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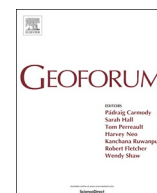
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‘Local hunting’ and community-based natural resource management in Namibia: Contestations and livelihoods

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ABSTRACT

The argument in this paper is not commonly made in the conservation literature. We argue that ‘poaching’ and ‘illegal hunting’ are inadequate concepts for understanding why local forms of hunting persist despite their being banned and criminalised. A ‘poacher’ ‘poaches’ because a set of institutionalised rules recognises and identifies him or her as such. Instead, we propose to use the concept ‘local hunting’ and ‘local hunters’. We also argue that conservation policies and specifically the creation of environmental subjects, conservancy’s distributional politics and a contrasting ontological foundation of community-based conservation play keys role in explaining the continuity of ‘local hunting’. More space is needed to situate local hunters and their hunting practices and motivations in the broader conservation discourse and policies.

1. Introduction

Hunting by people who live and work in environments relatively well endowed with wildlife has, over time, been redefined as ‘poaching’, as an illegal practice not sanctioned by statutory law (Bell et al., 2007; Hitchcock, 2000, 2001; Muth, 1998). The concern for poaching is against the background of a substantial reduction in wildlife populations in the Southern African region during the turn of the last century’s due to excessive and uncontrolled commercial and sports hunting, and illegal poaching (Adams, 2004; Carruthers, 2007, 2005). Prior to and after Namibia’s independence in 1990 the intensity of ‘poaching’ was considered to be considerably high and had driven many species, especially elephants and rhinos, to near extinction (Owen-Smith, 2010; www.traffic.org). There is evidence, however, that poaching has slightly reduced the last years (The Guardian, 2017; <http://www.poachingfacts.com/poaching-statistics/>).

This paper problematizes and questions the analytical adequacy of notions like ‘poaching’ and ‘illegal hunting’. These are highly problematic and contested terms and have different meanings for different social actors in different socio-cultural and legal contexts (Hebinck, 2019; Carter et al., 2017; Bell et al., 2007). ‘Poaching’ or ‘illegal hunting’ is also interrogated without incorporating the underlying values, practices of hunting and distribution, and knowledge repertoires of people and their interactions with the natural environment. Nor are the emerging realities in community-based conservation projects and

programmes and their relative achievements and little impact on local well-being taken into account when ‘hunting’ is debated (Lubilo, 2018; Nuulimba and Taylor, 2015; Kellert et al., 2000). The conservation debate loses in this way sight of hunting by local people as contesting how conservation, including community-based, is modelled and practised. By not taking these realities of contestation into account, it makes notions like ‘illegal wildlife hunting’ equally problematic (Duffy et al., 2016:15).

The objective of this paper is to incorporate the multiple meanings of hunting and expressions of contestation in the analysis. We propose to coin the notion ‘local hunting’ as an alternative to other notions of hunting like ‘poaching’ and ‘illegal hunting’. ‘Local hunting’ is conceptualised in this paper as performed, as culturally and nutritionally significant as well as that it manifests aspects of contesting the distributional politics of conservation projects and the ontological foundation of the predominant market-based conservation discourse. A key argument we advance is that CBNRM renders ‘local hunting’ invisible which we explain by the way environmental subjects are created in and through the formation of conservancies. This requires a methodology that situates hunting in the daily realities and struggles in conservancies and to make the ‘local hunter’ and their motivations visible. We provide in this way ample space for ‘local hunting’ in contemporary conservation discourses and debates.

The paper is divided into five sections. In the first section, we briefly describe our data sources and make a distinction between the various

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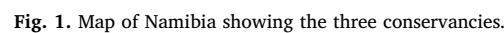
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between two additional layers of analysis as the recorded data on hunting cannot so easily be taken at face value. Both the context and social relations, and the purpose of data collection require a critical examination. The fifth section relates 'local hunting' to attempts of the state and NGO's to create environmental subjects. Lastly, we offer some

conclusions.

2. Data sources and approach

We limit ourselves to hunting that takes place in community-based conservation contexts in the Zambesi region of Namibia. We draw on data from longitudinal work in three conservancies: Wuparo, Sobbe and Kwandu (see Fig. 1). One of us worked and lived in the conservancies for over 8 years. Data collection began in 2009 when hired by the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) to assist the three conservancies to be gazetted as a legal entity. This gradually evolved into a PhD-study about conservancy formation processes, impact on livelihoods and benefit sharing (Lubilo, 2018).

Our methodology hinges on capturing the voices, experiences, explanations and practices as well as of the mapping of the relevant social actors involved. We focussed primarily on picturing the hunting and not so much the trade. Being present over a longer period of time and having regular informal talks with numerous members of the conservancies in their capacity of managers, committee members, game guards and ordinary members about conservancy issues (i.e. benefit sharing, job creation, conservancy politics) established substantial rapport. We held 20 interviews with specific questions about hunting (i.e. whether they supported it or were against it, what they knew about it) and during which names of hunters were mentioned who might be willing to talk about their hunting. Through snowballing (Bernard, 2006) 75 men and women were found willing under the condition of anonymity to answer questions about who hunted in their household, what was hunted, how and why.

To calibrate the data about hunting from observations and interviews, we collected Event Books and other conservancy records. The Event Book is a data sheet designed by the World Wildlife Foundation to facilitate the monitoring of game and poaching activities (Stuart-Hill et al., 2006). The data are collected by appointed conservancy game guards. The Event Book contains a list of animals, earmarked by government ecologists at the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), that can be hunted as a trophy by professional trophy hunters, for own-use hunting, for traditional ceremonies and for scientific or disease control and research purposes. The Event Book similarly captures surveillance data (i.e. sightings of ‘poaching’, the number of snares spotted and recovered, ‘poaching’ arrests made and human-wildlife conflicts). The data are then compiled and filed at the Conservancy office for anyone to see. These weekly Event Books are aggregated to form a monthly report and finally an annual report. The annual report is sent to the MET and guides decision-making on the yearly hunting quotas. Event Books and other basic data about conservancies (i.e. sources of income, management meetings) are also available from the Namibian Association of Community-based and Civil Society Organisations (NACSO) and can be downloaded from the website (www.nacso.org.na). Since there is a tendency to under-report ‘poaching’ activities in participatory monitoring exercises (see also Knapp et al., 2010; Kahler and Gore, 2012), we complemented data collection with participating in four different game counting and patrol missions. This served to observe how data are captured and to interview them about their reporting of poaching cases and potential arrests.

3. Conservation, conservancies and hunting

Critically engaging conservation discourses by purposefully providing space for hunters and their hunting demands moving away from using established notions such as ‘poaching’ or ‘illegal hunting’. Interestingly, we found that most local hunters refer to their hunting as ‘poaching’; the term has clearly been absorbed into the local discourse, which is partly a reflection of the trickling down of global conservation discourses. ‘Poaching’ is too easily coined as a container concept, too narrowly understood from a legal perspective, and too simply assumed to be destructive and impacting negatively on biodiversity (Ripple

et al., 2016; Romanelli et al., 2015; Sink et al., 2012). ‘Illegal’ hunting is perceived similar to ‘poaching’ and portrayed as a threat to poverty reduction (Khumalo and Yung, 2015; Sethi and Hilborn, 2008; Bowen-Jones et al., 2003). That protecting biodiversity is formulated as a Sustainable Development Goal only nurtures the view that enduring poverty drives ‘poaching’ and that poverty reduction is a spin-off of conservation (Kahler et al., 2013; Sachs et al., 2009; Adams et al., 2004). The attribution ‘illegal’ is real to the hunters, who fear the prospect of prosecution although they certainly do not see their hunting as illegal but rather, as cultural, as providing food for the family and a means of earning cash. Nor is its role as providing protein for rural and urban consumers properly valued (Nielsen et al., 2018; Van Velden et al., 2018). Hunting or ‘poaching’ for that matter clearly surpasses economic needs only (Bell et al., 2007; Muth and Bowe, 1998).

