, fences, and water points, workers customarily ride in the bed of the pickup truck, even if only one worker is present. Sometimes, this worker's primary job is to open and close gates for the landowner. Mechanical repair and metalworking is often the responsibility of certain skilled workers. Farmworkers also play an integral role in wildlife-based land uses including trophy hunting, game ranching, ecotourism, and meat production. For example, on hunting farms, workers often guide hunters, track game, and then load, skin, and process the carcasses. They also work to clean and prepare accommodations, cook and serve food, wash dishes, and maintain landscaping. Workers perform many of these same domestic tasks in the homes of landowners. By providing much of the labor for land and wildlife management, along with hunting and tourism, farmworkers play an important role in freehold conservancies.

Some farmworkers in Kalkfeld Conservancy are beginning to benefit directly from hunting, yet they are struggling to acquire new skills and opportunities to substantially improve their livelihoods in an increasingly wildlife-based rural economy. I spoke with Robert, a farmworker on one of the farms in the conservancy. He sat next to me in the front seat of a pickup truck on our way to town one morning. He is originally from Grootfontein but has worked on this farm for 12 years. Like many farmworkers, he is multilingual and speaks Otjiherero, Damara Khoekhoe, a Khoisan language,

Afrikaans, and some German. He has two kids and is not married, but has been in a relationship with the sister of another worker on the same farm for 14 years. His goal, he told me, is to become certified as a professional hunting guide. He credits the landowner for sending him to several hunting workshops but claims he hasn't had enough time off to complete the certification. He proudly told me how one week he got a N$100 tip from a hunter. Another hunter, who was visiting for a month, tipped him N$600. He then took the money to a neighboring farm to buy a goat as an investment. He aspires to save money to build a new house and provide for his children, and he thinks guiding hunters can make this possible. Robert claims that, for the first two years on the farm, he was paid N$10 a week, barely surviving on rations from the farmer. Although he now makes N$210 a week, a N$600 tip from a hunter nearly doubles his monthly salary. In addition to the money, Robert also benefits from the meat left behind by trophy hunters. Sometimes he also gets meat from an oryx that was stabbed to death in a fight or by finding a dead calf. Robert said, "A worker on a farm without hunting only gets the rations, but on the farm with hunting, you get more meat". As our conversation suggests, game meat plays an important role in the food security of farmworkers in Kalkfeld and other conservancies. The importance of game meat for rural food security in Namibia is supported by Lindsey (2011).

Unlike Robert, who is aware of the conservancy and the benefits of hunting, many farmworkers that I interviewed have never heard of a conservancy and do not know if the farm on which they live and work is a part of one. One Sunday, after attending a service in the small dilapidated church, I spoke with Benjamin, a worker who was born on the farm and grew up in a nearby town, but returned to live and work on the farm for the past 12 years. He claimed that although tourism hasn't impacted him, he occasionally gets tips from hunters. He also greatly values the abundance of oryx on the farm, more than any other animal, because they help sustain his life. “She's there for us, she's good to us,” he said. As Benjamin talked about the importance of game meat, I remembered a conversation a few days earlier with Moses, my key consultant. He told me that Benjamin sometimes kills an oryx on the farm, and then sells that meat in town. According to Moses, Benjamin sets up snares and catches oryx near a dry riverbed not far from the workers’ village. I never observed this behavior and I chose not to ask Benjamin about it, but he described a common sentiment that could motivate this behavior. When I asked him to rank his quality life on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 as the best, he sadly explained that his life is a one. “I'm not surviving good and I don't have enough money,” he said. Benjamin claimed that he is paid less than the law stipulates and accused the landowner of breaking the law. “I will continue to work in the will of God, and I don't know about the future, but I know that God will help me.” When

I asked about the conservancy, Benjamin said that he had no idea what a conservancy is, or if the farm is part of one. Like Benjamin, most farmworkers that I interviewed lacked an awareness and knowledge of the conservancy in which they are embedded.

Despite the benefits of wildlife-based land uses and the availability of game meat, most of the farmworkers that I interviewed, like Benjamin, rated their quality of life relatively low. Solomon, for example rated his quality of life as a 2, explaining that he "doesn't live good here" on the farm where he has lived and worked most of his life. Solomon is an old man and we sat on buckets across from each other in the shade near his house. His body was frail and he grasped a wooden cane with his wrinkled hands. Solomon had lived on this farm for 45 years, and when he arrived, the current landowner was a small child. As we spoke, tears began to well up in his eyes. Solomon said he has always worked hard, walked long distances to cattle posts each day, and now just wants to be a pensioner. Yet, despite all his years on the farm, Solomon mournfully explained that the landowner, who he watched grow up, does not respect him. He began to weep intensely, and his voice became broken and sorrowful. "I just want [the landowner] to respect me, to stop insulting me, and stop calling me a baboon or an ass." Solomon does not know if the farm is part of a conservancy, but he thinks it would be good for tourists to come to the farm and see their poverty, to see their "corrugated irons", and to learn how farmworkers live.

Henrik: Nonmember Neighboring Landowner

In my effort to study freehold conservancies, one of my aims was to involve and interview neighboring landowners who chose not to join a conservancy. I view these nonmember landowners as important stakeholders because their use of wildlife and land management decisions directly affect their neighbors in conservancies. Wildlife is a fugitive resource and can generally move freely across the boundaries of conservancies. Nonmember landowners can benefit from this wildlife, contribute to its conservation, or attempt to extirpate or overuse it. Some conservancy members call these areas of land outside conservancies "white spots", referring to their appearance on a map in contrast to the connectivity of the surrounding conservancy. Henrik's three farms, totaling 12,000 hectares, form one of these white spots in Kalkfeld Conservancy. He agreed to speak with me on his farm and our conversation offers insight into the decision-making of neighboring nonmembers and the challenge of collective action.

I arrived at Henrik's farm around 11:00 in the morning. I walked up onto the front porch of the farmhouse and, through the screen door, I could hear him invite me inside. I opened the door and Henrik was sitting at his dining room table, wearing only boxer shorts. He was a big guy, with an enormously round belly and a cigarette in his hand. The room was dark and bare and filled with smoke, and long cracks ran down the old plaster walls.

Come on in and have a seat. Can I get you some coffee?

I introduced myself and we talked about my research, which I briefly explained to him earlier that week on the phone. He told me about his farms and I asked him why he chose not to join the conservancy that surrounded him.

If we have 200 kudus in the area and they [conservancy members] shoot 50 bulls, the money should be divided between everyone. Hunting money should be split up, but this is not how it's done. Now it's everyone for himself.

For Henrik, the problem is the distribution of benefits.

I've never been in the conservancy, ever since the first day at a Farmers Association meeting in Kalkfeld that [a proponent and organizer of conservancies] came and talked. He said we should divide the money but no one else agreed, so I left. He said we should be honest.

Henrik's views on the conservancy were mixed. He described his views on two of the sub groups that make up Kalkfeld Conservancy. Again, he stressed his frustration with the distribution of benefits.

Kalkfeld South is really working. They have open minded guys. Kalkfeld North guys are like headboards. Every day people say bad things about me because I don't join but all I want is them to put money in the box and divide it.

Henrik also expressed his concern with conservancy restrictions on wildlife use and a quota system.

If I have 100 kudu and they tell me I can shoot one bull this year, this is a problem. The guy next to me feels the same way.

I told him that many conservancy members believe that some neighboring nonmember landowners—the "white spots" in conservancies—are over-utilizing game. I mentioned that some of these landowners surrounding Kalkfeld Conservancy have a reputation for shooting more game than the law allows. Henrik's response highlights one of the challenges of conserving shared resources: trust.

Even I do it. I get a permit for 20 and shoot 50. Everyone else does it as well.

Henrik had mentioned his neighbor who also chose not to join the conservancy, and I wanted to ask him about this neighbor. Kalkfeld Conservancy members often told me that this wealthy German landowner was a problem, funneling the conservancy's game onto his land to shoot and sell. I told him about the rumor and asked if he thought it was true.

This is bullshit. Tell these guys they're lying and it's bullshit, fucking bastards. I saw his permits—three eland, 30 oryx, and 10 kudu per year—and he works with him MET [Ministry of Environment and Tourism] in Otji. He is not overhunting, just what his permit says. I can put my head on the block for this.

