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Editorial: An anthropological encounter with post-colonial realities in Namibia?

Paula Alexiou, Camilo Angola, Malin Freytag, Moritz Gemmeke, Tilman Gorenflo, Hannah Siegert and Michael Pröpfer

Introduction: From where do we speak? Challenges for research

In spring 2019 when we were preparing for a fieldwork excursion to Namibia, as part of the University of Hamburg Institute of Anthropology's seminar cycle on colonialism, we visited the exhibition titled "Ovizire somgu"¹ held at the Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK) and at the Art-Space M-Bassy in Hamburg.² Three Namibian artists³ had been invited to Hamburg as artists-in-residence for a year to access the colonial image archive of the museum and formulate artistic positions/reactions. The artists came up with the subtitle "From where do we speak?". This subtitle, which we took as profound inspiration for our preparatory discussions, aptly pinpoints the enormous challenge, if not the impossibility, of finding a speaking position or perspective regarding the ongoing and pervasive system of post-colonialism. It also sketches the challenge of decolonization, as this process incorporates not only the transformation of language and positionality but additionally – in Currier's words – "the dismantling, removal, and/or transformation of laws, practices, ideologies, and institutions associated with foreign occupation and domination" (2011: 18).

As emerging anthropologists of Colombian, German, and US-American descent we asked ourselves how and from what perspective we could do "research" on some facets of the highly dynamic and highly diverse Namibian society – a society that gained independence only 30 years ago after suffering from more than a hundred years of colonial oppression. How, as academics coming from outside of Namibia though involved in troubling residues of historical events in a very unclear yet sensitive manner, would we approach a system that we found ourselves deeply part of? How would we begin taking

1 Meaning "Shadow".

2 Organized by the Forschungsstelle "Hamburgs (post-)koloniales Erbe / Hamburg und die frühe Globalisierung" see <https://www.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/arbeitsbereiche/globalgeschichte/forschung/forschungsstelle-hamburgs-postkoloniales-erbe.html> [accessed 02 October 2020].

3 Namely Nicola Brandt, Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja and Vitjitua Ndjiharine.

steps to decolonize our own language, our perception and our way of doing research, while pursuing the normal and meaningful practice of ethnography, the trade of a discipline that itself was and is involved with colonial practice? This volume is an attempt to find a partial answer to this question. The result are six research reports on self-chosen current issues like post-colonial memory politics, tourism and craft, tradition and modernity in Pentecostal congregations, current day gender relations, coloniality and identity, and artistic interventions (each of which will be further outlined below and in the articles of this volume).

Attempting to investigate the traces and residues of colonialism in Namibia in a decolonized manner first and foremost requires us to take into account the wealth of insight that has been produced by *post-colonial studies* and *theory* (Asad 1973; Bhabha 1994; Chakrabarty 2000; Chibber 2013; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Dirlik 1994; Fanon 1952; Gandhi 1998; Goldberg and Quayson 2002; Hall 2017; Huggan 2013; Kalu and Falola 2018; Mbembe 2001; Mongia 1996; Said 1978; Spivak 2006; Stoler and Cooper 1997; Young 2001) as well as research on decolonization (Bhambra 2014; Dhawan 2014; Grosfoguel 2007, 2008; Mignolo 2011, 2012; Mignolo and Walsh 2018)⁴. To inform our research we needed to critically think about key terms like the term *post-colonial*, which we are using in this volume in full awareness that the meaning is blurred, and a field of debate (Huggan 2013). We agree that *post-colonialism* cannot be simply thought as something that occurred or happened *after* colonialism. It also stands for the *anti* of resistance against the colonial powers and their consequences (Comaroff 2005; do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005). Besides, it implies a continuation of toxic colonial patterns of thought, perception, speaking etc. as well as ongoing hegemonic structures that also constitute the subject matter of decolonization, and which we wanted to better understand through our research.

The emergence of post-colonial theory engages, broadly speaking, in two moments: the history of decolonization and the connected problematic discourses around “race”,⁵ language, culture and class, as well as the restructuring of “western” intellectual traditions, which challenge concepts of power, subjectivity and resistance (do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005; Smith 1999). Post-colonial theory thus has as its theme the unfinished process of decolonization and criticizes actual Eurocentrism in science and everyday ideas (do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005) and asks for a sensitization

4 See also: http://democracyinafrica.org/decolonizing_the_academy/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=decolonizing_the_academy [accessed 21 September 2020].

