

Consequences of ‘Conservation’: A Critical Look at Namibian Communal Conservancies

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Today, the ideological foundation of protected areas is reason for alarm... [Protected areas] are developed in the context of economic growth – that is, ‘resource’ consumption. Revenue objectives of government will still be met and industry priorities will be catered to. It is scandalous to suggest this safeguards anything (Johnson 2005: 160).

Abstract

Each individual, organization and nation holds a different idea of “conservation”. The concept is so intangible, yet widely regarded in the developed world as a moral ‘good’ and possibly even a moral duty, now that “climate change” has become a household phrase. Conservation’s intangibility leaves much leeway through which unequalizing capitalist logic can maneuver. This paper addresses relationships among political, economic and social factors in the changes at play in the Kunene region of Northwestern Namibia, home to the indigenous Himba pastoral people and birthplace of the community conservation model. This post-structural political ecology approach in “new ecological thinking” focuses on how the institutional nexus of power, wielded through wildlife conservation, restricts continuation of alternative livelihoods. Conservation, understood as inherently ‘good’ in the discourse of development, holds disadvantageous consequences for traditional livelihoods, as is seen upon investigation of community-based conservancies in Namibia and their effects upon the Himba people. The aforementioned claim is examined through the case of the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) award-winning Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program in Northwestern Namibia. This paper explores the theory that conservancies, and nature reserves at large, tend to be the ‘beginning of the end’ for pastoralist livelihoods, as applied to the Himba.

Keywords: *Himba; Namibia; Conservation; Pastoralism; Conservancy*

Literature Review: Conservation as a Concept and a Construct

“The term ‘conservancy’ emerged in the 1970s in an apartheid-structured South Africa to describe the consolidation of exclusive rights over animal-wildlife among co-operating white settler farmers” (Sullivan 2001: 162). These “rights over animal wildlife” required static land tenure. However, pastoral people live a nomadic lifestyle and thus do not fit within the neoliberal economic model of private, fixed land tenure. This clash of systems creates conflict and confusion when land is to be divided. The lens of Political Ecology was first used to examine the unique land issues of nomadic pastoralists with Thomas Basset’s 1988 account of Fulani pastoralists in Cote D’Ivoire during the Sahelian drought. In reviewing this kind of issue today, development agencies may step in to referee conflicts over pastoralist land. Thus, two main commentaries develop: first is that of the development community, through governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the second is in the academic community. The former often views pastoralist activity as degradation and hence declares a need for nature conservation, while the latter has time and again shown

evidence to the contrary. However, when all goes well, they tend to support one another.

The issues of land tenure and resource use among pastoralist people have been discussed in both the academic and development communities since the 20th century, beginning with Garrett Hardin's 1968 paper 'The Tragedy of the Commons.' Hardin's thesis posits that the open access land tenure system of groups (e.g. of pastoral people) leads to their ultimate demise through overuse (overgrazing). According to this thought process, individual pastoralists would have nothing to gain from limiting the numbers of their own stock grazing on communally-owned land; any environmental benefit from restraint would be exploited by others, and as a result, the common land would be steadily overgrazed (Allan 1976, Lamprey 1983, Spooner 1973). This widely held view has been questioned in the face of a large body of contradictory data for decades, but the 'Tragedy of the Commons' idea is still prevalent in the layman's mind. Sandford (1983) highlights Hardin's lack of real data on desertification, overstocking, actual herd size and other crucial factors. The Tragedy of the Commons idea rests on the assumption that pastoralists are solely self-interested 'rational' actors looking to further their immediate personal interest – without regard for the future or other beings (Homewood and Rogers 1984). Various ethnographies describe a system very different from Hardin's, where indeed there is no tragedy of the commons in open-access pastoralist systems (McCabe 1990).