Henrik also explained that he works closely with MET and believes that their support for wildlife management is sufficient.

They [conservancy members] say Nature Conservation [MET] in Otjiwarongo is not effective anymore, but I've never had a problem with them. For the 27 years of my time on the farm, their game count was perfect. Why must we change to a conservancy? Now there's almost no gemsbok in the east because they've overharvested. They must get guys who know how to count. Every year in May I do a game count with helicopters and MET comes and does a ground count. Every 1 to 2 km is a water place. We count at fucking hundreds of water places.

In contrast to many conservancy members, wildlife-based land uses are not a significant part of Henrik's livelihood. He makes most of his money from hay production—much more than cattle, he said. Cattle is his second most important source of income and game is third. He hosts a few hunting friends every year, but most of his game use consists of meat sales or on-farm own use.

To produce a large amount of hay, Hendrik invests considerable time and money in an ongoing battle against bush encroachment. These efforts have important implications for the habitat and species on his land. Henrik focuses on creating patches of grassland, rather than one single open area, with an emphasis on providing habitat for springbok.

Springbok like this [patchiness]. In 1983, I counted 23 springbok over two years. Now there are over 400.

Henrik said that he is happy about springbok, and that he has only shot one in 20 years. It is a personal joy to have springbok on his land, he explained. Henrik remarked that he also has lots of steenbok and then proceeded to proudly list all the different game species on his farm.

One of my unexpected discoveries about Henrik is that he views his farm as a safe haven from the surrounding hunting farms in the conservancy. In addition to creating springbok habitat, Henrik claims that his management has led to increases in kudu and oryx populations. He refuses to allow hunting of kudu cows and, based on game count numbers, he is concerned about a decline in kudu bulls due to trophy hunting on neighboring farms in the conservancy. Unlike some conservancy members and landowners in the area, Henrik opposes game fencing.

I'm against game fences. I don't like it. The game should go as far as he wants to go.

By not hunting certain species such as springbok or relying financially on consumptive wildlife use, Henrik views his farm as a safe haven from hunting in the conservancy. He also attributes this level of protection to his approach to farmworker management. Based on my observations, however, this approach is not significantly different than many conservancy members.

My black guys don't shoot them either. I give game meat to my workers, one kudu or oryx, 2 kilos per week. They never complain. my workers won't poach. If you give them meat, you never have poaching

problems with your own guys. Sometimes I have 30 workers and sometimes five, but if you have an adequate freezer you can harvest less.

In contrast to springbok, Henrik is much less tolerant of cheetahs.

Last year I shot 23 cheetahs. If I see them, I shoot them. I also use traps. I caught one with five little ones but I didn't kill those—too cruel.

Henrik later explained to me that if he catches young cheetahs, he transports them to a large landowner in the conservancy specialized in wildlife-based tourism. He continued to tell stories of catching and shooting cheetahs. He also expressed his reasoning and his greater tolerance for leopards. Henrik claimed to have only shot one leopard and explained that he does not hunt them if they kill less than five head of livestock. According to Hendrik, cheetahs are a much more significant problem.

Cheetahs hurt sheep and goats. I once lost 35 sheep over lunch time, the next day 17, and then I declared war.

I asked Henrik about the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CFF), a prominent nearby conservation organization that was a frequent—and intensely polarizing—topic of discussion with landowners. Some landowners support the organization's efforts, while many others condemn them and frequently blame the organization for their conflicts with cheetahs. There is a widespread belief that cheetah populations are increasing in the area around Otjiwarongo, and I encountered a common rumor that CCF secretly reintroduces cheetahs onto nearby private land. This theme is reflected in

Henrik's response, although his opinions of CCF are more nuanced than those of many landowners. He has also implemented methods promoted by CCF to reduce conflict including the use of livestock guarding dogs, which many landowners, including some conservancy members, have not adopted.

It's a good thing they [CCF] are there, but now there are too many cheetahs in some parts of Namibia. People bring them cheetahs, load them up in a bakkie, and drive them outside of Otji and dump them. It makes me very cross and that's why I kill cheetahs. The other day I saw a cheetah bakkie and I should have followed it. There was something in the back, and then I saw it later with nothing in the back. I wouldn't mind cheetahs at all if they wouldn't take my goats and sheep. They could do whatever they want. I use [livestock guarding] dogs and I have herders, and the cheetahs still get them. Because of CCF there are too many cheetahs, because they release them. We never had a problem until recently.

Adolf: Nearby Resettlement Farmer

As land reform proceeds, the demographics of rural Namibia are slowly changing. Thousands of resettlement farmers—part of a broader class of black and indigenous emerging farmers—now occupy land that was previously owned by private landowners[40]. These resettlement farmers are

[40] Harring and Odendaal (2007: 29) estimated that approximately 9,000 people were resettled on farms by 2007, "but the record-keeping is so poor

disadvantaged, formerly landless individuals who acquire land from the state through state-run land reform programs. Resettlement farmers are ethnically and linguistically diverse, both nationally and within local areas of resettlement.[41] Because these individuals occupy previously privately owned land, many of these farms are near freehold conservancies.

Resettlement farmers, therefore, should be considered important stakeholders in freehold conservancies. Like other neighboring nonmember landowners, resettlement farmers' use of wildlife and land management decisions directly affect their neighbors in conservancies. Since wildlife can move between conservancies and resettlement farms, these landholders can benefit from this wildlife, contribute to its conservation, or attempt to extirpate or overuse it. Many conservancy members accuse resettlement farmers of overuse, an intolerance for wildlife, or unethical practices. These accusations were sometimes explained as the result of racial predispositions toward cattle and a lack of environmental ethics. I also heard about (but never documented) failed attempts by conservancies to incorporate resettlement and other emerging farmers. In my interviews with resettlement farmers, however, I discovered not only an awareness of conservancies but a strong desire to engage with these groups, learn from

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that we cannot determine the actual number. Many have already left the rural poverty of the resettlement farms, and more leave every day."

[41] Issues of ethnic differences and tensions are discussed in Werner and Odendaal (2010).

their experience, and both conserve and sustainably use wildlife on their land. For Adolf, an optimistic and resilient resettlement farmer near Kalkfeld Conservancy, his goal is to organize a conservancy made up of neighboring resettlement farmers to build a thriving local economy based on agriculture, livestock production, and the sustainable use of wildlife.

I first met Adolf at an event hosted by a conservation organization during which he was presented with an award as their "farmer of the year." Adolf invited me to visit his farm, which I did many times over my year in Namibia, and he became an important key consultant in my research. He introduced me to many other resettlement farmers in the area and allowed me to observe and participate in his everyday life. Adolf is a leader in his community. He has attended several workshops on the integration of wildlife conservation and agriculture, and he has organized educational events among resettlement farmers to spread this knowledge.

Adolf lives on relatively small, thornbush-choked resettlement farm along a dusty rural road. His wife lives in an informal settlement in a nearby town and his young son comes to visit him on the weekends. Adolf's farm forms part of a cluster of resettlement farms, which is embedded within the wider landscape of predominately white-owned private land. Two freehold conservancies are located nearby. Many of the resettlement farms in this cluster are occupied by women, who tend small gardens, since many of the men work on surrounding white-owned ranches. There is also a relatively

large community of charcoal producers, many of whom are migrants from central Africa. Another resettlement farm nearby is occupied by its former San farmworkers.

Adolf built his small farmhouse, literally brick by brick, over a period of ten years with salvaged materials. He produces his own electricity from a discarded solar panel given to him by a neighboring white landowner. His water source is approximately a quarter mile away. Near Adolf's house, there is a small shed where he stores tools and food, including his staple maize meal and sour milk. There is an outdoor cooking area, as well as a garden with corn and pumpkins. Several San farmworkers live in a nearby shack. Adolf raises cattle and goats, although his goat herd was recovering after most of his animals were plowed over by a large truck on the rural road that passes by his farm.