5 In this article we italicize the noun *race* referring to its ideological constructedness. “*Races*” by no means depict biological realities but continuously affect their presence at a social, economic, political and psychological level as a concept.

of the context.⁶ As Huggan puts it, post-colonial theory is to “play its utopian part in making colonialism and the imperialist ideologies that drive it a thing of the past” (2013: 22). Hence, instead of looking at history as a linear process, post-colonial theory turns towards the complexities and contradictions of historical processes. Pre-colonial structures had an effect on colonial ones. Telling the history of “western” countries would not be possible without the colonization of other lands, which is why Shalini Randeria talks about “entangled histories” (Randeria 2002: 284). Post-colonial theory takes the challenges of this transnational writing of history seriously.

What post-colonial theory aims to show is essentially that colonialism does not belong to the past, that there are continuities of neo-colonial power relations and that specific forms of oppression are still present (do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005). It aims to expose forms of representation of the colonized in literature as well as in all other social contexts through a simultaneous analysis of history, politics, social sciences, and other disciplines. Post-colonial theory thus not only considers the remains or effects of colonialism but also focuses on recent neo-colonial cultural formations, which emerged from migration to the metropolises, as one remainder of colonial times.

So how to tackle these challenges in our research on Namibia? Investigating the traces and residues of colonialism in others as well as inside of us, we learned, requires listening, a sensuous approach, and something that one might call dialogic ethnography. It is about researching and writing and depicting *with* rather than *about* people.

Decolonized co-operation at eye-level in a system loaded with hurt, pain and vulnerabilities resulting from colonial violence in the areas of gender, class, physical appearance etc. requires us to attempt to clearly answer the question “from where do we come?”. It requires a self-placement and a reflection of the potentially privileged and relatively unhurt position/ history one comes from. We have been doing research as a heterogeneous group of people. Heterogeneity means that our group is internally differentiated in terms of gender, sexuality, age, “race”, class, nationality, education and wealth. We will reflect upon these factors, which potentially influence our individual approaches to a post-colonial research subject, in our respective articles of this volume and below. However, here we also speak with one voice and therefore

6 Said, Spivak and Bhabha have been important for post-colonial theory, because they enable a radical reconceptualization of the relations between nation, culture and ethnicity, which is of far reaching cultural and political importance (do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005). The fight for decolonialization has brought up different strategies and ran through different phases, and it also shed light on intern and unresolvable controversies. They continue to revolve around the question of representation, material relations of dominance and the connection between theory and political activism (do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005).

would like to reflect upon a common position. We are a group currently living and studying/ working in an academic environment in Hamburg, Germany. Hence our position can be described as privileged since the research trip was only affordable with a certain income/ financial background, and was in addition partially supported by the University. Academic studies also require a certain “higher-level” educational background that privileges us, and likewise the outcome of our research will mean academic capital. In the research reports that this volume contains we have attempted to incorporate the above presented reflections to influence our research practice and methodology.

The presence of the past

Additionally, we have learned that any meaningful research on present conditions has to take a look at the past, and that we are involved with both. Collective research on contemporary residues of colonialism automatically takes into account the fact that the peculiar history of an area, a nation or a country impacts upon the present (Förster et al. 2004; Kössler 2015a & 2015b; Melber 2015). We are aware that this whole nexus is a system that we – especially as Germans – are inescapably part of and that this system is in constant processual change and not coming to any end. So, to understand this impact for us it became necessary to look back into the history of Namibia and the history of colonialism to understand ongoing debates about identity, politics and society. The peculiar Namibian history is thus another key issue framing subjects of our interest – a certain lens through which we look at all the rest. The writing of history is not a neutral process. Rather, historical events are being interpreted and read in different ways to legitimate specific politics or can be used to cover up a given party’s guilt. For the Namibian context it is important to recognize that many of the data were produced by the colonial powers to justify their occupation and their aggression against local people. Several aspects which are salient when it comes to influencing the present can be sketched here. Therefore, it is necessary to look back in the past to understand that lot of current inequality in Namibian society, like the unequal distribution of land and wealth, can be traced back to colonialism and the oppression of the population by Germany and South Africa (Bollig 2004; Förster 2010; Gewalt 2003; Häussler 2018; Hayes et al. 1998; Miescher 2012; Steinmetz 2007; Zimmerer and Zeller 2003).