Continued use of ‘poaching’ not only criminalises but also complicates hunting in the broader conservation politics and policies. It leaves important political questions unanswered: whose laws are being trespassed, or whose cultural rights are being ignored. It likewise obscures that conservation agendas and discourses predominantly hinge on privatising the conservation of nature and biodiversity (Levine and Wandesforde-Smith, 2004; Sullivan, 2006). Quite a few scholars refer to this as a neo-liberal discourse, one which facilitates and legitimizes the appropriation of nature by capital (Büscher and Fletcher, 2015; Dressler et al., 2010; Brockington and Duffy, 2010). The coining of ‘poaching’ also leaves unquestioned that conservation discourses have been largely dominated by networks of conservation-minded global elites, philanthropists, royalty and tourism entrepreneurs marketing nature for pleasure and profit (Van der Duim et al., 2012; Spierenburg and Wels, 2010; Draper et al., 2004). The conservation practices that flow from such networks limit the role of the majority of people, including the local hunters to being game guards, skimmers, cleaners, servants, and makers of tourist products.

The networks that connect rural communities in Africa with the global consumer of nature require a critical questioning, and they are being questioned and challenged. The emphasis on privatising and the marketing of nature has made the distribution of nature’s benefits between the various stakeholders as well as the interpretations of nature-culture associations that legitimise such use and distribution subject to negotiation and contestation (see for instance Pasmans and Hebinck, 2017; Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014; Sodikoff, 2007). Conservation becomes, what Long (2001) has conceptualised as an arena: a space where issues, resources, values and representations are contested and battles over meanings are fought out (Long, 2001:40,59; see also Olivier de Sardan, 2006).

Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) is or has evolved as such an arena (Lubilo, 2018; Bollig, 2016; Nuulimba and Taylor, 2015). CBNRM has specifically been promoted as a model for conservation in the communal areas in Africa to turn rural dwellers into stakeholders of conservation and to become the ideal environmental subjects (ref. Agrawal, 2005). By devolving resource rights to rural communities and by establishing mechanisms of control and redistribution of the use and benefits of the natural resources, communities legally obtain and share the economic benefits of their harvesting and marketing (Nelson and Agrawal, 2008; Fabricius and Koch, 2004). Providing alternative sources of income, containing illegal hunting through anti-poaching patrols, and nurturing an anti-poaching culture would prevent a further loss of biodiversity and strengthen the sustainable use of natural resources.

3.1. Conservancies

In Namibia, conservancies are the legal entity for community-based natural resource management. Currently, there are 83 registered conservancies, covering 163,017 km² with over 189,230 people registered as members (www.nacso.org.na). After independence in 1990, the state devolved the rights to manage and legally reap the benefits from the use

of natural resources to local communities which, after gazetting, are called a conservancy. These are conceived as territory-based communities and legal entities governed by the constitution with a constitution that specifies and codifies the role of managers and that of elected committees in the day-to-day management (Lubilo, 2018; Bollig, 2016; Nuulimba and Taylor, 2015). Their role entails organising regular general meetings at which decisions are debated, appointing staff and deciding how to distribute conservancy income. Those in managerial positions of power and decision making are expected to raise awareness in the community and implement social and community projects that add value to the livelihoods of conservancy members. They also have a key role to play in anti-poaching campaigns and negotiate with external partners (e.g. trophy hunters, tourist lodge owners) for co-management deals. Conservancies are an assemblage of activities (small-scale farming, fishing, community-run campsites, artisanal curio making, trophy hunting, local hunting, annual management meetings) and social actors (international visitors, conservancy managers and committees, chiefs and headman, foreign trophy hunters, cleaners, game guards, representatives of MET and NGOs like the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)).

Conservancies, applying Agrawal's (2005) Foucauldian inspired frame of analysis, serve to create environmental subjects. The people making a living in conservancy territory are expected to perform as environmental subjects; as a community bound by the rules and regulations of the conservancy, as codified in the conservancy constitution (Lubilo, 2018; Schnegg, 2018; Bollig, 2016). Environmentalism captures the workings of disciplining institutions that, without any apparent coercion, manage to make people act in certain ways (see also De Vette et al., 2012; Li, 2007). The Constitution and the Event Book are good examples of environmentalism exercising what Schnegg (2018) has qualified as social control. The Constitution is an essential ingredient of the design of the conservancy formation process (e.g. fixing boundaries, sharing costs proportional to use, and formal sanctioning). It supported their gazetting but also provided means for control and disciplining. We also include the Event Book as operating as a regulatory device that exhibits the subtleties of direct rule, but also the various indirect mechanisms and discourses that encourage people to (self-)regulate their behaviour so as to act as expected by the outside world – the state, donors and NGOs (see also De Vette et al., 2012; Neumann, 2001, 1998). The success of CBNRM is largely determined by the degree to which the creation of environmental subjects succeeds, implying in turn that local hunting or 'poaching' is contained.

3.2. Conceptualising 'local hunting'

To investigate hunting practices in conservancies in Namibia we prefer 'local hunting' as analytically and empirically more adequate and sufficiently distinct from 'poaching', 'illegal hunting', and hunting for trophy, sports and venison. We conceptualise, drawing on Richards (1993) and (Long, 2001), hunting as a practice, as a performance. Invoking the notion of performance allows us to escape from a narrow focus on the legal and regulatory dimensions of hunting and incorporate agency, motivations, culture, networks, relationships, experiences, emergent structures (i.e. laws, regulations, markets, conservancies, constitution), knowledge, skills, ontologies and hunting technologies in the analysis. By 'local' we mean both the arena in which hunting is debated and the sites of hunting and consumption. While making such a distinction, we should be aware – and not ignore – that 'local hunting', 'poaching' and hunting for venison and trophy co-exist and co-evolve in interaction with or as a reaction to each other. The implication of mutual shaping is that we should not deconstruct 'local hunting' in isolation from other hunting practices as interactions amongst and between these may gradually blur the distinction (Hebinck, 2019).¹

The hunting we encounter in Southern Africa and beyond is performed by social actors, but these are significantly differentiated in

their livelihoods conditions and potentially understand nature-culture relations differently. Trophy hunting is embedded in global networks linking global professional hunters and their associations to private game farms and conservancies (Cloete et al., 2015; Brandt, 2013). They hunt for the trophy only, which is highly contested and debated (Koot, 2019; Batavia et al., 2018; Muposhi et al., 2016). Venison hunters, on the other hand, are predominantly drawn from the region and hunt for money and food for themselves, and the outdoor experience. Venison hunters are mostly of urban origin (Cloete et al., 2015). 'Local hunting' is likewise culturally significant, but the products are also used for medicinal and spiritual purposes and a source of protein, cash and barter for local rural livelihoods (Nielsen et al., 2018; Romanelli et al., 2015; CBD, 2011; Lindsey et al., 2013, 2011). Such hunting is depicted in the conservation literature as hunting for 'subsistence' or 'bushmeat hunting' (Van Velden et al., 2018; Fa et al., 2015; CBD, 2011). Another salient difference is that 'local hunting' in contrast to 'trophy hunting' is not practised out in the open; local hunters do not really show their kill and certainly do not brag like trophy hunters (Pasmans and Hebinck, 2017; Carruthers, 2010; Forsyth and Marckese, 1993). The narratives we collected from hunters in the conservancies attest that they dislike trophy hunting because of the way trophy hunters hunt.