On one cool evening, we huddled around a small fire sitting on old metal chairs that Adolf had salvaged. I was always impressed with his fires, and his careful and efficient use of wood and heat. He would make a very small fire in a circle of stones, and then gently lay wood on the fire so that only the tip of each log was burning. As the wood burned, he would slightly inch the logs closer to the fire. By doing this, Adolf could make small, hot fires with a limited pile of wood. As we sat around the fire that evening, with bright stars overhead, we spoke about his efforts to restore and conserve wildlife populations, and his desire to form a conservancy. Although wildlife

in the area declined in the early years after resettlement, he has led a campaign to educate other resettlement farmers about the potential benefits of conservation and the possible coexistence of wildlife and agriculture.

It's a wonderful story. I was resettled as part of a group settlement. At first there was wildlife, but after three years, all the wildlife was out. Now there are animals. Eland are here. We see them with our own eyes. Even warthogs were out and now they're here, and duiker and steenbok are here too. I was very worried that we were killing the wildlife.

Adolf described how he saw white landowners around him benefiting from wildlife, and heard about community-based natural resource management on communal land, and thought "maybe we could benefit too." His goal is to combine agriculture and livestock production with wildlife-based land uses including trophy hunting and ecotourism.

People here are just waiting for when the first gun of trophy hunting goes off.

He admits, however, that his community of resettlement farmers needs outside support and that building a wildlife-based economy is difficult when people are struggling to survive.

People who are more educated must help. The government will need to give us the green light. Research will guide us. People need education. It's hard to see an oryx pass by if you have a hungry stomach.

Adolf is aware of the freehold conservancies near his farm and learned about conservancies on both private and communal land from workshops sponsored by a local conservation organization. For several years, Adolf has struggled to organize a conservancy for resettlement farmers. He has managed to form a provisional conservancy committee and worked to educate his community that a "conservancy means living together with wildlife, working together, and joint management." The main obstacle facing Adolf and his committee, however, is the ambiguity surrounding land and wildlife rights. Without freehold or communal land tenure, Adolf is uncertain whether he should model this group on freehold or communal conservancies, or design something different altogether. The issue of wildlife rights also presents an obstacle. Unlike private and communal landholders, resettlement farmers lack legal rights to use the wildlife on their land. Adolf had previously written the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for assistance, and after many months, his letter was forwarded to a public interest law firm in Windhoek, who agreed to help. The first challenge, Adolf explained, is to clarify the issues surrounding land and wildlife rights.

During my time on Adolf's farm, he was always optimistic. Based largely on his observations of freehold conservancies and wildlife use on private land, he believed firmly in the idea of a conservancy for resettlement farmers. Adolf and other resettlement farmers not only have a stake in the wildlife that moves between their land and freehold conservancies, but they

also have a stake in the knowledge and lessons learned by these groups. As we sat around the fire, Adolf explained with his usual optimism that, eventually, he will succeed in creating a conservancy in which farming and wildlife coexist.

It will take years, but Rome wasn't built in a day.

Common Property on Private Ranchland: A Tool for Conservation

This chapter presented an ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy. It described the land and shared natural resources of this group, as well as the ways in which these resources are used and managed collectively. Valuable games species are a fugitive common-pool resource, meaning that this wildlife can move across the boundaries of privately owned land. Rather than preventing this movement or over-exploiting the resource at the expense of the group, this tight knit, predominantly German-Namibian community has worked together to organize a system for sustainable management and conservation. By working together, these neighboring landowners have transformed their relationship to both wildlife and each other.

During my research with freehold conservancy members across Namibia, I frequently heard about the success of Kalkfeld Conservancy. Many of these members, often disillusioned with their own conservancy, regarded Kalkfeld as a model for collective action and a conservation success

story. This success was commonly attributed to a shared sense of German-Namibian identity and a conservation ethic. Although some members of Kalkfeld conservancy agreed with this outsider's perspective, many of them were much more apathetic and increasingly disillusioned. Like Ulrich, many members believed that the conservancy was powerless without legal recognition—something essential for success and security in post-apartheid Namibia.

Yet, Ulrich and other members continue to work together and make individual decisions that are, in fact, cooperative. Theodor, for example, works to produce suitable habitat for springbok that can roam freely throughout the conservancy, and Ulrich's giraffe population has spread across neighboring farms. These landowners have cultivated a conservation ethic in which wildlife is valued, and wildlife and cattle can coexist. For most Kalkfeld Conservancy members, wildlife-based land uses form an important part of their livelihood, and game meat is vital to farmworker food security. Together, members monitor resources, reintroduce and translocate game, regulate its use, share information, collaborate, and assist each other in a system of reciprocity.

In terms of the conservancy's objectives, this group has managed to be relatively effective at establishing a cooperative strategy for conservation and sustainable utilization, reintroducing wildlife, and coordinating other resource management objectives. As Dorothy noted, however, Kalkfeld

Conservancy must improve to meet its objective of managing and conserving biodiversity beyond valuable game species. Other freehold conservancies face this same challenge. Predators, for example, are still sometimes persecuted, although many Kalkfeld Conservancy members are tolerant (and sometimes appreciative) of native cats. Most expect a certain loss of livestock and, as one rancher told me, he tolerates a 15 percent loss in recognition of his place alongside predators in this African landscape. Overall, Kalkfeld Conservancy members have organized a relatively resilient and effective system for managing shared resources, and most landowners continue to benefit from the wildlife on their land.

Still, there are important stakeholders who do not fully share in these benefits or the opportunity to participate. One of the conservancy's objectives is to "generate interest and active participation by all inhabitants of the conservancy area in wildlife conservation, wildlife and other natural resource management." Yet most of the farmworkers that I interviewed do not know what a conservancy is or if the farm on which they live is a part of one. While some farmworkers clearly benefit from the game meat produced by hunting and access to abundant wildlife, freehold conservancies have done little to incorporate or incentivize these stakeholders and largely perpetuate the system of rural inequality. Additionally, as white private landowners increasingly share this landscape and its resources with non-white resettlement farmers, conservancies have an opportunity to work

together with these new neighbors—some of whom yearn to learn from their experience, benefit from wildlife, and build a more sustainable future.

By presenting an ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy, this chapter documents a unique case of common property and the management of common-pool resources. This case shows how a group of neighboring landowners have used common property as a tool for the management and conservation of common-pool wildlife on privately owned ranchland. Not only does this ethnographic portrait offer insight into freehold conservancies, in general, it also contributes to our understanding of the diversity, variability, and possibility of common property as a tool for managing and conserving shared natural resources.

Chapter Five

NARRATIVES OF DISILLUSIONMENT AND BELONGING

Edwin[42] is a grumpy guy, and he generally gets straight to the point. As we sat and talked on his farm, which produces high value cattle and hosts an array of wildlife including a large herd of springbok that roam freely between neighboring land, I asked him about his membership in a conservancy. I expected to hear about the value of free roaming game, habitat connectivity, the benefits of hunting, or the outcomes of cooperation. Instead, Edwin barked back, "Look man, conservancies are a bullshit story!"

It took me a while to understand what Edwin meant that day. Why would someone who works to conserve wildlife on their land, benefits from this wildlife, and cooperates with neighbors to use it sustainably, also believe that the conservancy he actively takes part in is a "bullshit story"? The answer is that, for Edwin and many of the other white landowners who joined conservancies, the story has not lived up to expectations. The beginning of the story offered false hope in a secure sense of belonging, which has left landowners discouraged and disappointed. This feeling of disappointment from the realization that conservancies are not the defense mechanism that they were believed to be, has contributed to the widespread disillusionment of conservancy members. Despite their accomplishments,

[42] Edwin and all other names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

many members believe that their efforts, and the efforts of conservancies in general, have either failed or fallen short. Edwin's exclamation echoes the disillusionment I discovered in my interviews with freehold conservancy members throughout the country.

This widespread disillusionment, I argue, stems from the politics of land, fear of a predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging. As detailed in Chapter 3, freehold conservancies emerged not only as a tool for the management of common-pool resources but also as a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa. Many white landowners believed that joining a conservancy would help protect them from a violent, race-based land reform process. After nearly three decades since Namibian independence, however, few white landowners feel secure. This insecurity is what leads Edwin to call conservancies a "bullshit story." It is also why the issue of legal recognition for freehold conservancies is so important to many members.