To assume a tragedy of the commons consequently constructs a perceived need to help pastoralists manage their rangelands. Assistance is then coupled with a drive to help restore certain wildlife lost during colonialism (cf. Currey 1998 for Namibia's colonial history of extraction). The conservancy system is yet another version of the white man's burden, though this time the victim to be saved is the environment. According to Kauffman (1998) it is clear that "within this environmental paradigm, wherein 'nature' is the victim and 'culture' the villain, multivarious cattle keeping practices are reduced to their negative effects on the environment. Burning and overgrazing become synonymous with pastoralism in one-sided anti-pastoralist hyperbole that generates donor interest in the crisis of the environment" (Kaufmann 1998: 126). All evidence to the contrary, Hardin's solution was privatization of land, which remains the ensuing plan of action to the present day. One of the most thorough critiques of Hardin comes from Eleanor Ostrom (1990), recent Nobel Laureate in Economics, whose eight design principles for successful communal resource management demonstrate how the commons system functions sustainably. Time and again since Hardin, studies have shown that pastoralists do not degrade the environment; livestock numbers do not exceed the area's carrying capacity; and localized social institutions successfully cope with environmental problems. Although many indigenous systems are sustainable, the clash with the mainstream capitalist system spurs the perceived need for help. Outside parties, like environmental activist groups for example, then step in to help indigenous populations manage wildlife refuges (and thus supposedly not overgraze the land). An opportunity then unfolds for these parties where it becomes easy to partner with development organizations, which hope to spur economic development through privatization of land and tourism within the indigenous community. This is what has happened in the case of the Kunene region in Namibia, with the World Wildlife Fund and USAID as the actors (cf. Sullivan 2001 for a grim report of the on-the-ground situation).

Since the turn of the century, discussion has increased among scholars regarding tourism as a lever for economic growth within African conservancies. Igoe (2004) writes about "Africa as an Ecocultural Theme Park," detailing the commodification of nature reserves and wildlife and, more recently, the indigenous

tribes of Sub-Saharan Africa. This idea follows Brunner's (2001) discussion of the "Disney dream machine" as a cycle in which fantasies are produced, and then the dreams are repackaged and sold to tourists traveling through Africa. Both accounts gesture toward the pretense of two assumptions: the first is that the profit generated by tourism will benefit or even reach underprivileged and indigenous societies; the second is the belief that the revenue will also go to protecting endangered species. These two premises account for what Igoe calls the "articles of faith" at the core of ecotourism. Igoe's 2004 *Conservation and Globalization* critically engages with the real effects of the National Park system, as an extension of colonialism, on the pastoral Masaai people of Kenya. Igoe hints that the situation on the ground is not necessarily what is promoted by NGOs or development agencies. Sullivan (2001) confirms this sentiment in the case of the USAID Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program in Namibia.

National Economy of Namibia vs. Economy of the Himba Nation

Stretching out over a high plateau between the Namib and Kalahari deserts, a land area of 824,494 square kilometers (more than half the size of Alaska), with a population of only slightly more than two million, Namibia has one of the lowest population densities on earth (CIA World Factbook 2009). The population is largely rural based, with more than 65 percent of citizens living on communally-owned land, one of the three predominant types of Namibian land tenure. Roughly 6,100 private farms occupy 44 percent of the land mass; communal lands encompass an additional 42 percent of the country, and a network of 21 protected areas account for the remaining 14 percent of the land (Weaver and Skyer 2003). At the turn off the century, roughly one out of every 12 Namibians was a member of a wildlife conservancy (Harring 2001).

After decades of warfare, first as a British colony and later occupied under German rule and South African apartheid, Namibia was one of the last African states to declare independence in March 1990. Namibia still hosts a settler population, largely of European descent, in both rural farming areas and in the capital of Windhoek (UN Habitat 2005). More than 87 percent of the population identifies with a tribal group, and Namibia's urban population, tribal or not, is only 37 percent of the total country's population (CIA World Factbook 2009); Namibia far from resembles the Western conception of modernity. Under a democratic republic, Namibia's capitalist economy is small and open, closely linked to South Africa. It specializes in meatpacking, fish processing, dairy production and mining (diamonds, uranium, zinc and gold); notably the service sector now accounts for 50 percent of all output and for most economic growth (The World Bank). A 2008 estimate for annual GDP per capita was 6,400 USD, and the total purchasing power parity-rated GDP was 13.28 billion USD (CIA World Factbook 2009). "While poverty has declined since independence, it remains high on account of very unequal distribution of income and assets (with a Gini coefficient of 0.6, inequality in Namibia is among the highest in the world) and widespread unemployment" (The World Bank).