Hunting at a scale beyond mere subsistence and local, regional and global trade could be said to have emerged in the 19th century, during the heydays of the colonial conquest. Hunting wildlife became a sport for the colonial and imperial elite, predominantly of British origin, it was fashioned by the pleasure of killing wildlife as well as by the lifestyle it was embedded in (Adams, 2009; Beinart, 1990; Carruthers, 2008, 2005). In contrast, notably in the southern African region, *trekboers* and other pioneering settlers of mostly Dutch and British origin saw hunting as an economically rewarding activity. They hunted like their African counterparts for subsistence and traded skin and meat but did not necessarily share the pleasure and recreational values of wildlife (Carruthers, 2008:187). The combination of hunting for sport, subsistence and trade, with the increased use of firearms rather than only snares, spears and bow and arrow, contributed to a substantial reduction in wildlife populations in the region (Bollig and Olwage, 2016; Carruthers, 2007; Adams, 2004). Public opinion about hunting started to change in favour of conserving wildlife; gradually conservation or preservation became a key societal objective (Carruthers, 2017). By the turn of the 19th century, conservation laws and agreements were drafted to prevent and contain a further reduction in wildlife.

These laws – some of which formed an essential core of state environmental and agricultural policies – dramatically reshaped the appropriation of nature on private, state, and communal land. The first laws of this kind were introduced in the then Transvaal (now Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Gauteng and part of North West province) in South Africa in 1858. The 'Wet tot het beter regelen van de jagt op olifanten en ander wild in de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek' (Law for the improved regulation of the hunting of elephant and other wild animals in the South African Republic) (Carruthers, 1995:12) aimed to stop hunting in summer when human diseases were at their most virulent, cut down on the amount of wildlife that was needlessly killed (by sports hunters), and prevent African and foreign visitors from hunting (Carruthers, 2010:256–257). By extending private property rights over wildlife to private landowners and the state, a similar set of acts were implemented a century later, converted wildlife from a common property resource to private property. This furthered commoditisation by allowing (private) landholders to legally use wildlife commercially and designated any hunting of wildlife not sanctioned by these laws into, by legal definition, an illegal practice (Kahler et al., 2013). Prime examples of these more recent laws are the amended Wildlife Act of 1975 in Zimbabwe, followed by changes in wildlife legislation in 1991

¹ Taxi-hunting (see Kamuti, 2016: 277, 279; Hebinck, 2019) is a good example.

in South Africa and in Namibia in 1996 (Child et al., 2012). The acts likewise facilitated the formation of a CBNRM programme in the region.

All hunting, including 'local', is regulated and sanctioned by a series of laws and regulations. The designation 'local' does not imply it is unregulated. Hunting was prior to colonisation and the enactment of statutory laws, sanctioned by the tribal rulers and culturally regulated (Murombedzi, 2003; Hinz, 1999, 2003). Specific species could not be hunted because of taboos (e.g. you do not hunt your totem), or could be killed only with the consent of the chief or king. There were – and there still are – local rules on how the trophies would be treated; trophies like elephant tusks and lion skins would usually be given to the chief as a gift, showing support, and used for traditional ceremonies (Hebinck, 2019; Murombedzi, 2003; Stiles, 1981). Relations of barter for predominantly regional markets (Lindsey et al., 2013) and locally shared interpretations of the ecological dynamics of the fauna and flora are significantly shaping 'local hunting', particularly what is hunted, and when (Berkes et al., 1995; Hitchcock, 2000). However, the market is not necessarily an *explanans*. This is too easily assumed by Brashares et al. (2004) and Bowen-Jones et al. (2003). 'Poaching' is but driven by global market demands (see Gao and Clark, 2014; Montesh, 2013; Hauck and Kroese, 2006). It is particularly associated with crimes against wildlife and the slaughter of animals for ivory and skin (i.e. rhinos, lions and elephants), with violence, organised crime and trafficking of wildlife (Pires and Moreto, 2011). Montesh (2013:9) points to the role of African-based Asian syndicate leaders in the supply chain, suggesting links to organized crime groups such as the Chinese Triads already resident in South Africa. The crimes against wildlife provide in turn legitimacy for implanting anti-poaching measures in securitisation infrastructures (Büscher and Ramutsindela, 2016; Massé and Lunstrum, 2016; Duffy, 2014).

4. Wuparo, Sobbe and Kwandu conservancies

Tables 1 and 2 provide background about the conservancies. They generate employment opportunities for the conservancy community. Table 2 shows next to numbers of people and income, how expenditure is distributed between the expenditure categories. Conservancies generate income from trophy hunting and eco-tourism. Wuparo and Kwandu have a co-management agreement with a tourist lodge. Comparing Tables 1 and 2 also shows that only a small portion of the community receive wages or allowances. In 2012, the three conservancies employed 38 game guards (12 in Wuparo, 13 each in Sobbe and Kwandu). There are 130 people in leadership positions (i.e. appointed managers and representatives from villages) in the three

Table 1
Salaried positions in the conservancy (2012).
Source: Conservancy staff financial records (2012).

Job title	Wuparo	Sobbe	Kwandu
Conservancy manager	1	1	1
Office clerk	1	0	0
Enterprise officer	1	1	1
Bookkeeper	1	1	1
Secretary	0	1	1
Treasurer	0	1	1
Field officer: anti-bushmeat hunting	1	1	1
Forest guards	0	0	3
Community game rangers (game guards)	12	13	13
Cleaners	2	2	2
Security guards	2	0	0
Resource monitors	4	6	6
Campsite staff	3	0	0
Total	28	27	30

Note: this is the information for 2012. There is some variation in the number of staff on the payroll from year to year. The averages given in Table 2 are slightly different.

conservancies: 64 in Wuparo, 118 in Sobbe and 48 in Kwandu. Each conservancy has four salaried management positions with, respectively, 8, 4 and 13 community representatives receiving allowances. The chairman receives some N\$1300 while area representatives earn about N\$500 monthly. Table 2 shows that some 25% of total income is paid out as staff salaries and allowances to committee members across the three conservancies. The monthly salary of game guards is about N\$1000. Over the four years, Wuparo Conservancy has spent on average some 52% of total income on wages for scouts, conservancy committees and other staff, and 40% on allowances and pay-outs to participants in conservancy projects. The remaining income was spent on running costs such as travel, scouts, guns, vehicle maintenance, meetings, skills training and other miscellaneous expenses. Between 2009 and 2013, Kwandu Conservancy spent 48% of total income on salaries and allowances, and running and other associated costs included some 50% while, in the same period, Sobbe spent some 2% of total income on wages, and allowances and another 67% on running and other administrative costs. With regard to cash dividends and pay-outs, Wuparo paid an average of N\$192 per adult individual per annum, with Kwandu and Sobbe spending very little to N\$32, respectively. This information is made available for everybody to see and ask questions about at general meetings, which are regularly held. These salaried positions in the conservancy are usually filled at community meetings or through interviews, depending on the method each conservancy committee decides to apply. It is these positions that are scrambled for.

Some conservancy members are employed in joint-venture partnerships, such as hunting camps and tourism lodges which offer a very limited number of permanent jobs that are aligned with seasonal business operations. The hunting season runs from May to December each year, while tour operators running tourism lodges operate from March to December. These tourism jobs include a mandatory one month's unpaid leave for staff each year. Tourism jobs include workers who are employed at safari hunting camps which are also seasonal – from January to about November each year. Hunting camp jobs include trackers, skimmers, waiters, chefs and general staff, who are deployed to undertake various assignments at the hunting camp. These camps provide a mixture of full-time and seasonal employment. Safari and tour guides, drivers, room attendants, waiters, cleaners and general staff usually work for at least nine months a year during the tourism season. On average, there are about 30 such jobs per conservancy.