As this chapter demonstrates, there are numerous sources of disillusionment, but few are as debilitating as the issue of legal recognition. Although individual private landowners in Namibia hold extensive rights to the wildlife on their land, there remains no legislation that officially defines and recognizes freehold conservancies as legal entities. Without legal recognition, many conservancy members believe that their efforts cannot succeed. Legal recognition could provide several practical benefits including

greater autonomy in wildlife management and authority over the issuance of permits and quotas. Most importantly for conservancy members, however, it could also provide the political legitimacy necessary for surviving land reform and constructing a new niche for themselves based on the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife. This lack of legal recognition contributes to the insecure sense of belonging that emerges in the narratives presented in this chapter.

Over my year in Namibia I interviewed conservancy members throughout the country. I collected narratives of disillusionment and belonging, presented in this chapter through a series of seven vignettes, representing six different conservancies. I argue that the disillusionment of freehold conservancy members in Namibia is an apt illustration of the broader struggles of whites to belong in Southern Africa.

"At the beginning, we had a nice vision. We were very optimistic."

Jakob, conservancy organizer, member, and farm manager, with Berta, conservancy member and landowner

For many years, Jakob was a farm manager in the north, near Tsumeb, in an area now forming part of Namibia's first freehold conservancy, Ngarongombe. His brother-in-law was an adjacent farmer and next to him lived his cousin. A clash broke out between his brother-in-law and the cousin's husband over the management and use of eland. The

husband brought in hunters from South Africa to harvest eland for biltong (dried meat), and hunted heavily. Many landowners reported that this was a common practice on private land in the past, especially prior to legislative changes in wildlife rights that are often credited with giving wildlife 'value'. Jakob's brother-in-law, on the other hand, earned larger returns from trophy hunting and saw the potential for eland management based on sustainable use. As Jakob explained, this conflict over the use of Eland sparked his interest in the concept of a conservancy.

Jakob: *Marcellus Loots, from [Directorate of] Nature Conservation, often came to the farm to talk about game. He mentioned the idea of a conservancy, which was popular in KwaZulu-Natal. Through that, we initiated talks on the sustainable utilization of game. That's where it started.*

In 1990, Jakob and neighboring landowners conducted a large aerial game survey in collaboration with the government. Then, in November 1992, Ngarongombe Conservancy was officially established and its inauguration was attended by a representative from the new Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Jakob was invited to talk at other conservancy inaugurations and led initiating talks with numerous other groups of landowners in what would become Waterberg, Seeis, Swakoptal, Black Nossob, Etosha, and Ovipuka conservancies. He introduced the concept of a conservancy based on holistic management, sustainable utilization, and the

benefits of forming one single unit of management. These ideas caught on quickly, but he began to see problems emerging.

Jakob: *The further we went down the road, the longer we waited for the wildlife act, and our vision got watered down. Politics got involved. They—the politicians—look at conservancies from a political viewpoint. It's a political move not to take up commercial conservancies in the act. They're scared it would go against land reform.*

Berta, who owns and manages a farm with her sons in a conservancy near Okahandja, agreed that politics has curbed enthusiasm among conservancy members.

Berta: *People have lost interest because the act hasn't come through.*

Jakob and Berta are referring to anticipated legislation that would legally recognize freehold conservancies. Many conservancy members see this act as necessary for the success of conservancies, and view its delay as a major impediment. Like Jakob, many landowners also believe that freehold conservancies are not formally recognized by the state precisely because a larger legal entity made up of multiple farms is seen by politicians as an obstacle to the redistribution of land. As Berta suggests, many conservancy members are disappointed with the lack of progress and question the benefit of a conservancy without formal, legal recognition. While the issue of legal recognition is the primary source of the widespread disillusionment that I encountered during my fieldwork, there are several other contributing

factors. One of these factors is the tension between individual self-interest and the collective goals of conservation and sustainable use, often expressed as the problem of money.

Jakob: *At the beginning, we had a nice vision. We were very optimistic. But then everyday life came in and money began to talk. One big issue that causes problems is money!"*

He pulled a hundred dollar bill out from his pocket and rubbed it between his fingers.

Jakob: *I see it here in our conservancy. It was alright in the beginning, but after a few years, the trophy hunting guys are the ones who benefit and get the money. The money is not distributed. There was one guy who didn't benefit from trophy hunting and he tried to find ways to make money. He started over-utilizing game for shoot-and-sell. He had livestock loses and felt like he had to compensate, so he caught and sold cheetahs. We got in an argument and I tried to sort it out, but he left the conservancy. He sidestepped our committee and our rules, and ended up making a lot of money.*

Shoot-and-sell means killing animals to sell for meat. Many conservancy members complain that this often leads to over-utilization by unscrupulous landowners who do not share the values of the conservancy. The larger point that Jakob is making, which was frequently echoed by other conservancy members, is that the financial benefits of conservancies are not

always distributed equitably, and the desire of individuals to profit from the game on their land in the short-term sometimes conflicts with the goals of cooperation, conservation, and sustainable utilization on a landscape scale over the long term. Similar problems have also disappointed Berta. Her conservancy has more than a dozen members, but less than three actively participate, and the conservancy is effectively dormant, with talk of disbanding. Despite her vision for a large co-managed area integrating cattle with a diversity of wildlife, she characterized her conservancy as dysfunctional—unable to overcome an individual focus on livestock production to work together for wildlife.

Berta: *I got involved when Jakob did. My husband was dynamic and we all became members. Everyone was keen on the idea of a conservancy. But the more I go, the more I see that sustainability is left behind. We used to talk about the conservation of non-game, non-trophy animals. Sustainability was the main thing early on.*

I asked why sustainability got left behind. Barbara leaned over and looked me straight in the eyes.

Berta: *Because of money.*

"No one wants to end up like Zimbabwe."

Gerard, conservancy member and landowner

I arrived at Gerard's farm early in the morning, shortly after sunrise. After coffee in the kitchen, we proceeded out into the well-manicured farmyard, shaded by tall trees and brightened by colorful flowers. Gerard invited me to stand next to him on the front step of his orderly workshop, at the end of a long barn filled with tractors and other machinery. The step lifted the two of us up slightly higher than the large group of farmworkers who stood below us in a semicircle, all dressed in the matching blue coveralls common on farms throughout the country. Gerard wore a short sleeve work shirt tucked into mid-thigh-length blue shorts, with black boots and tall socks. He asked everyone to bow their heads in silence as he led us in prayer. As soon as the prayer ended, he began to assign each worker a task for the day. He told me that he also looks over worker to see if they are fit. The workers took off in different directions and Gerard proudly explained that this is how each day begins on his farm.

I spent the rest of the morning with Gerard, travelling around the farm and moving from one task to the next. Like many of my farm visits, I hopped into a pickup truck next to a no-nonsense Jack Russell Terrier and we toured the farm and on-going projects. We stopped to look out across a vast expanse of open grassland, swaying in the breeze and punctuated only by scattered *Acacia*. This grassland stood out in contrast to the thick

thornbush savanna that characterizes the region and reflects Gerard's effort and investment in habitat restoration and management. We then proceeded to an interior corral where several workers were beginning to dehorn cattle. Later in the morning, we returned to the farmyard. At a slaughtering station near the barn, a group of workers were waiting with sheep to be processed for meat. One worker would lead a sheep onto the concrete slab and Gerard would shoot it in the top of the head with a small pistol. Other workers would then slit their throats and hang the animal up to begin skinning, eviscerating, and cleaning the carcass. After Gerard washed up, we stood in the shade of the farmyard to talk. I asked about the conservancy.

I feel positive. The conservancy is very good, and I definitely benefit from it. But the problem is that people don't want to move forward because of fear that the government will take their game. The problem is there is no government support. They don't recognize or support what the conservancies are doing. No one wants to end up like Zimbabwe.

This is a powerful statement, and it is a sentiment I heard often on white-owned farms around the country. White landowners in Namibia are acutely aware of the violent race-based land reform process that has taken place in Zimbabwe, in which many landowners have been brutalized, killed, or displaced. For example, during my time in the homes of landowners, some people were forwarded email updates on Zimbabwe, often with disturbing stories and bloody images. I often got the sense that these stories

and images maintained a certain level of anxiety, as well as a feeling that this possibility was largely out of their control. Momentarily, our conversation turned to the practical challenges of cooperation and conservation.