In a 2008 International Monetary Fund (IMF) survey, the surveyors declared the Namibian economy as "promising," due to an increase in private and public savings (Allum 2008). According to this IMF survey, private and public savings are the key to Namibia's development. Between 2004 and 2006, the gross national savings rate of Namibia averaged 37 percent of the national GDP. This is nearly double the average GDP for sub-Saharan Africa and a good 60 percent higher than the average for lower-middle income countries (ibid). Namibia's economic deficiency, however, is its high level of unemployment, which the IMF mainly attributed to a lack

of skills in its 2008 report. This perceived lack is seen most clearly in the rural sector, where the unemployment rate averages 45 percent. The Kunene region (formerly the Kaokoland), wherein the pastoral Himba reside, has an unemployment rate of 40 percent (Allum 2008). The number of Namibians unemployed and “not looking for work” in the 2008 report totaled 115,162, about half of all unemployed Namibians. Both the World Bank and the IMF see amelioration of unemployment in the market sector, and thus job creation, as the answer to stronger growth in Namibia. The community conservancy system has been one of the largest mass movements in this direction, formally employing the rural unemployed through various institutional implementations, largely focused around tourism. The report did not account for traditional, self-sustaining lifestyles and therefore reported numbers may not fully reflect the section of the population who, though formally unemployed and without material wealth, is indeed largely self-sufficient. If more than half of the unemployed Namibians are not looking for work, they are likely sustaining themselves in the traditional sector.

In the Kunene region, the Himba live amid a semi-arid savanna divided by high mountain ridges in Northwestern Namibia, where they herd cattle, goats and some sheep. The Himba number from 12,000-18,000 people living south of the Kunene River, which divides the states of Namibia and Angola. Under colonial rule, this region was deliberately created in isolation and maintained as a buffer zone between different colonial regimes (first the British and later the German and South African on the Namibian side, and the Portuguese on the Angolan side). The name 'Himba' derives from the literal phrase, “people settling on the banks of a river” (Bollig 2006). As a pastoral people, the Himba have roamed northern Namibia for as many as 200-300 years. In the 20th century, the colonization of Namibia greatly affected the Himba, as colonial powers further isolated the tribe by imposing large trade restrictions on traditional livestock exchange (ibid). Since 1990, when Namibia became an independent state, the Himba's land has been at risk for development (“commercial interest of private enterprises”) through mining and dam endeavors (Ibid: 56). The Himba sustain themselves from the milk, blood and meat of their herd. To care properly for their herd and reduce their people's vulnerability to the unpredictable environment, the Himba use the buffering mechanism of mobility, moving their camp around 10 times each Gregorian calendar year (Jacobsohn 1990). The Himba practice thorough social risk management strategies (Bollig 2006) and have a long and deep relationship with the land, amounting to at least eighty years of “exclusive and uninterrupted occupation within the approximately four hundred years of steady occupation marked by the ebb and flow of droughts and wars” (Harring 2001).

When held to the standards of any pastoralist economy, the Himba are an exceptionally wealthy people with herds averaging 100 animals per household and reaching at least 500 for wealthy households (Harring 2001). Thus, the Himba's pastoral economic concept of wealth is quite different than that of the market economy in the mainstream capitalist world. “Economies based on indigenous technologies have been viewed as backward and unproductive because of the distorted concept of patriarchal productivity” (Shiva 1988: 11). While the goal of accumulation is parallel, capital on one hand and cattle on the other, the focus of the systems' perseverance diverges. Capitalism strives to acquire wealth and grow to produce yet more capital.

The Himba pastoral economy is based upon subsistence, and while acquiring more cattle and supporting a larger household is desirable, there is a balance deeply known and understood by pastoral people (Dahl and Hjort 1978). If a man has many

cattle but not enough members of his family to take care of his cattle, he will not succeed in sustaining his greater self: his household, his grazing land and his herds. If a man has too few cattle and too many mouths to feed, his plight is equally unsustainable. In general, a market-driven capitalist economy exerts an equilibrium force upon the beginning condition of capital accumulation (e.g. the balance of payments concept) but has no perceived limit to accumulation once said accumulation has begun. "In the market economy, the organizing principle for natural resource use is the maximization of profits and capital accumulation" (Shiva 1988: 8). Pastoral economies have a differential equilibrational rationale within which they strive to function to ensure subsistence and sustainability of their greater selves as well as of their livelihoods.