Most conservancy residents are considered poor and rely largely on farming (Khumalo and Yung, 2015). Most make less than N\$3000 per annum from their various livelihood activities (Lubilo, 2018). Agricultural production from their fields is affected by elephant- and baboon-raids on their crops, but also by drought and floods. Given their low formal education and training, their chances of getting a job in Windhoek or South Africa are rather slim. They have limited livelihood options alternative to what the Conservancy has to offer. Accessing employment opportunities that the conservancy offers is thus critical although only a few can be and are effectively employed by the conservancy. Use of natural resources in the form of hunting and gathering, and some casual labour are among the few options for value-added activities in the area. Game guards receive a regular annual income of about N\$12,000 while those appointed as managers earn between N\$25,000 and N\$35,000 making them and their families the greatest beneficiaries of the conservancy programme.

5. What is being hunted, how, and why

Table 3 contains data from the Event Books that provide some insight into the intensity of local hunting. The categories are those used in the Event Book sheets. 'Commercial' can be taken to mean hunting for barter and for cash, while 'subsistence' stands for what locally is referred to as meat 'for the pot'. Apart from Event Book data, narratives from hunter narratives provide evidence for the extent of local hunting. Other indications are the fireplaces one encounters in the bush and

Table 2Average conservancy annual income and expenditure (N\$), 2009–2013.⁴

Source: Compiled from conservancy account books and IRDNC financial reports (2009–2013).

	Wuparo				Kwando				Sobbe			
Conservancy income	686,862 ²				167,020 ²				277,216 ²			
Total conservancy membership	2600				3400				2000			
Average income	264.18 ²				49.12 ²				138.60 ²			
Expenditure	Number	Annual	Per beneficiary	% of total income	Number	Annual	Per beneficiary	% of total income	Number	Annual	Per beneficiary	% of total income
Committee allowances	64	47,167 ²	737 ¹	6.9	48	23,556 ²	491 ¹	14.1	18	32,820 ²	1823 ¹	11.8
Salaries staff	28	120,035 ²	4287 ¹	17.5	24	55,546 ²	2314 ¹	33.3	23	24,610 ²	1070 ¹	8.9
Project beneficiaries	1500	287,673 ²	192 ¹	41.9	2000	2000 ²	1 ¹	1.2	957	30,448 ²	32 ¹	11.0
Running costs	n.a. ³	219,768 ²	n.a. ³	32.0	n.a. ³	85,718 ²	n.a. ³	51.3	n.a. ³	188,279 ²	n.a. ³	67.9
Number of staff	5	12,220 ²	n.a. ³	1.8	2	200 ²	n.a. ³	0.1	3	1060 ²	n.a. ³	0.4
skills training												
Total	n.a. ³	686,862 ²	n.a. ³	100.0	n.a. ³	167,020 ²	n.a. ³	100.0	n.a. ³	277,216 ²	n.a. ³	100.0

¹ The salaries per category of employment are averaged. Not all on the payroll of the conservancy earn the same salary.² All amounts are averaged over a five-year period. This was done as not all budget items were fully recorded and accounted for in the conservancy account books.³ n.a.: no data available.⁴ The exchange rate US\$ and Nam \$ varied between 1:12 and 1:14 between 2009 and 2014.**Table 3**

Reported cases of 'local hunting' in Wuparo, Kwando and Sobbe.

Source: Conservancy Event Books, 2008–2016.

Year	'Commercial'			'Subsistence'		
	Wuparo	Sobbe	Kwando	Wuparo	Sobbe	Kwando
2008	0	5	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	2	n.a.
2009	2	1	45	2	0	0
2010	1	0	0	1	0	0
2011	0	0	1	0	3	0
2012	0	0	1	0	0	0
2013	0	0	2	0	4	2
2014	n.a. ¹	1	0	0	1	0
2015	n.a. ¹	1	0	0	1	0
2016	1	1	1	1	0	0

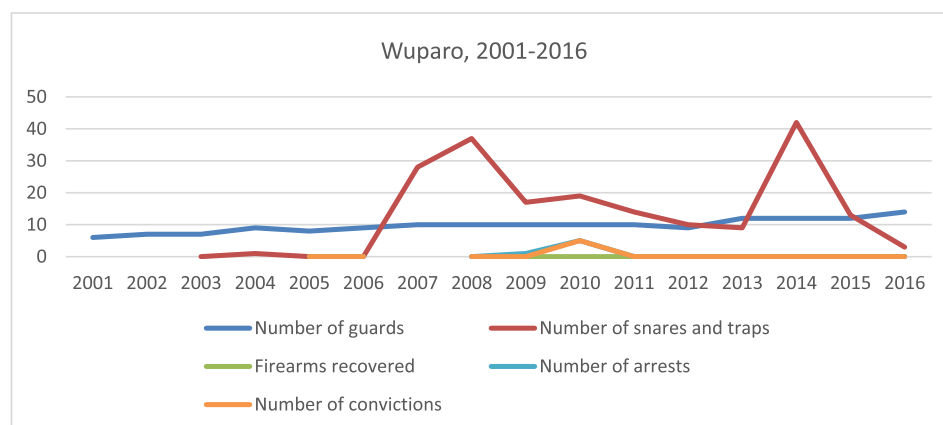
¹ n.a.: no data available.

occasionally also leftovers of the roasted meat and bones.

Figs. 2a–2c, also based on the conservancy records, are indicative of local hunting activities. Fig. 2a shows that in Wuparo five people have been arrested for 'poaching' and five have been convicted in 2010 alone. In Table 1, we see that Sobbe conservancy recorded only a few cases of subsistence hunting but four cases of 'subsistence poaching' in 2013, which involved elephant hunting. The latter was immediately

blamed on foreigners (from Zambia). Fig. 2b shows that one or two firearms were recovered in Sobbe over the last decade, with between two and four arrests annually and even fewer convictions. Interestingly, the number of guards on duty has almost doubled almost during the same period. At Kwando, hardly 'subsistence' hunting activities were recorded; only two in 2013, while 'commercial' hunting occurred on 45 occasions in 2009 (see Table 3). The official arrests stand at 11 for 2005, and two convictions for the same year. There was a noticeable peak in snare discovery in Kwando in 2004, 2005 and 2009 when respectively 105, 44 and 33 snares were confiscated. The high number of reported 'commercial' hunting cases in Kwando is partly explained by a MET- and NGO-led campaign to step up monitoring of hunting activities. The recording is also not always accurate. We found in our conversations with the game guards that the boundaries between the categories 'commercial' and 'subsistence' are not always crystal clear and interpreted in similar ways. The same goes for the sudden spikes in convictions in the three conservancies.

Table 4 provides clear evidence that hunting takes place and a first indication why. The table is only a snapshot of the intensity of hunting during 2014. Hunting is performed in networks and relationships with their close kin and family friends, some of whom are employed as game guards. The criminalisation of any form of local hunting has made local hunters change their hunting practices to avoid being caught and sent to jail. Bound by the constitution of their conservancy, they adapted

**Fig. 2a.** 'Poaching' incidences in Wuparo, 2001–2016.

Source: Event books 2001–2016 for Wuparo.