One of the other problems is the issues people have with each other—the squabbles between members. This needs to be solved first. The conservancy has to get all the personal things in order and start really conserving game, grass, and water.

But then Gerard returned to the larger issue of legislation and legal recognition.

We have to think positive about legislation. Positive thinking can even bring rain—really—I had three droughts but I survived. Look at my grass.

He continued on about the value of positive thinking, but then as we stood there in the shade of the farmyard, he became quiet, as if he was pondering something deeply.

I've been thinking more about the conservancy. After you asked me questions and I asked questions of you, I've realized that the conservancy really isn't going well.

He seemed disappointed and his remarks stood out in contrast to his initial optimism.

It's true, I've realized, it really isn't working well.

"The future of commercial conservancies is a political decision."

Hubert, conservancy chairman, co-founder, landowner

I met Hubert at a roller hockey tournament in Otjiwarongo. There were German-Namibian families in attendance from all over the country, and I knew this event would be an opportune time to interview conservancy members that I had not yet met. This tournament was held at an outdoor rink located on the edge of town near the other athletic fields and fairgrounds. It was a cold evening, and steam rose from a large pot of mulled wine. I asked Hubert about his conservancy, located northwest of Otjiwarongo near Etosha National Park, as well as the state of conservancies in general.

There's no law, no recognition. This is the biggest obstacle for commercial conservancies. My conservancy is about to dissolve. Nobody sees the benefit anymore. There's really no benefit except for those involved in trophy hunting.

At the beginning, our vision was completely different than now. It was very idealistic. We thought in 50 years' time we'd be like the land around Krueger—private land, no fences, living through tourism. We wanted to benefit more from wildlife. There was also a rumor at the time that if you were a member of a conservancy you were safe from land reform. This was nonsense.

In the early 1990s, this rumor spread widely throughout rural Namibia. For many of the conservancy members that I interviewed, this was a major driver in their decision to join a conservancy. Hubert continued to elaborate on the contrast between his initial optimism and his disappointment with the current state of his conservancy.

In the beginning, the first three years worked really well. We were really enthusiastic. It brought us together. Even if there's no benefits, it brought us together. We agreed that in 20 years we'd take down internal game fences and put up one fence on the outside. But then a number of core farmers sold their land. This is a contributing factor in our decline. These farms were bought with AA [Affirmative Action] loans. We tried to include them but none were interested. They just wanted to be cattle farmers.

The demographics of rural Namibia are slowly changing, in part due to land reform programs such as the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme, which helps new farmers from previously disadvantaged communities purchase private land. Some conservancy members see these changes as obstacles to conservancy formation, connectivity, and the sustainable use of wildlife. Hubert explained that his conservancy was on the brink of disbanding. I asked what might happen next.

We are thinking we will dissolve ours and those who want a conservancy can join Loxondonta [Conservancy].

Our conversation ended with a discussion of CANAM (Conservancy Association of Namibia), an umbrella organization for freehold conservancies. Hubert served in a leadership role with the organization, and like a number of conservancy members that I interviewed, he thinks that it should represent conservancies on both private and communal land—a role that could increase its political legitimacy. My interviews also revealed that many conservancy members are disappointed in CANAM, and some conservancies have either ended their affiliation or chose not to join. Some landowners, however, feel that CANAM offers their only hope for negotiations with the government. I asked Hubert about his opinions on the organization.

CAMAM should be an umbrella organization for both commercial and communal conservancies. It should be recognized. It's living up to its responsibility but it faces the same problem—the wildlife act. The problem is that it depends on a political decision. The future of commercial conservancies is a political decision. The point is that there are so few non-white members.

"We don't want to give ownership back to the government."

Johan, conservancy leader, founding member, landowner

It was a hot, sunny day and I sat across from Johan at a long table in a cool, dark community hall near the center of Kamanjab—a dusty village

located southwest of Etosha National Park. We were joined by another conservancy member who identified himself as "*just* a cattle farmer" whose main interest in the conservancy is protecting game from the government. Johan was an officer and founding member of his conservancy and I asked him why it was formed.

There are two reasons why the conservancy was started. One is that a few years ago we had an elephant problem and we wanted to figure out how to manage it. The second is that there was a proposed government bill to take wildlife back. We don't want to give ownership back to the government. Since the ownership of game went to landowners, the price for game has gone up.

Like other freehold conservancies, this group was organized not only as a tool for wildlife management, but also as a strategy to protect land and resource rights. Johan expanded on efforts to gain legal recognition, which many conservancy members see as the key to their security and the success of conservancies.

NAU [Namibia Agricultural Union] is doing a lot. The conservancy does the work on the ground, but NAU is doing work with the government. Most success comes from NAU. NAU can go straight to the Ministry, but conservancies aren't recognized to anyone.

I asked if his conservancy was part of CANAM.

No we're not a member of CANAM. I'm not sure what they do, and their member fees are too high. Until commercial conservancies are recognized by government, CANAM or anyone can't do anything.

Our conversation turned to the topics of wildlife management and human-wildlife conflict. Johan explained an on-going debate over elephants between members who prioritize cattle production and do not want elephants versus those engaged in wildlife-based land uses who want, or at least tolerate, elephants on their land. He described the conservancy's system for allocating the right to shoot problem elephants and distributing the benefits, although complained that these benefits are seldom enough to offset the damage caused by elephants. We also discussed the moratorium on leopard hunting, which Johan opposed, and which he claims has led to indiscriminate killing by landowners who feel as though they can no longer benefit from the cats. Our conversation then returned to the issue of legal recognition and the politics of land.

We need to keep the conservancy going because we believe the bill will be passed and we want to be ready. We need to be recognized. It would have to be included in a new nature conservation law, but it's a political thing. The government doesn't want us to be recognized. Zimbabwe is a nice example of how it can go wrong. It's not a real threat now, as long as we stay productive. Agriculture is the backbone of any country. People need to eat, so as long as you produce food, you're okay. But if you're in hunting,

it's a political thing, like with Mugabe. The conservancy can't protect us against land reform. We can do nothing. We try to be very optimistic about the future, but only the fools don't think about it.

"I don't see my children on the farm."

Piet, conservancy member, former officer, farm manager

I sat with Piet in the shady garden of a small café in Otjiwarongo. In contrast to most conservancy members in the area, Piet's first language is Afrikaans, which he said becomes a problem in his conservancy's meetings when people frequently switch over to German. He is originally from South Africa and now manages a farm and leases land near Otjiwarongo. Piet has served on the executive committees of his conservancy and CANAM. Although he was once actively involved in his conservancy, he described his involvement dropping from a high of 8 to a low of 2.

I stepped down because I hadn't seen progress in the conservancy, in general. I wanted to see the conservancy get more influence, but it hasn't happened.

Despite this lack of progress, Piet still believes that his conservancy functions well, which he attributes to the conservation ethic of its members. He sees data collection and information sharing as the primary benefits of the conservancy, but wants to see improvements.

For me with the conservancy, you get a little better data for game management. That's about all it does and it's not really reliable. That's what CANAM should do—get a standard data collection method for all farmers. We should do it the way CCF [Cheetah Conservation Fund] does it. They do three strip counts, waterholes at full moons, and 12-hour counts. A normal farmer can't do this on his own. CANAM struggles to get data out of conservancies, but we shouldn't ask farmers to do it in their spare time. CANAM should standardize things. Now, data is just disappearing in the system.

In addition to data collection, Piet also wants to see conservancies and CANAM, in particular, given authority and take on responsibility for issuing permits. The allocation of permits for wildlife utilization remains under the authority of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). Piet, like many conservancy members, believes that the current system limits the influence of conservancies and undermines local-level management. His widely shared opinion is that the decision not to decentralize permitting results from the politics of land and the lack of legal recognition for conservancies.

Politicians have totally wrong impressions of commercial conservancies. At first, I thought CANAM would have the power to negotiate conflicts in conservancies. I thought CANAM could take over the role of MET in issuing permits. The conservancy knows the guys who are misusing wildlife, not MET. Conservancies should be able to issue permits to hunters

and even neighboring farms, but we need legal backing and the law isn't in place. MET isn't functioning. There has to be a better option. At this point, conservancies are just a name on paper.