Namibian Communal Conservancies: An Un-sponsored Case Study

Various NGOs and development agencies are involved in development work in Namibia. As previously stated, in regard to the Himba and the Kunene communal conservancies, USAID has been the major player in funding these arrangements. This section lays a path to tour the structures at play in this case – a path that ultimately leads to a contradiction between pretense and reality. Development agencies such as USAID hail the conservancy programs, like the LIFE project in Namibia, as great successes. This attitude toward the program has spread to other institutions shaping the international political arena. One Namibian conservancy was awarded the Equator Prize, a United Nations-led initiative rewarding the efforts of communities that link economic development with conservation (Shigwedha 2008). Namibian communal conservancies are set around the agenda of wildlife conservation on the assumption that people indigenous to the area will assume responsibility to protect the wildlife only if they are given economic incentive. Often, this incentive is indeed provided by marginal income from trophy-hunting and tourism retreats. USAID website headlines read: "USAID helps restore wildlife and promotes tourism in rural areas of Namibia", and the "Conservancy movement reaps benefits in Namibia" (USAID.gov). USAID's partner in the Namibian conservancy mission, The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), has equally optimistic headlines on their website reading "Saving Lives and Incomes of the Rural Poor" (WWF 2009). These statements of success are made with a Western, neoliberal economic view of wealth, again neglecting the true interests of the indigenous people they intended to serve. The Himba have historically been one of Africa's wealthiest pastoralist groups with great wealth in cattle and in Himba offspring (Jacobsohn 1990) yet have been targeted by the LIFE program as a population in need of income advancement.

Namibia is a particularly interesting case for these projects, as it may be one of the only countries in the world that specifically addresses habitat conservation and protection of natural resources in its constitution. Article 95 states, "The State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting international policies aimed at the following: maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity of Namibia, and utilization of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future" (Center for International Environmental Law 2009). Even before Namibia became an independent nation-state, conservation and pastoralism crossed paths elsewhere in Africa. Homewood and Rogers (1984) discuss the Masaai of Kenya and the joint venture of Masaai land use with wildlife preservation. In regard to the future in a joint venture situation, the authors state that the "pastoral economy cannot continue indefinitely under prevailing conditions" (Homewood and Rogers 1984: 439). The Masaai/Kenya experience is largely reflective of the Himba/Namibia

situation today.

Supplemented by aid from other sources like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, USAID money goes to support Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) initiatives vis-à-vis Namibian conservancies. The published goal of the CBNRM project is to promote sustainable management of natural resources by giving local communities usufruct rights to wildlife management and tourism (USAID.gov). USAID is the second largest bilateral donor to Namibia after Germany. “Current US assistance to Namibia through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), to the tune of 80 million Namibian dollars, was scheduled to end in September 2005.” But the USAID Director in Namibia said, “...because of Namibia's impressive performance record in promoting economic freedom, ruling justly and investing in its people, we were able to make the case to USAID in Washington to extend USAID's programme in Namibia beyond the original 2005 through to September 2010” (ibid). This so-called promotion of economic freedom is in essence quite the opposite, as it greatly limits the freedom to choose any other economic alternative to social-capitalist relations. The large sums of aid have likely been the reason that the conservancies were unable to become self-sustainable in the first proposed USAID timeframe, and consequently USAID has continually had to renew its grants of aid since 1993 (ibid). This large monetary ‘assistance’ will be part of the new Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), which funds initiatives to improve the economies and standards of living in qualified developing countries. “The goal of the MCA is to reward sound policy decisions that support economic growth and reduce poverty” (Hamata 2003). The following section examines the lack of freedom and assumption of poverty leading to restricted alternative development paradigms in the case of the Himba and Namibian communal conservancies.

Analysis: Misconceived Poverty and the Undermining of Traditional Livelihood Practices

The idea of conservancy, as developed in South Africa, was first applied to communal areas post-independence in the 1990s. The impetus fell in 1996 with The Nature Conservation Amendment Act, when proprietorship of wildlife and concessionary rights to commercial tourism were granted to people on communal land. The Himba were one group of many communal dwellers. The ultimate ownership of wildlife remains with the state, and “while the legislative situation may be more progressive [in Namibia] than elsewhere, continuities with past priorities are clear” (Sullivan 2001: 165). This section addresses the Himba’s misconceived poverty status, as well as assumptions made by the premise of conservation programs (their underlying capitalist logic) and an overview of the power structure as reported by Sullivan’s ongoing field research. These elements culminate in imposing capitalist social relations, undermining the Himba’s subsistence economy.