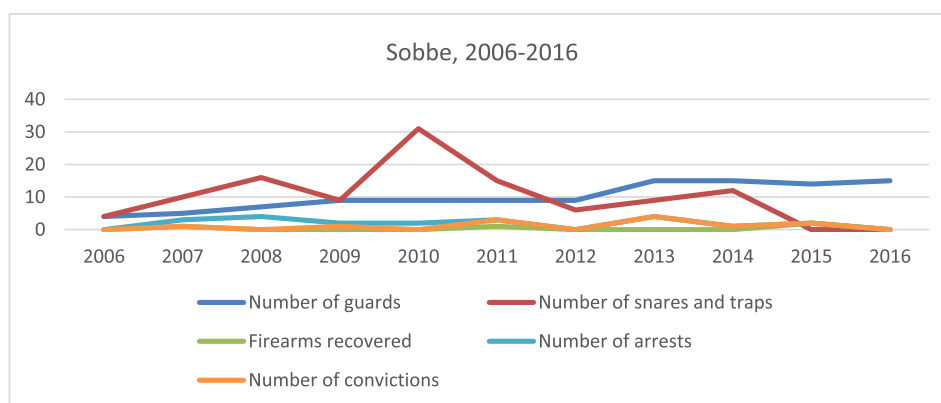


Fig. 2b. 'Poaching' incidences in Sobbe, 2006–2016.

Source: Event books 2006–2016 for Sobbe.

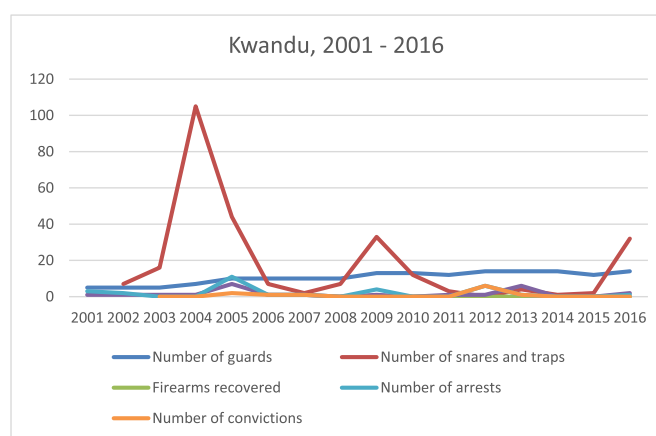


Fig. 2c. 'Poaching' incidences in Kwandu, 2001–2016.

Source: Event Books 2001–2016 for Kwandu.

Table 4

The extent of local hunting (n = 75).

Source: Own survey (2014).

	Wuparo	Sobbe	Kwandu	Total
<i>Reason for hunting by members of their household</i>				
Pot/meat – women	7	9	5	21
Pot/meat – men	11	13	12	36
Barter/exchange – women	3	2	4	9
Barter/exchange – men	4	1	4	9

their hunting to the timing of game guards' patrol and their ways of working while on patrol, as well as their complex social relationships with conservancy members. Through their networks, relatives and connections, they are alerted about when to go out hunting and when not to. Hunters say that they will regularly hunt whenever an opportunity arises, that is when there is a need for protein for the family or when they know that the conservancy game guards are not on patrol. They could go for hunting depending on either twice a week or more once or twice a month. Sometimes even daily. They say '*it is an operation that you have to plan*'.

The plan entails not just hunting in the bush. They also hunt near their fields which are located outside the communal areas at the fringes of the conservancy territory. This makes it difficult to monitor their activities. They set up hunting traps near their fields to eliminate animals that give them trouble such as baboons, bush pigs, monkeys, sometimes even lions.

Our data reflect what is written in the 'bushmeat' literature (see for instance Schulte-Herbrüggen et al., 2013; CBD, 2011; Lindsey et al.,

2011, 2007; Golden, 2009; Hayward, 2009). Depending on the ecological zone, mostly smaller antelopes, such as bushbucks and grysbok, and other species such as rabbits and warthogs are hunted. The commonly used tools are traps, snares, trenches, bows and arrows, spears, occasionally poison and also headlamps that are used to search for road kills at night. Despite one occasionally hears hunters talking about muzzle-loading guns, the use of guns is rare because of the danger of being caught by game guards who would pick up the sounds of the gunshots and make a chase.

The spatial dimension and how widespread the hunting and the trade of bushmeat in the Zambesi Province and the role of women of Namibia is currently being investigated. What we do know is that men usually do the hunting. Women are known to be involved in the local hunting chain as traders and as those who prepare the meat for their family. The role of women in trade in bushmeat is well covered in the literature (see for instance Lowassa et al., 2012a,b; Coad et al., 2010; Mendelson et al., 2003).

5.1. 'Local hunting' as a legitimate practice

Hunting is predominantly perceived as legitimate and sanctioned as such by conservancy members. Hunting for food, hunting as a birthright and hunting as an integral part of people's cultural repertoire are offered as explanations of why they hunt.

'I am able to buy myself something once I kill an animal, as am able to sell, buy some basics for my family. I am aware of the state that they have police to arrest us but I always pray that am not caught' (a local hunter in Sobbe).

'We cannot stop poaching; it's our way of life. We use it for relish, we kill small animals for survival. The animals can't finish, and safari hunters are the ones who finish our animals because they kill all the big ones' (an anonymous hunter).

'I stopped being involved in hunting when I started having alternative sources of income, by rearing chickens, goats and growing cash crops, but many local people, especially the poor, have developed good hunting skills and that to stop them from doing the vice does not make any sense in the absence of alternative choices' (a farmer at Sangwali.)

Table 4 summarizes the results of our interviews. The majority (57) indicated that they or a member of their household hunt for domestic use ('for the pot') to supplement their diet with protein from the wild, including fish, small mammals and antelopes. A smaller number (18) said that they hunt for barter to exchange meat for sugar and maize meal or they hunt to sell. Lindsey et al. (2007), Fusari and Carpaneto (2006) and Kahler et al. (2013) report similar findings.

'We also know what animals we can kill and not kill; for us, we hunt

for our families, we don't want to get rich, we just need for our pot. But those who kill elephants are poachers because they kill, remove the ivory and run away, leaving the meat to rot; that is not good, so those are poachers who should be arrested, not us who kill for relish' (a hunter from Wuparo).

Local hunting is also legitimised as a cultural practice which strengthens the feeling that hunting is not perceived as illegal but as an essential livelihood asset. Hunting from a cultural perspective revolves around an intimate association between humans and non-humans. Taught by their parents how to hunt, makes hunting part and parcel of an intergenerational transfer of knowledge and skills. This makes hunting an integral part of socialisation processes: at a young age, boys learn hunting skills, tactics and techniques from their fathers and learn about the behaviour of the various species of wildlife. This is also revealed in the way hunting is talked about. The animal is seen as part of the social and vice versa, creating specific, localised ontological realities. This point is well developed by Ingold (2000, 2005), Gombay (2014), Mavhunga (2014) and Blaser (2009). Their ontology implies that certain species cannot be hunted without an elder's intervention or the performance of rituals.

For many, hunting is seen as a birthright. 'You are born with it' is a common expression. Author1 managed to interact and engage with local hunters to get an idea of the meaning of 'poaching' as a God-given right to use the game in their environment. Some expressed anger for being referred to as 'poachers' as they felt insulted. 'How can someone who does not live here with us refer to us as poachers just because we harvest our own resources? We are just good hunters and above all, we have kept this wildlife for many years,' explained one of the local hunters in Sobbe.

'It is our birthright as inherited from our forefathers that we should hunt wild games for meat, and use it in such a way we want. In the old days, we used to hunt for the whole village. When I come from hunting I would distribute the meat to all the people in the village, but today because of the government, we cannot openly do that; we hide because they have criminalised hunting of game which is not good. We will continue to hunt because we are entitled to eat meat and government can't stop us in order to make foreigners rich' (an inhabitant from Sangwali).

These sentiments are commonly shared by many of the conservancy members, including the young ones who added that:

'Hunting is our right, and we should be allowed to hunt, and the conservancy should engage the government to change the laws – what do we benefit? Nothing, so when you hunt, you are able to have food for the family (a hunter from Sangwali).