As my interviews have revealed, there is an intricate connection between the disillusionment of conservancy members and their insecure sense of belonging. My conversation with Piet highlighted this connection as it turned from the issue of legal recognition to the insecurity and uncertainty caused by land reform. As he implied, this threat impacts landowners decision-making related to wildlife use and conservation.

We don't live in a wonderland where everything is perfect. There is uncertainty about land reform so why wouldn't you pocket the money now. In hard times, I'll take what I can. I don't see my children on the farm. By that time, agriculture will not be as good as it is now. You can't earn as much money on a farm anymore, not enough to send your kids to university. You can be a communal farmer. You can make more money by fighting bush or getting bigger, but you have to be realistic with land reform. We all have a brain. These guys are looking at land reform in China and other places. With the uncertainty, you will think twice. Here things can change overnight. I think a person who tells me he's not worried is either stupid or ignorant.

"Land reform is a big threat now. It's throwing the country back."

Jürgen, conservancy member, landowner

I spoke with Jürgen on the long porch that runs the length of his farmhouse. He was preparing a large, wood-fired grill for a gathering that evening. In the porch, the wall of the house was decorated with dozens of small antelope-horn mounts. Our conversation started off with a discussion of bush encroachment, a major problem faced by many conservancy members, especially in the north-central part of the country. Jürgen hires four full-time bush cutters and hopes that someday he can find a way to use it commercially and make money. He described the problem as a result of the interaction of multiple factors including the absence of fire, absence of black rhino, and imbalance of grazers, browsers, and cattle, and the destruction of a natural balance. Jürgen manages a mixed system of cattle production and wildlife use, primarily in the form of trophy hunting. He proudly listed the game species on his land, although like many ranchers in the area, he also shares the widely-held philosophy that "if it pays, it stays."

We tolerate so much game because we make money.

Jürgen, however, appreciates the wildlife on his land. He identified himself as a conservation-oriented landowner and values the opportunity to benefit from wildlife, and to teach others about the role of sustainable utilization and trophy hunting. He complained that the farmers (landowners focused solely on cattle production) in his area shoot way more animals than

hunters, like himself. He supports protections and the development of a plan for sustainable leopard hunting, an end to canned hunting, and a fund to compensate farmers for livestock loss caused by cheetahs. I asked Jurgen about his opinion on the reintroduction of buffalo—a possibility in large, well-connected conservancies—and his answer highlighted the often-conflicting interests of landowners in conservancies.

Buffalos would be great, but the cattle fraternity stopped it!

We spoke about his conservancy, which is divided into four regional sub-conservancies. For Jürgen, the conservancy offers a mechanism for reintroducing and managing a diverse suite of species beyond the boundaries of his land, not in exclusion but as a compliment to cattle production.

It's functioning good. The South is leading the way, but the whole thing is good. We were the first to have a proper system of statistics. We're relocating impalas, and this has encouraged farmers to look better at game. But the main benefit of being in the conservancy that you wouldn't get otherwise is the social net it forms. You also get information.

Jürgen continued on about some of the problems with wildlife management in the conservancy including overgrazing in game-fenced areas called game camps, loss of perennial grasses, and the spread of parasites. He bemoans the fact that, in order to address these problems, he will have to take on a leadership role.

I'll have to take the role as leader in the conservancy. But I'm loaded up with work.

I asked him what other problems or issues he would want to address.

One problem is honesty—people not being honest on game numbers. But we're also losing a lot of income from poaching. This is a major social problem. Our biggest challenge is anti-poaching. To alleviate the problem, we must start at the grassroots with the education of school children. I don't feel like doing it but it has to happen to preserve flora and fauna. I have day-to-day work, especially anti-poaching [operations], but you will only achieve this [a reduction in poaching] by educating those who are hunting the game.

In addition to education, Jürgen also sees the need for local economic development to reduce poaching. He thinks that the conservancy could do more to involve the public and create jobs for the unemployed in the nearby impoverished settlement surrounded by conservancy farms.

We are producing skins, meat, horns, wood, and what if we had an electricity plant or guys making ornaments from horns. I have a whole shed of horns. If they were making an income, they could come and buy their own meat. Our main problem is [the nearby settlement]. Where do they get their food? It has to be our farms.

I asked him what his fellow conservancy members think.

I haven't really proposed these ideas. A lot of them wouldn't really get it. We're loaded with work, and there are only so many points on the agenda.

Although Jürgen is a relative outlier for thinking that his conservancy is working well, he is also deeply uncertain about its future, and the future of his farm and way of life. Jürgen may not share the same level of disillusionment as other members but the end of our conversation highlighted the insecure sense of belonging felt by many white landowners. Unlike many others, however, Jürgen still has hope that the conservancy can change this.

Land reform is a big threat now. It's throwing the country back. I'm not saying new farmers are bad farmers, but they take out loans and this creates a whole generation in production to service loans. We don't feel safe that I'll be able to pass on my farm. Land reform hampers investment. I could build a big dam but then I'd worry that it'd be taken because of water. All of a sudden there's water! The conservancy gives us communal bargaining power. We are big group and we can say this is our vision.

"No oryx, no zebra, nothing."

Heidi, conservancy member, landowner

I joined five conservancy members for an executive committee meeting under a thatch roof *lapa* at a guest farm near Okahandja. The

meeting began with a discussion of the conservancy's management plan and the problem of rabies in kudu, including the question of how to manage it collectively. The most vocal and outspoken participant in the meeting was a woman named Heidi. She expressed her opinion on the leopard hunting moratorium.

Heidi: *If I can't get a leopard permit, I guess I'll have to buy more strychnine [poison]. It's bullshit that people tell me that now farmers will shoot the leopard, the leopard will get shot anyway. Either the farmer shoots it or the trophy hunter shoots it. It's really about who gets the money. The farmer makes a little money or the PH [professional hunter] makes a lot of money. I'll tell you, if I see a leopard, I'll shoot it.*

Although I spoke with some conservancy members in Namibia who shared this perspective and intolerance for predators, I met many others who would disagree with Heidi, and who appreciate, enjoy, or at least tolerate predators on their land. Numerous landowners I interviewed accept a certain rate of livestock loss. One cattle ranching couple near Kalkfeld, for example, explained that they tolerate a 15 percent annual loss based on the understanding that they share this habitat with native cats.

The meeting continued with an update on conservancies. One of the members reported that, based on information from CANAM, a growing number of conservancies are dormant. Everyone agreed that the problems are a lack of legal recognition and obstructive politicians. Without legal

protection and the security it is believed to provide, Heidi worries that conservancies are losing cohesion.

Heidi: *Our biggest problem is solidarity among commercial farmers. They say, "What's in it for me?" We've been trying to get power, but if the law doesn't pass, we will lose members. There were a lot of people who joined conservancies based on the idea that the conservancy will protect them from land reform. Government doesn't like this and members that see results don't like it. Other guys outside the conservancy now have the same rights, so why should I be in the conservancy. Our biggest challenge is to keep our sheep in the corral.*

One of the other members interjected.

Walter: *If game goes back to government hands, I'm going to get a helicopter and chase all my gemsbok out into the streets of Okahandja.*

Heidi: *We wouldn't want any of our game eating our grass. No oryx, no zebra, nothing.*

Disillusionment and the Struggle to Belong in Southern Africa

Within the first few months of my research, it became clear that there was widespread disillusionment among freehold conservancy members. They often wanted to talk about the lack of legal recognition and I heard frequently about dwindling membership, a decline in participation, and a loss of hope. I also heard uncertainty about the future and the prospect of

passing along the farm to future generations. I arrived in the field with expectations of freehold conservancies based on portrayals of a "success story", but by listening to the voices of actual landowners, I instead encountered apathy and disappointment.

This chapter presented a series of vignettes that capture narratives of disillusionment and belonging. In the interview with Jakob and Berta, we hear of a lack of legal recognition and the challenge of balancing individual self-interest with the collective goals of conservation and sustainability. For Gerard, the progress and potential of conservancies are constrained by members' fear of the state. There is concern that the state will take back the ownership of game, but there is also a more unnerving fear that Namibia might "end up like Zimbabwe." The interview with Hubert also describes an original idealistic vision, growing pessimism, and a conservancy on the brink of dissolving. Both Hubert and Johan highlight their disappointment in a lack of legal recognition and uncertainty about the future. This uncertainty and the threat of land reform are common themes in the narratives of Piet, Jürgen, and Heidi. As these conservancy members explain, the threat of land reform incentivizes short-term self-interest and stifles on-farm investment. There was once hope that conservancies would help protect landowners' land and wildlife rights but, like conservancy participation, this hope is withering away.