When dealing with the wealth of a traditional society like the Himba, one must look at poverty not as lack, but rather as relative deprivation. Culturally-perceived poverty need not indicate material poverty. Subsistence economies are not poor in the sense of being deprived, yet the ideology of development declares them to be so, because those who engage in a subsistence economy do not often participate in the market economy, as they are satisfying most of their needs through self-provisioning (Shiva 1988). Acknowledging the differentiation between the traditional pastoralist and the global capitalist economies, as well as recognizing authenticity of “poverty”, one finds it quite difficult to assess the Himba people upon the guidelines of the prevailing development discourse or to apply the same indicators. Measurement of

GDP and the aforementioned high unemployment rate simply do not apply to Himba people. Traditional sectors function largely outside of the capitalist economic system, and therefore the Himba should not be held to the same poverty indicators or economic growth formulas for capitalist economic development. Rather, supra-capitalistic economic structures, those that transcend capitalistic social-economic relations, must be continued to preserve the strength, knowledge, historicism and environmental stewardship of the traditional sector. As mentioned before, the pillar institutions of the neoliberal global economic architecture, namely the IMF and the World Bank, advise Namibia to curb its unemployment rate and its high rate of HIV/AIDS for continued success in neoliberal economic development. Neither of these issues, however, describes the Himba people. The plight of an unemployed urban slum dweller does not equate to the situation of a wealthy Himba pastoralist, yet they are held to the same standard of 'impoverished people'. Additionally, according to UNAIDS, roughly 19.6 percent of Namibians aged between 15 and 49 are HIV positive, but the infection rate among the Himba is thought to be less than half of the national average. This relatively low infection rate is attributed to the Himba's homogenous society and successful pastoralist economy (IRIN Africa).

The capitalistic and "cultural perception of prudent subsistence as poverty has provided the legitimization for the development process as a poverty-removal project. But instead, as a culturally-biased project, it destroys wholesome and sustainable lifestyles [livelihoods] and creates real poverty" (Shiva 1998: 9). Despite the Himba's clear differentiation from the rest of the nation-state, Namibian conservancy programs follow a one-size-fits-all formula, and programs like LIFE's CBNRM do not even mention the word 'Himba.' Furthermore, these programs, which are hailed to have "clear benefits for people as well as wildlife," undermine Himba pastoral livelihood. Reports specify goals and gains of the conservancy program as strengthened local institutions and governance as well as increased community cohesion (World Resources Institute 2009). Just as Hardin's 1968 thesis assumed that pastoralists do not have a means to avoid ecological change, statements like the preceding assume that rural Namibians, like the Himba, do not traditionally have strong institutions, governance or community cohesion. Yet Himba society does indeed have strong, functioning traditional institutions and governments headed by pastoral chiefs. Himba prosperity, coupled with isolation and a bilinear family structure, has created a "remarkably cohesive social structure" (Harring 2001). Additionally, strong community cohesion has likely aided in the Himba's historical survival as a large ethnic group with high rates of inter-marriage as well as continuation of the society during drought or warfare (Jacobsohn 1990). Upon investigating social risk management, Bollig (2006) deduces that the Himba social network is strong, and when in trouble, the Himba first turn to extended family members for aid.

The implementation of the CBNRM program has proven to be yet another way to push hegemonic values, in this case those of USAID and a US neoliberal agenda at large, onto societies in the periphery, identified in a pity-ridden phrase by USAID as "historically disadvantaged people." In Buddhism, pity is understood as an outpouring of empathy stemming more out of the need to ease one's own sense of guilt than true compassion. Most development workers on the ground are foreigners, frequently entering the situation without much understanding of the Himba societal structure, function or economy. This begs the question of who really holds the power in conservancy meetings, who is able to attend those meetings and who dictates how a decision (to begin a tourism sector, for example) will be implemented. Based on his continuing fieldwork, Sullivan (2001) explores the actual success of the CBNRM program and attests to these unequal power relations and concludes that CBNRM "is

not the radically and quantitatively different approach to conservation it claims to be”, and “rather little income will remain after the running costs of the conservancies have been covered” (Sullivan 2001: 179, 173). The result is an extension of the colonial-development relationship, which tends to result in the pushing of a Western agenda (and its constructs of success) on people not yet integrated into global capital-social relations.