This hunter explained that he normally hunts smaller species such as warthog, impalas and grysbok because these are meant for food and are easier to kill.

'I used to hunt other big species like buffalo but nowadays, the law is bad, I only kill small game, using sometimes snares, just to have meat to eat. You see we don't get meat, it is only shared by the staff at conservancy office'.

Hunting is likewise perceived as an art or a skill; a performance. Author1 hails from a rural African village in Zambia and enjoyed local hunting from a tender age. In this process, you were not sent to hunt, you hunted with your peers and you learned the skills by performing and enjoying the art of hunting. Being a good hunter made you feel proud. Such skills are acknowledged, including the firing of muzzle-loading guns during a funeral to signify your prowess in hunting history. Some local hunters make use of traditional charms for a successful kill or to be a good hunter. Use of charms in hunting is something that is deeply rooted: if you want to be a successful hunter, you need to learn the art of using local charms to hunt without problems. This can be disputed by others who have not experienced or learned about it, but

this is a reality for many renowned village hunters.

'You need to have some form of charm to be a good hunter. Some animals are dangerous, and sometimes, other people can plan that you are killed while hunting, so you have to learn from the elders, traditionally, how to protect yourself from attacks. We have examples where hunters have been killed by animals because of witchcraft' (a witchfinder in Masida).

The father of the first author attested to this understanding when he told us that a 'you need to select which people to go out hunting with because some of them use charms, including anti-snake bite, to hide from game guards, or their enemies, and prevent incidents such as unlucky things befalling you. He explained an ordeal, where his brother survived a hyena attack caused by an evil charm. One of the hunting troupe members was given medicine (traditional charms) to plant in the place where his brother was going to sleep. The hyena, which is believed to be a shy animal, came running straight to where he was sleeping but because he had his own form of charm protection he foresaw a hyena coming and when it came close, he shot and killed it. To the surprise of the team, the person who had planted the bad charms cried that he was scared and wanted to go back to the village to see if his grandfather was alive. When interrogated, he revealed what he had done: his grandfather had given him some charms to plant where the brother was going to sleep, so that when he appeared in the form of a hyena, the brother would continue sleeping and then the hyena (grandfather) would bite him and he would die in the bush. Unfortunately, the charms backfired on his grandfather because the hyena was shot and died a few metres away. Since this old man had taken on a magical form, people in the village did not know what he had done and were surprised with his sudden sickness and eventual death. This is but one of the 'traditional' realities of the interaction between nature and culture and the relationships between humans and non-humans that connect people to wildlife in rural Africa.

6. Ordering and interpreting the data

Interestingly, the data in Table 4 and in the Figs. 2a–2c. do not at all compare to our data in Table 3. There is a clear underreporting of 'local' or 'illegal' hunting in the Event Book reporting which makes 'local hunting' invisible. We explore here the discrepancy between our data and the Event Book data. When ordering the data we have avoided, as Latour (2005) advises, making a-priori distinctions between 'rich' and 'poor', or between 'powerful' and 'powerless' or 'witchcraft' and 'wisdom'.

Our aim is not to discredit the guards who do the monitoring but to underline that conservancy governance is embedded in and shaped by relations of power between and among conservancy members and the state. We understand the Event Book data collection as structured by relationships of (extended) family and kinship as well as community power relationships and conservancy politics. At the same time, state-community relationships and trust are at stake. In the paragraphs that follow we situate the hunting practices in the midst of the complexities of community conservation practices and discourse.

6.1. Event Book data as socially constructed

'The problem is with our game guards, they don't want to arrest their friends, they know them but they are friends, they don't want to see them go to jail. If people who hunt small game were tried at the khuta [traditional court], many people would be arrested because they would be punished locally, but now, if they are arrested they will go to jail for many years, leaving behind their children to suffer. You understand that some of them poach to assist their families' (induna from a Wuparo village).

'Most of the people involved are related to the conservancy officials, and some are related to the game guards; how you expect them to be

arrested, they can't arrest them' (a conservancy official at Sobbe). 'We get our salary that is fine, so why arrest people, our own parents, no it is not fair but we work hard, you can see there are no arrests, poaching is gone, maybe in other conservancies' (a game guard from Sobbe). 'We know people who poach but we can't report them, some of these people can bewitch you if you report them' (a Sobbe conservancy member).

These quotes articulate the tense relationship between conservancy governance, the communities' kinship structure, power relations and the role of tribal leaders. The guards and conservancy leaders are drawn from the community which is an assemblage of various kinship groups and their loyalties are often with their own ethnic group (Lubilo, 2018; Schnegg and Kiaka, 2018; see also Sodikoff, 2009, 2007).

The data captured by the game guards need to interpret in this context which makes that the data cannot be as straightforward interpreted as presented (see for instance Sheil, 2001) and as Danielsen et al. (2010, 2009) want us to believe. Under-reporting 'poaching' in participatory monitoring exercises is well known (see also Knapp et al., 2010; Kahler and Gore, 2012). As a consequence, little quantifiable data are available about how much is hunted and whether or not local hunting is a sustainable form of utilising nature. The Event Book data are misleading because while a few official arrests have been recorded, there are more activities, deemed 'illegal' that are not reported and made invisible. Some conservancy members express their disappointment with the game guards for their failure to apprehend offenders. They, including the hunters, commented that the community game guards 'have something to hide' or 'somebody to protect'. Many guards have been compromised along the way.

'Poaching is still taking place, the game guards are deliberately not apprehending the people involved in poaching, and they are not serious' (a villager from Kwandu).

'Conservancy officials have lost control, and are not worried about the poaching because the hunters are targeting small species, which is not linked to commercial purposes' (a local hunter from Sobbe).

We also need to be aware that extracted data on the quantity and quality of hunting are derived from those who engage in hunting and who normally tend to be reticent about their activities. This is aptly illustrated by the following quotes.

'They use snares to kill small animals, and it's difficult to know that people have snared an animal; people nowadays, hide their meat, they don't serve game meat to visitors. If you Rodgers you go in the village, they will serve you beans, but when you leave, they will eat the meat because they fear to be arrested' (a game guard from Sobbe).

'It's difficult to stop local hunting, people snare when they take their cattle for grazing, and you can't stop people from taking their cattle for grazing. Others claim to be fishing but they set snares and catch the animals. It's a problem, we are trying to educate them ... it is better now than before' (John Mulauli, Chairperson, Wuparo Conservancy).

Moreover, as one of the game guards pointed out during a game patrol mission in Wuparo that 'we cannot expect that a guard arrests his uncle [who is known as a hunter in the conservancy RL/PH] for poaching'. These processes and relationships complicate the interpretation of data.

The Event Book data are also problematic from another angle. Danielsen et al. (2010, 2009) argue that the data are very effective for decision-making. Kahler et al. (2013) comment, however, that the current monitoring system is not robust enough and lacks the spatial component. Our experience brings in another element: that of the relations between the state and experts (MET is this case) and the conservancies. It appears that such data – whether accurate or less accurate

or not – are often ignored, or not taken seriously by MET during their yearly sessions with conservancies to determine quota. Local conservancy officials told us that their input is often discounted by MET. The conclusions, MET officials argue, that conservancy members draw from the data are evaluated as not based on sound ecological and scientific knowledge and therefore have the potential to endanger wildlife populations. This point was clearly made in a quota-setting workshop that one of us attended in Windhoek at MET-headquarters on August 28, 2014. It was also argued that local community observations are inadequate as they would always want more animals in the quota for trophy-hunting purposes.