The widespread disillusionment documented in this chapter stems from the politics of land, fear of a predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging. While some white landowners in Namibia sought a tool for managing and conserving common-pool wildlife, others saw conservancies as a strategy for survival in the face of land reform. Although a rumor once spread through rural Namibia that joining a conservancy could help protect land and wildlife rights, some landowners like Edwin now see this promise as a "bullshit story." Conservancy members have waited and hoped for the legal recognition they deem essential for success and security, but as years pass by without political change, their disappointment grows. By working together, white landowners have attempted to construct a new niche for themselves, yet their place in rural Namibian society seems uncertain.

The disillusionment of freehold conservancy members, therefore, is an apt illustration of the broader struggle of whites to belong in southern Africa. As anthropologists have demonstrated, whites have adopted a variety of strategies to establish a secure sense of belonging and defend their claims to land, legitimacy, and citizenship in a region where Europeans largely never became "normal". In Zimbabwe, whites have adopted a strategy of social escape. By investing themselves "emotionally and artistically in the environment", they have sought to "imagine" away the black masses around them (Hughes 2010: xii). In Botswana, whites have defended their assertions of belonging with extensive ecological knowledge and a "constant

articulation of deep emotional ties to the natural environment" (Gressier 2014: 2; 2011). For white landowners in Namibia, the formation of conservancies came to be seen as a strategy for survival and an opportunity to belong. Conservancy members have transformed their relationship to both wildlife and each other, yet as the threat of land reform remains, this strategy has left many disillusioned.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

This dissertation presented an ethnographic account of wildlife management and conservation on private land in Namibia. It focused on freehold conservancies, which are institutional arrangements for the management of common-pool wildlife, organized by voluntary associations of neighboring landowners. Freehold conservancies provide a unique case study of common property that illustrates how groups of neighboring landowners can use this type of arrangement as a tool for the management and conservation of wildlife on privately owned ranchland. By documenting this possibility, this dissertation helps us better understand how humans can work together in the Anthropocene to sustainability manage and conserve wildlife and other shared natural resources.

Drawing on anthropological data and information collected over 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork, this dissertation examined how and why these groups of white ranchers in Namibia have used common property as a tool for managing common-pool wildlife across boundaries of private land. I argued that freehold conservancies offered not only a tool for conservation, but also strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa. After acquiring extensive rights to the wildlife on their land, private landowners in Namibia still faced the challenge of managing this fugitive common-pool

resource. While some landowners sought to prevent overexploitation and enclosure, others saw conservancies as a defense mechanism against the state, as well as a strategy to escape the threat of land reform. By working together, white ranchers in Namibia have attempted to construct a new niche for themselves based on the conservation and sustainable use of African wildlife. Just as the devolution of rights gave wildlife on private land "value," white ranchers have strived to make themselves valuable in a society in which they yearn to belong.

Since the early 1990s, freehold conservancy members have transformed their relationship to wildlife and each other, contributing to the conservation of wildlife and habitat on private land. Yet, despite their accomplishments, many ranchers see their efforts as failing or falling short. A lack of legitimacy and legal recognition for conservancies has left landowners discouraged and disappointed that their strategy has not unfolded as expected, contributing to widespread disillusionment among members. This disillusionment, I argued, stems from the politics of land, fear of a predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging.

Understanding freehold conservancies, therefore, requires taking into consideration the broader context in which they are situated. Chapter Two described this context by providing an overview of Namibia, noting the country's racially skewed system of land tenure. Freehold conservancies encompass vast expanses of private land, which is at the center of an

ongoing, contentious debate about land reform. This arid and semi-arid savanna, which is divided into large, primarily white-owned ranches, also supports most of the country's wildlife (Barnes et al. 2013). Private landowners gained extensive rights over wildlife in the 1960s and 1970s, as explained in Chapter Three. Neighboring landowners formed the first freehold conservancy in 1992, just two years after Namibian independence and the collapse of apartheid.

The dominant narrative about the history of freehold conservancies is that collective action emerged as a rational response to the devolution of wildlife rights, which occurred nearly 20 years earlier. Freehold conservancies are portrayed simply as the result of a recognition of the benefits of working together for wildlife management and conservation. I argued in Chapter Three, however, that the emergence of freehold conservancies was driven not merely by policy change, incentives, or ecological concerns, but also by rumor, fear of government, and the politics of land. My argument is not that the dominant narrative is incorrect, it just fails to tell the whole story.

Chapter Three supported this argument by outlining an additional narrative using ethnographic data that illuminates the voices of landowners motivated by factors other than economic or ecological benefits of collaborative wildlife management. This chapter began by presenting historical background on conservancies, including an overview of the

devolution of wildlife rights and the expansion of wildlife-based land uses on private land. These changes, in part, created conditions for the emergence of conservancies, but as the chapter demonstrates, there were other contributing factors. I explained that after gaining proprietorship over wildlife on their land, private landowners still faced the challenge of managing this fugitive common-pool resource. As an alternative to the threat of enclosure, resulting from growing concerns about overexploitation, some landowners agreed to work together. Various other potential benefits and opportunities to improve wildlife use, management, and conservation also motivated collective action. However, while some landowners organized conservancies for these reasons, this chapter demonstrated that this is not why many other members chose to join. By describing their motivations related to rumor, fear, and the politics of land, Chapter Three provided essential information for understanding the disillusionment of conservancy members introduced in Chapter Four and detailed in Chapter Five. It also offered evidence that freehold conservancies emerged not only as a tool for conservation, but also as a strategy for survival in post-apartheid southern Africa.

Despite growing disillusionment, members of Kalkfeld Conservancy have organized a relatively resilient and effective system for managing shared resources, and most landowners continue to benefit from the wildlife on their land. Chapter Four provided an ethnographic portrait of this

conservancy, one of largest and most active groups in the country. Although Kalkfeld Conservancy is unique in its level of participation, cohesion, and cooperation, it also faces many of the same challenges as other freehold conservancies. These challenges relate not only to the coordination of wildlife use, management, and conservation, but also the corrosive issue of legal recognition—an essential ingredient for success and security in the minds of many members. Yet, in terms of the conservancy's objectives, this tightly knit, predominantly German-Namibian community has managed to be relatively effective at establishing a cooperative strategy for conservation and sustainable utilization. By presenting an ethnographic portrait of Kalkfeld Conservancy, this chapter illustrated how freehold conservancy members have transformed their relationship to wildlife and each other. It showed how neighboring landowners have used common property as a tool for the management and conservation of common-pool wildlife on privately owned ranchland.

In this chapter, however, I also argued that there are important stakeholders who do not share in the benefits of conservancies, and who remain excluded from opportunities to participate. Throughout freehold conservancies, including Kalkfeld Conservancy, a substantial population of farmworkers live and work on this land. These farmworkers form part of a marginalized and impoverished segment of Namibian society, as well as overlooked but vital stakeholders in freehold conservancies. While some

farmworkers clearly benefit from the game meat produced by hunting and access to abundant wildlife, I argued that freehold conservancies have done little to incorporate or incentivize these stakeholders, perpetuating Namibia's system of rural inequality.

Another group that should be considered important stakeholders in freehold conservancies are nearby resettlement farmers. These formerly landless individuals have recently acquired land from the state through state-run land reform programs. Because resettlement farmers occupy previously privately owned land, many of these farms are near or adjacent to freehold conservancies. Their land and wildlife use directly affects their neighbors in conservancies, and some resettlement farmers, as illustrated in Chapter Four, express a strong desire to engage with these groups, learn from their experience, and benefit from the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife. Therefore, as white private landowners increasingly share this landscape and its resources with non-white resettlement farmers, I argued that freehold conservancies have a valuable opportunity to work together with these new neighbors.