The representatives of the German government started the formal colonialism in Namibia when they declared themselves as *Schutzmacht* in 1884 (Speitkamp 2017: 65). The interference of the German state had the purpose of stabilizing their power as a new imperial power and protecting German economic interests. Restricted laws and taxes, based on racism, forced the local population into contract labour and to give their fertile land to German settlers (ibid. 76-77). The war against the Herero and later against the Nama in 1904 was a consequence of the ongoing oppression by the Germans and

their expansion. Through the *Schießbefehl*,⁷ which was signed on the 2nd October 1904 by the German general Lothar von Trotha, and its inherent extermination order, the war is referred to as the first genocide of the 20th century. By the end, 80% of an estimated total of around 80,000 Herero and 50% of an estimated total of around 20,000 Nama had been killed (ibid. 86). The German colonial period ended with their defeat in the First World War, and South Africa become the declared mandate power of Namibia (Wallace 2011: 205).

The hopes of the Namibian people that an African Government would stop the racial discrimination soon vanished when they were faced with the South African apartheid regime (ibid. 343). Racial segregation was legally enforced by the South African state which was dominated by white people who took over the fertile land (ibid. 319). The plan of South Africa was to establish Namibia as one of the South African provinces, against the will of the United Nations (ibid. 387). The ongoing oppression resulted in several liberation Movements and a guerilla war against South Africa. Independence from the apartheid regime was formally declared on 21st March 1990. Namibia was the last country in the African continent to declare a formal independence from a colonial state.

The German genocides of the Herero and Nama at the beginning of the 20th century are today a matter of negotiations between the German and the Namibian state. The Namibian side wants a formal apology, a restitution of all colonial artifacts and a reparation payment, but Germany is delaying the negotiations and emphasizing the development aid that is already being paid. Representatives of the Herero and Nama people are not part of these negotiations, so they are trying to bring Germany to court to get justice.

When it comes to the remembrance of the colonial times it is necessary to take a look at the political development after independence in 1990. There was no Namibian state before the colonial time and for that reason the post-independent government needed to make clear what it means to be Namibian at all. For this, a nation-building program has been created to define a Namibian identity. Beside socioeconomic improvements this nation-building also focused on cultural aspects of the Namibian identity, which are expressed through memory politics – an issue which will be further discussed by Tilman Gorenflo (see Gorenflo, this volume). In an examination of the Independence Memorial Museum different characteristics of the Namibian memory culture, like militarization, resistance, and hero worship will be analyzed and the way in which these are related to the nation-building discourse will be shown. With its location on the most prominent hills in Windhoek the newly built Independence Museum disrupts the German colonial landscape in Windhoek and establishes a post-colonial Namibian identity. This forming of an identity goes along with the appropriation of history, which is one

7 Meaning “The order to shoot”.

crucial aspect of the exhibition. Specific histories, like the resistance of the Herero and Nama against the German colonial power, become nationalized and established as the ideological forebears of the SWAPO. This construction of history causes tensions between the Namibian state and those communities that emphasize their own history, and raises questions about heritage, property and identity in the post-colonial setting. Gorenflo takes two recent examples – the restitution of the Witbooi Bible, and the case of the Bismarckstreet – to illustrate these tensions and discuss how they are connected with memory politics and nation-building in Namibia.

The present: Outline of salient core dimensions of a post-colonial condition in Namibia

Against the background outlined above we have chosen to look into several “segments” of contemporary society with individually chosen research projects. It is impossible with a small group of upcoming anthropologists to do more than scratch the surface of a problem that is so big and multidimensional. So, in this volume we present partial glimpses of our encounter and do not claim to be able to paint more than a rough picture. However, in the following paragraphs we jointly undertook the exercise of sketching an overview of certain broad dimensions of Namibian society that *we found* consensually. This description serves to offer the reader (and us) some background and map some reference points for our following ethnographic descriptions/articles, which will portray certain phenomena in more detail.