Underreporting of poaching incidences is explained by the role of the traditional leadership and authorities. The Chief and his Indunas and their Traditional Authority Courts (TAC) traditionally played a role in disciplining hunters, generating in this way their income through the imposition of fines for minor cases. They thus enjoyed financial reward and also reinforcing their traditional control over the use of wildlife resources. For a long time, the Tribal Authorities have been demanding that the TAC's should deal with cases related to hunting small species and that the state should handle only the cases involving rhino and elephant poaching because of its global sensitivity and economic value.

'We used to control the subjects on what to hunt, what time to kill, especially during ceremonies, funerals and rituals, and our people used to listen to indunas and headmen, but now you have the conservancy, unfortunately, no one listens to them so people poach, they kill at will. People, here they eat meat, others sell in Katima but you can't see them, they hide. The government should give power back to us, the traditional leaders; we will be able to control the people because we know them' (induna, Sheshe).

However, their demand is viewed with suspicion by government and NGOs. Their insensitivity to the issue of traditional leadership practices and their failure to understand the motivations for hunting have resulted in compromised local leaders who do not report hunting by community members.

Stories and accusations of witchcraft are common and widespread and add to the reason and explanation why data on hunting needs to be seen in context. Witchcraft, to quote Geschiere (1998: 814), 'is supposedly used as a levelling force, undermining inequalities in wealth and power, but the same force is often supposed to be indispensable for the accumulation of such wealth and power. Witchcraft is both jealousy and success. It is used to kill but also to heal. It is evil but it can be controlled and used in a positive way; and so forth'. Game guards fear being bewitched by hunters; they do not want to risk leaving their families behind to suffer (see also Geschiere, 2008).

6.2. Selling success

There is another element that complicates the interpretation of the data. Preventing and reducing illegal hunting is among the reasons why conservancies are formed, promoted and funded and are considered among the successes of community-based conservation (Nuulimba and Taylor, 2015; Owen-Smith, 2010; Vaughan and Long, 2008; Nelson and Agrawal, 2008). It is also an obligation to show success (Büscher, 2014). Hence data about conservancies, their management, income generation and distribution, anti-poaching and so on are freely available to all, to the conservancy community as well as for donors, consultants and researchers. Obscuring 'local hunting' here is an essential ingredient of achieving that success. This makes interpreting the data from the Event Books far from a straightforward process. The monitoring is rather incomplete and erratic, and there is a substantial difference between what is recorded and what actually happens in everyday reality.

Many of the people we spoke to, including the game guards, community leaders and ordinary community members, mention that local hunting is not only real and even increasing but also that the

responsible people are deliberately ignoring the trend for fear of losing their job. Their livelihood depends on the future of the conservancy programme and success is needed; even if the success is constructed. Making local hunting invisible is thus an important strategy for both conservancy members and managers. The Event Book and the data reporting are proof of that.

7. Hunting as a contestation of conservancy

‘Local hunting’ beyond the level of individuals and their networks, also takes us to interrogate the mechanisms through which conservancies attempt to create environmental subjects. ‘Local hunting’ is evidence that not all members of the conservancy comply. We interpret it as a manifestation of contestation of the community-based conservation model. We make a distinction between contesting the distribution of benefits from community-based conservation and the overarching ontological foundation of the conservation discourse. Both trigger and discursively support ‘local hunting’ as legitimate.

7.1. Conservancy benefit distribution

The ordering and functioning of conservancies are challenged; questions are frequently raised by conservancy members during the annual general meetings (see Lubilo, 2018 for an account). The broader CBNRM-literature is likewise critical about the income-earning capacity of conservancies of trophy hunting and (eco-) tourism. The mode of distribution hotly debated. The struggle for conservancy jobs, income from projects and pay-outs is well documented (Schnegg and Kiaka, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2016; Lapeyre, 2015, 2013). Angula et al. (2018) point out that the cash-generating capacity of trophy hunting for the Conservancy and its members is appreciated but, as Koot (2019), Lubilo (2018) and Schnegg and Kiaka (2018) show in detail, it is the distribution which is challenged and adds to why people hunt ‘illegal’.

The benefits that conservancy members derive from conservancy activities take different forms. A major avenue is through wage employment and allowances to which one is entitled as a representative of the various layers and villages of the conservancy community. Tables 1 and 2 capture the realities of conservancy benefit distribution. Only a small number of people and their immediate families reap the monetary and other material benefits. Getting a salaried position is not straightforward. Based on interviews with the game guards, we managed to get the following picture (Table 5).

The employment criteria favour elites, friends and close relatives of traditional leaders and those linked to field staff of supporting NGOs and state agencies. This excludes those without connections within the community, and they respond by being disobedient in order to maintain the current situation. There are many permutations within this state of affairs: some local hunters, for example, have also developed networks with outsiders to provide a ready market, making local hunting a form of employment for those involved.

‘Hunting is a form of employment for us, we are not educated and we can’t find jobs, so we hunt to support ourselves, that is the only

thing we can do’ (local hunter at Kwandu).

Local hunters convey in their narratives that for them, hunting means, simultaneously, survival and protest against exclusion and elite capture. They feel excluded from any distribution of the benefits in terms of paid jobs or projects and have valid arguments to continue hunting. Most local hunters have little or no formal education, are poor and marginalised and will not be absorbed into the current management systems that require some level of education. Hunters came to realise that the distributional politics of community-based conservation largely benefit the conservancy elites, the educated, those in influential positions.

‘When there are jobs, we are not employed; they need educated people, they also employ their own children and friends, so for me, I keep quiet and kill whenever I get chance, because if we talk they don’t like us’ (a local hunter at Kwandu).

‘When we kill an animal we either exchange for basic essentials, sugar, money, clothes, etc., and we can survive, but when we stop, where will we get money and who is benefiting from this conservation’ (a local hunter at Wuparo).

‘As long as we remain poor, we will continue to hunt the game, and we are ready to go to jail if arrested because we have no choice; look here, since we started the conservancy, we are not employed, it’s the same people, and those educated who gets the jobs’ (a local hunter at Sobbe).

‘The elite is in control and they benefit both from salaries and also from those who kill animals because they are somehow related’ (a teacher from Sobbe).

Some scholars attribute the failure of community-based programmes to the weak institutional control mechanisms, which create ideal opportunities for local elites to syphon off substantial shares of local resources (Lubilo, 2018; Schnegg, 2018; Platteau, 2004). The phenomenon of elite capture and favouring is well documented in the community-based conservation literature (Balint and Mashinya, 2006; Dzingirai, 2003; Muyengwa et al., 2014).

7.2. Local hunting as a contestation of the conservation discourse

Treating ‘local hunting’ as a silent manifestation of contestation of the discourses that underpin community-based and other forms of conservation, allows for an analysis of counter-discourses. It simultaneously opens doors for a critical appraisal of the ontological foundation of community-based conservation. ‘Local hunting’ challenges the ubiquitous emphasis on monetarizing nature and its products and services. Such view on nature is not shared but rather contested in ways which are mostly hidden from the public eye (see also Bell et al., 2007). Monetarizing nature to achieve conservation implies not only the banning of illegal hunting but also simultaneously ignoring the existence of other, contrasting interpretations of nature-culture relations. Discarding localised ontological foundations of ‘local’ hunting renders ‘local’ hunting invisible, however. It is one of the mechanisms – or the technologies of government to refer to Agrawal’s (2005) notion of

Table 5

Employment of game guards and their relationships, 2012.

Source: Face-to-face interviews.

Conservancy	Number of guards	Non-relation	Relationship to area representatives	Relationship with TA ¹	‘Reformed poacher’ ²
Wuparo	12	1	4	4	3
Sobbe	13	3	6	2	2
Kwandu	13	1	6	6	0

¹ TA = Traditional Authority.