As Lindsey (2011: 69) has argued, "The failure of commercial [freehold] conservancies to integrate effectively with [black and indigenous] emerging farmers has created a perception among some sectors of government that conservancies represent a barrier to land reform. Such a perception is likely to ensure that changes in the legislation favoring the

development of conservancies are not forthcoming." I agree with Lindsey that, "Active efforts are required on the part of commercial conservancies to demonstrate to government a commitment to integrating with emerging farmers and facilitating their entry into WBLU [wildlife-based land uses]." Rather than 'circling the wagons', freehold conservancy members may find that a strategy of cooperation with blacks and indigenous people around them may "significantly improve the prospects of being granted a legislative environment favourable to the development and profitability of conservancies" (69), as well as more secure sense of belonging.

In Chapter Five, I returned to the widespread disillusionment among conservancy members. Through a series of seven vignettes, representing six different conservancies, this chapter used ethnographic data to document narratives of disillusionment and belonging. These narratives brought to light the debilitating issue of legal recognition, the looming threat of land reform, dwindling membership, decline in participation, and a loss of hope. The words of conservancy members also described the impact of uncertainty and insecurity, along with the unnerving fear that Namibia might "end up like Zimbabwe."

This chapter illustrated that while some conservancy founders shared an idealistic vision of collaborative wildlife management and conservation, many white landowners saw conservancies as a strategy for survival and an opportunity to belong. The success of this strategy, however, was believed

to depend on legal recognition and the legitimacy it could provide. Without it, conservancy members have become increasingly disillusioned because, despite their efforts to construct a new niche for themselves based on the conservation and sustainable use of African wildlife, their place in Namibian society remains uncertain. This chapter, therefore, supported my argument that the widespread disillusionment of freehold conservancy members stems from the politics of land, fear of a predatory state, and an insecure sense of belonging.

By providing an ethnographic account of freehold conservancies, this dissertation makes three primary contributions to the field of anthropology. First, it advances our understanding of the ways in which humans can work together to sustainably manage shared and valued natural resources. Humans face the challenge of devising institutions for the sustainable management and conservation of the common-pool resources we use and depend on. The problem is that there is no consensus on which institutions are most effective.

Scholars have debated the use of different institutions for managing common-pool resources, and anthropologists have played an important role in challenging the conventional wisdom that common property leads to tragedies of the commons. Instead, anthropological research has shown that common property can be an effective tool for the management of common-pool resources in a variety of situations. This dissertation contributes to our

understanding of the diversity, variability, and possibility of these systems by documenting a case study of common property among ranchers. I argue that common property can serve as an effective tool for collaborative natural resource management and wildlife conservation on privately owned land but, as illustrated by freehold conservancies, it is neither a panacea nor inherently equitable.

Second, as one of the only anthropological and ethnographic studies of freehold conservancies, this dissertation contributes to knowledge on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Namibia and southern Africa. Due to various factors, much of the anthropological work on CBNRM has taken place in areas of communal land, not on private land. There are important similarities and differences between community-based institutions on private and communal land, but these similarities and differences are not well understood. The collective efforts of private landowners are also seldom explored in depth within the literature on CBNRM, despite the interwoven histories of institutions such as freehold and communal conservancies in Namibia.

This dissertation begins to bridge this divide by presenting new anthropological data and information on freehold conservancies, but further comparative and integrative research is needed. Such research could improve our understanding of barriers and opportunities for collaboration between freehold and communal conservancies (Jones 2005). It could also

offer insight into the factors influencing the rate of conservancy formation. While the formation of new freehold conservancies is clearly impacted by the issue of legal recognition, as discussed in this dissertation, the declining rate of new communal conservancies is likely shaped by different factors including shifts in support and priorities from NGOs and international donors, with whom freehold conservancies have few connections. In the context of land reform, further comparative research could also aid the design of innovative partnerships and enhance anthropological engagement with resettlement farmers, some of whom—as described in Chapter Four—want to work together to conserve and benefit from wildlife.

Third, by focusing on freehold conservancies, this dissertation also contributes to the ethnography of whites in southern Africa. I argue that the story of conservancies and the widespread disillusionment among members offers an apt illustration of the strategies and struggle of whites to belong. Anthropologists have described this struggle and the variety of strategies adopted to establish a sense of belonging and defend their claims to land, legitimacy, and citizenship. In Namibia, as this dissertation has demonstrated, freehold conservancies emerged not only as tool for the management and conservation of common-pool wildlife, but also as a strategy for survival and an opportunity to belong in post-apartheid southern Africa.

By working together, white landowners in Namibia have attempted to construct a new niche for themselves in which they are just as valuable as the wildlife they manage and conserve. Despite their efforts and accomplishments, many landowners believe this strategy has failed or fallen short, contributing to widespread disillusionment. Understanding freehold conservancies and the lives of their members requires taking this disillusionment seriously. Their insecurity holds important implications for the future of wildlife and rural Namibian society.

* * *

Although this dissertation comes to a close, the story of freehold conservancies does not end here. Escalating tensions over land, race, and inequality throughout the region will likely shape the chapters that come, but also make this story particularly relevant now. In October and November 2017, white South Africans held demonstrations and blocked major roads in protest of the number, frequency, and state response to murders and violence against white farmers. Although the exact figures are highly contentious and contested, it is likely that hundreds or thousands of white farmers (as well as black farmers and farmworkers) have been killed in rural South Africa since independence, and many more have been violently beaten and brutalized. I imagine that many of the white Namibian landowners profiled in this dissertation are watching these events unfold in trepidation.

In Zimbabwe, white farmers have faced similar violence. Within two years after the beginning of the government's "fast-track" land reform process in 2000, in which paramilitary bands violently occupied white-owned farms, the number of white farming families declined from 4,500 to roughly 500. This state violence also resulted in the killing of "large, but unverifiable, numbers of black farm workers and displaced hundreds of thousands of them" (Hughes 2010: xi). Between 2002 and 2012, land reform reduced the number of white farmers in Zimbabwe to less than 300, leading to a substantial decline in agricultural production and exports, as well as the displacement and impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of farmworkers and their families (Derman and Kaarhus 2013: 9-10). Following the removal of Robert Mugabe from power in 2017 for the first time since the end of white minority rule in 1980, the fate of whites remains uncertain. Freehold conservancy members in Namibia have feared that they might one day "end up like Zimbabwe," but now their fear is likely that they might end up like white farmers in South Africa too.

Given this precarious situation, it is difficult to predict the future of freehold conservancies. Even if these groups of neighboring landowners can be successful in terms of wildlife management and conservation, they may not succeed in persisting within the broader political economic context of the region. While freehold conservancy members wait in anticipation for the legal recognition they deem necessary for success, their future may also

hinge on their willingness to incorporate, cooperate, and reciprocate with their new black neighbors, as well as the many impoverished farmworkers who often do not know what a conservancy is, or if they live and work in one. Conservancies can help overcome not only the physical barriers between neighboring landholders, but cultural ones too. Despite these challenges—which remind us that there are never panaceas and always a need to consider culture and context—I am confident that we can learn from freehold conservancies in our quest to understand how humans can work together to manage and conserve shared natural resources.

My confidence in freehold conservancies as a potential model for elsewhere comes largely from my observations and experiences within Kalkfeld Conservancy. It comes from observing an abundance of game and diversity of species in a ranching landscape in which neighboring landowners work together to manage their land for both livestock and wildlife. It comes from experiencing the integral role of wildlife in their rural livelihoods, from the food they eat to the hunters and tourists they host in their homes. My confidence comes from the giraffes that have spread outward from Ulrich's farm, the springbok that gather near Theodor's home and move across the boundaries of neighboring land, the impala that roam freely throughout the conservancy, and the cheetahs that coexist with ranchers who have come to value the wildlife around them. While some landowners once sought to eliminate oryx and other herbivores as unwanted competition, this

conservancy now includes some of the areas of highest abundance in the country. Private land supports nearly 90 percent of wildlife in Namibia, and freehold conservancies clearly play an important role. Although many conservancy members may not deem their efforts successful as long as they fear for their lives and land, these arrangements still provide us with a potential model for wildlife conservation in similar landscapes around the world. I imagine that these conservancy members would be pleased to know that their story is valued somewhere.

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