This hegemonic power structure, woven into the very fabric of communal conservancies, has led to — and according to some (Jones 1999, as cited in Sullivan 2001), ultimately served for — privatization of communal land. The Kunene region, a high desert plateau broken up by mountain ridges, has for the past few hundreds of years provided vast expanses of land needed to support a pastoral economy (Harring 2001). When the Himba no longer have access to these extensive grazing pastures, off of which they have lived for hundreds of years, they become much more vulnerable to climatic variability, as they can no longer use mobility as a key strategy for risk management. Thus, only after the conservancies are established do USAID statements such as, “because climatic conditions are highly variable, there is a need to diversify economic activities” hold truth for these people. Prior to globalized market integration, over hundreds of years, the Himba have developed a successful system of mobility to reduce their vulnerability; only when pastoralist grazing and reserve lands are separated, privatized or restricted do climatic variations impede pastoralist livelihood enough to require economic diversification (Igoe 2004).

Another question to ask is: whose best interest is in mind while creating these programs? Who is making the most money from the Kunene region’s newly-bustling tourist market? After all, tourism is a sector in which the largest sums of money are made by multi-national airline and accommodation companies as well as any wealthy colonial descendants leading hunting safaris, photographic journeys or cultural excursions. The conservancies only receive a small cut of the big picture (for more ecotourism critique and analysis, see Johnston 2005). Additionally, while nature conservation officers and tourists may welcome the return of wild animals, the Himba may have a different perspective. The conservancy system and reintroduction of mega fauna onto communal lands threatens not only the safety of the Himba and their children, but also that of their herds and domestic agriculture, which combined form the three main pillars of Himba livelihood.

It may be exhilarating to view a lion, elephant and rhino from the safety of a vehicle, but the view from a sapling or a dung shelter is very different. Sharing a spring with dangerous wild animals means having to be constantly alert. Kaokolanders know, far better than most Westerners, that left alone, wild animals are usually not dangerous. But they also know that they or their children could be killed, albeit accidentally, if they carelessly walked too near an elephant or rhino in the thick riverine bush on the way to the spring at Purros or elsewhere. There is also a risk to the people’s subsistence economy: elephants may trample gardens, lion may kill stock... It is very easy, from the perspective of the people who have to live with wildlife, to understand the conflict of interests

(Jacobsohn 1990: 55).

Considering the hegemonic power structures at play, the restriction of land and the small monetary benefits (not to mention the dangers presented from reintroducing mega fauna onto communal land or the enticement of a Western lifestyle) the Himba

have little choice other than to walk away from their traditional livelihood practices and join a conservancy. Even if the LIFE Community-Based Natural Resource Management program's successes were to be actualized for the Himba, they would still be deprived and experience yet another form of poverty: as the Himba saying goes, "a man is nothing without cattle" (Jacobsohn 1990: xi).

Conclusion: The Way Forward

"The paradox and crises of development arise from the mistaken identification of culturally perceived poverty as real material poverty and the mistaken identification of the growth of commodity production as solving basic needs" (Shiva 1988: 11). The awards and general favor won by the USAID CBNRM and similar community conservancy programs are based upon the assumption that there is a need for economic diversification. The international acclaim given to these organizations fails to recognize the inequality in the power relations during implementation and maintenance of such programs (Sullivan 2001). When combined with the situational compromises of indigenous people (loss and privatization of land, resources, mobility etc.) these unequal relations leave the Himba little other alternative than to step away from the traditional pastoral livelihood and join the ranks of Namibian conservancy members.

In facing a capitalist myopia, this research points to a need for development agency workers to recognize capitalism as just one mode of production and economic structure and consider that there are indeed alternative, successful modes of economic arrangement and survival. "One by one we can unearth our own humanity from the faceless heap of consumerism, to understand the chain of cause and effect between world markets (our consumer demands) and exploitative relationships (industry abuse)" (Johnson 2005: 161). This newfound respect for alternative economies (most commonly encountered today with subsistent indigenous peoples of the world and in intentional communities) must then be posited into policy. Such policies would focus on programs that do not rush to incorporate the traditional sector into the global capitalist society, but rather set up institutions of autonomy in which differing economic systems can coexist. The reality of this, of course, relies upon an assumption that all indigenous people (e.g. the Himba) wish to remain practicing their traditional ways of living, and this would be a rather naïve claim to make. Since the tourist boom, which began as far back as the 1980s, "the influx of Westerners in four-wheel-drive vehicles has created new appetites and aspirations among the Kaokolanders who now seek Western foods, particularly addictive substances, such as sugar, tea and coffee, and Western goods, including tobacco, alcohol, plastic containers, buckets, blankets and medicines" (Jacobsohn 1990: 55). Though, without respect to the end result of desire, the *values* driving such desire stem from uninformed exposure. This non-holistic, partial and possibly biased exposure occurs in Namibian society due to tourism and during childhood at school. Over her many years of field work with the Himba, Margaret Jacobsohn has reported that once children go away to schools with Western curricula in commercial areas, they return to insult their Himba parents:

Inherent in Western education is the certainty that western perspectives are the basis for all rational thought and action. Our towering technological prowess appears to 'back-up' this 'fact,' in spite of the plethora of quality of life and life-threatening problems spawned across the world by the unwise application of technology. But no child—nor any rural teacher—is likely to question the assumed link between

technological expertise and wisdom. So, for the time being, Himba children will continue returning home from school convinced that their parents are backward, ignorant and dirty... Perhaps, quite simply, the future can best be met if past ethical values are fused with carefully selected Western values into a truly integrated modern African system of education

(Jacobsohn 1990: 53-4).

If a nature conservancy is to actually preserve the natural world (in addition to allowing for multiple sets of standards for evaluating the well-being of a population, changing policy appropriately and expanding the viewpoint of African education) the modern conceptualization of nature must be reassessed. In order to approach more realistically the subject of conservation, one must change the Cartesian (*objectifying*) way of viewing nature. We often chant the mindless mantra "save the earth," though we humans have not the presumptuous ability to do so, as we are just one species on this planet, and the dynamic organism of the earth will continue long after our species disappears. Albeit, we can stop killing many of earth's living systems, but to truly reconcile our position we must realign our place in the natural state of affairs by overcoming anthropocentrism and restoring ideas of interdependency. Beyond the objectification of nature is the objectification of indigenous people, the least disturbed of whom still live in systems that coexist and harmonize with the natural world. Once this shift in consciousness has come about, one can come to recognize indigenous people as fellow members of the human species rather than objects to be examined, from whom we take home souvenirs to remember.¹ Only when this deeply ecological ("home knowledge" from Greek) way of thinking reinvents policy will everyone be able to exist in equanimity.

The necessary conditions under which the conservancy program will cease to undermine alternative livelihoods are full and non-binding land rights for pastoralist groups like the Himba to continue pastoralist practices and minimize vulnerability through maintained mobility. "The exponential rate at which conservancies are now being formed thus might be an attempt on the part of communal area inhabitants to establish rights to land and resources in the absence of any other legitimate way of doing so" (Sullivan 2001: 166). The obstacles set up to prevent transpiration of this last solution take course in the Westerner's agenda of tourism and the possibly undeserved praise for the conservancy program. USAID reports did not look completely realistically at the situation on the ground. Re-evaluation is needed in real terms, not just statistical, neoliberal development-inspired terms of success. Once again, the Himba should not be held to development standards or be discussed as part of Namibian at-large/urban development plans for the sake of continuation of their successful pastoralist economy; for this fails to acknowledge the stable subsistence economy in place before external interaction.

Even if their traditional livelihood is to become completely undermined, the Himba culture will remain, as it must, for the sake of commercial 'authentic' tourism. If from nothing else, then it will remain from the otherness exerted by foreign tourists coming to buy Himba goods and indulge in a 'traditional village.' The traditional shell of red ochre butterfat mix may stay on the cultural skin of the Himba, but the knowledge held within the body of their people may escape easily through their accelerated interactions with Western constructs and influences. Cultural decline is not the principle field of worry; loss of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are what may disappear.² Himba indigenous knowledge is so deeply rooted in the daily practice of cattle herding, a sustainable livelihood trampled by the seemingly-

endless herd of opportunity provided by Western social-capital relations. The case of the Himba is merely a symbol of the worldwide loss of Indigenous Knowledge, largely caused by the unnecessary invasion of social-capital relations as a one-stop solution to all challenges of today.

¹I wish to add a disclaimer on clear romanticism yet still advocate for purity in the face of homogenizing social-capitalist relations.

²For further reading on the importance of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge, see Moore 2009, Battiste and Henderson 2000.

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