² ‘Reformed poachers’ are local hunters that have given up their hunting. The purpose of employing them is to encourage others to stop as they see an opportunity to be integrated into a broader society that promotes sustainable benefits for the present and future generations (see Gibson and Marks, 1995). They are also a critical asset as they know where hunting happens and are familiar with hunting networks.

environmentality – of conservancies through which the dominant market-based nature conservation perspective is imposed.

Our understanding of the narratives and experiences of local hunters is that their hunting pivots on attributions to nature such as a sense of belonging, identity and history, and that hunting is their historical and cultural right to harvest wildlife from the immediate environment (Watts et al., 2017; Pröpper, 2015; Hitchcock, 2000, 2001). This motivates ‘local’ people both discursively and practically to utilising nature that is designated as illegal and consequently treated as criminal offences. Hunting, in other words, is not just interpreted or understood in different ways (epistemologically); hunting is also experienced differently (ontologically) (Law and Urry, 2005: 397). Human and non-human actors are seen as co-evolving providing local hunting with a competing ontological foundation (Hitchcock, 2011, 2014; see also Gombay, 2014; Mavhunga, 2014; Blaser, 2009; Ingold, 2000, 2005).

The ontological foundation of ‘local hunting’ decodes into a locally situated ecological knowledge. Many local people have a detailed and structurally different understanding of their ecosystem from that of experts (Sillitoe, 2007, 1998; Pottier et al., 2003; Richards, 1993). Sillitoe’s (2007:5) comment that ‘*local people often get it right, sometimes when science gets it wrong*’ adds to the many arguments debating scientific (in this case ecological) knowledge. Local knowledge is constituted differently in comparison to scientific knowledge; facts and phenomena are observed and interpreted differently, a point which is raised by many scholars (e.g. Hobart, 1993; Richards, 1993). ‘*We know where to find water and locate what kind of species are there and which ones can be hunted and when*’ is what was often conveyed to us in interviews. Eland hunting, for example, entails using witchcraft and requires the use of charms at the same time. As in the past, taboos and local rules shape the decision as to what to hunt and when (Murombedzi, 2003). Eland hunting requires ritual performances before you can hunt it. It is widely believed that if the eland is not hunted according to the traditional rules, the hunter normally has bad luck, may fall ill and may even die. This discourages some hunters from killing eland for fear of the mystique associated with them. In a similar vein, the hunting of buffalo needs careful and proper aim, with knowledge about where to shoot to avoid wounding it and arousing dangerous reaction. Some of the species became culturally significant and were attributed a status that protects them from being hunted unless permitted by the kings and indunas.

Local hunters say they know what type of animals to hunt; they know they cannot hunt a baby animal and sometimes they do not hunt female antelope because they understand they need to reproduce. They manage off-take rates in their own way, using their traditional know-how (see, for instance, Berkes et al., 1995). They also know when to switch to killing small mammals such as warthog and impala, and occasionally buffalo (see, for instance, Gibson and Marks, 1995). In contrast to Davies (2002) or Ripple et al. (2016), the local narratives express the claim that local hunting is a sustainable form of appropriating nature. Local hunters point out that they are selective as to what kind of animals can be hunted for home use and the numbers game hunted are only small.

‘Local hunting’ viewed from the angle of contestation, or as ‘space of contestation’ as Long (2001) or Olivier de Sardan (2006)) would frame it, leads to a new, innovative comparative research agenda. One that combines the socio-cultural and spiritual, common property dimensions of hunting with exploring ‘local hunting’ as operating within the wider commodity economy but one that is structured by locally embedded economic repertoires whereby both the quantity and quality of bushmeat and other natural products are negotiated and exchanged. Such research agenda builds on work done under the heading of nested markets (Hebinck, et al., 2015) which combines concepts of institutional economics, and notably, the kind of analysis pioneered by Ostrom (2005), and a constructivist understanding of social relations hinging on markets (Callon, 2007). Drawing on Negri (2006) and van der Ploeg (2008), contestations of the conservancy order and discourse,

and analysing how it manifests is best conceptualised as ‘*no longer a form of reaction but a form of production (...) based (...) on autonomous co-operation between (...) subjects. It is the capacity to develop new, constitutive potentialities that go beyond reigning forms of domination*’ (Negri, 2006:54, quoted in van der Ploeg, 2008:271, 272). Typical of such an autonomous cooperation is a polycentric organisation. This dimension of contestation entails the creation and maintaining of ‘alternative’ market networks that span beyond the site of production. This is well supported by our data and by a substantial body of evidence of the informal and regionally organised trade in bushmeat and natural products (Nielsen et al., 2018; Ndeinoma, 2018a,b; Lowassa et al., 2012a,b; Coad et al., 2010).

8. Conclusions

Our aim was to develop a more accurate picture of ‘local hunting’. Our approach and methodology centred on making local hunting and local hunters visible. Conservancies like the ones we studied have evolved since their inception as sites where global and local actors and their conservation and development projects interact and intersect. By taking on board ideas and perspectives of conservancy members and the hunters among them, we have shown that local hunting is not simply a matter of providing (cheap) protein to feed families. Nor is poverty its only motivation as proponents of the Sustainable Development Goals put forward (Sachs et al., 2009). Similarly, the scale and intensity of poaching wildlife, logging or fishing cannot solely and unilinearly be explained by (global) market demands for illegally hunted products. Local hunting also needs to be treated as skilled performance and culturally sanctioned hinging on pride and identity, and an intimate interaction between culture and nature. It revolves around a locally situated, inherited knowledge of game management that is dissimilar from the knowledge underpinning community-based conservation. The central argument of this paper is that the very conditions created by community-based conservation practices in the three conservancies in Namibia trigger local hunting. It is performed invisibly by local hunters and at the same time, it is made invisible by conservancy governance. The Event Books and mode of data recording play a crucial role in this process. While the data captured in the Event Books show a decline in ‘poaching’, the evidence we provide suggests that local hunting is occurring on a regular basis, resembling defiant behaviour and contestation. The very way in which conservancies operate perpetuates local hunting as a locally relevant and defensible social action.

Hunting is a manifestation of community-based conservation being clouded by the many inherent contradictions and expectations. The conservancy leadership and the game guards are overwhelmed by many challenges affecting the conservancy and their membership and, as a result, have lost the mantle to contain hunting. A major challenge for the community-based conservation discourse is to come to terms with the fact that, collectively, people have agreed to conform to the conservancies’ technologies of governance. Some conservancy members, however, appear not to be the ideal environmental subjects the community conservation discourse expects them to be. Redefining and re-configuring conservancy rules and regulations to resonate with local everyday realities and needs is needed. Situations, where conservancy members agree to regulations at general meetings, but go out to kill animals and light a fire to roast them, are not uncommon. A new (community) conservation discourse is required, taking into account the multiple factors that reproduce acts of hunting and ‘poaching’. Such discourse should not hinge on conservation biology only, or on criminalising local hunting but also on finding ways to a more equal form of redistributing benefits from conservation as well as to provide space for nature-culture relations that goes beyond reducing nature to monetary values. This includes not just receiving cash payments and accessing employment opportunities but also socially regulated access to protein and embracing the potential of local hunting as sustainable. Nonetheless, it is important to continue to view ‘local hunting’

critically, as some hunting practices may evolve such that they come close to what is referred to in the conservation discourse as ‘poaching’. Materialising all this requires rethinking current agendas of conservation politics and policies. Local people will continue to resist, reject and remain defiant to the way in which community-based conservation works out for most of them, particularly if they do not get a share of the tangible benefits that have a direct impact on their well-being and that of their families. This calls for a review of policy strategies and approaches to ensure that various interests groups are integrated, with no groups treated as minorities.

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