Recent societal and political developments

Distributed across an area of 824,292 km², Namibia’s population amounts to no more than about 2.5 million, resulting in the second-lowest population density in the world. The pyramidal societal structure⁸ shows colonial residues in structural socio-economic conditions, in which a once enslaved majority performs the most elementary work to maintain a newly founded capitalist state. The social and economic distribution of wealth must be contextualized in the aftermath of decolonization. Part of a colonial-historic

8 Namibia shows a pyramidal societal age structure with a share of 57 % of the population being aged 24 or less, while only 4 % have achieved an age of 54 or higher. While the younger people dominate the cities, the middle-aged population is overrepresented in rural areas (Greiner 2011: 620). Over the last 10 years, the increase of population has been at a rate of a mere 1.4 % due, to a significant extent, to the impact of the devastating HIV/Aids infection rate of 15 %. Connected to this massive challenge is a health system which aggravates social stratification by benefiting an elite private health sector at the expense of a chronically underfinanced public health care system lacking qualified personnel. Furthermore, Namibia struggles to provide a health infrastructure that covers the vast rural areas.

and economic nexus is the current situation of land possession in Namibia (Melber 2019, Werner and Odendaal 2010). During both colonial periods, the fertile land was taken away from the local communities and appropriated by white settlers. Many of those colonial land tenures are still active today, which means that descendants of colonial settlers still have access to the best and most fertile land. Land reforms have been promised since independence but there is not much progress yet. More and more the debate about land becomes a debate between white and black, showing how it is deeply rooted in colonial times (Bollig 2004). Ownership structures that stem from a racially-weighted distribution of land which was a core part of the colonial exploitation of Namibia persist (Werner 1993, Werner and Kruger 2007). The per-capita income of Namibia is estimated about US\$ 11,200 (CIA World Factbook 2020). This number appears far less promising considering that Namibia used to be the country with the worldwide highest income inequality for many years.⁹ As a post-colonial reality, the top economic players in farming, tourism, gastronomy, and retail industry are disproportionately of German descent, while 26.9 % (estimation of 2010) of the population live in highly impoverished economic conditions (Blueprint on wealth redistribution and poverty eradication 2016). Most craft and souvenir shops for tourists are managed and controlled by middle(wo-)men of German descent (see Alexiou, this volume). An unemployment rate of 23.1%, spiking to a rate of 44.4 % in people aged 15 to 24 (UN Human Development Report 2020) challenges the standard of living, and is worse for the young black population. While large proportions of the population still derive their income and subsistence from farming, a significant move towards the urban areas is noticeable. The reasons for resettlement to urban areas are not least due to the climatic conditions of the country. Namibia has been suffering from drought for several years. Due to the low rainfall, less than one-tenth of the total land area is suitable for agriculture without irrigation. During periods of drought, farmers must cope with water shortages, rampant animal pests or similar impairments (Melber 2015: 121). Up to 25 % of Namibia's population are now located in the five biggest cities, which struggle to keep up with the infrastructural demands of their inhabitants (Final draft blueprint on mass housing development in Namibia 2013). As a result, informal settlements rapidly expand on their outskirts, where up to a third of all inhabitants live in precarious conditions. Windhoek's informal settlements are growing at a rate of 8% every year, twice as fast as the city itself (ibid.).

Deficits can also be diagnosed in the education system. Namibia managed to create a qualitative tertiary education sector, led by the University

9 The Gini-Index has mildly decreased, from a stark 0.7 in 2011 to 0.57 in 2017, still ranking Namibia at the top in the world in terms of unequally divided wealth in its population despite its growing middle class. The UN Human Development Report of 2019 ranks Namibia's Inequality Index at a 0.422.

of Namibia (UNAM) and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The abolition of segregation laws formally granted access to Academia for everyone. In reality, a tertiary education still depends on unequally distributed economic capacities. Public institutions of primary and secondary education lack the funding and qualified personnel necessary to reach an educational standard similar to that of the highly acclaimed private schools. As a result, several higher-grade students encounter structural difficulties in attaining the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC), which is required to enter university (Iipinge and Likando 2012).

Concerning the formation of a working class in Namibia it is necessary to consider that during South African occupation, the country experienced a high flow of translocation of people from northern rural areas to the capital city and surrounding smaller cities and towns, establishing the basis for a large oppressed lower working class. At the same time, other ethnic ascriptions were equally dragged into working-class lifestyles, additionally limited, and oppressed by apartheid segregation laws. Today, rural-urban migrant networks and remittances are common income-diversification strategies. They reduce the risk of deprivation in the face of internal and external stressors for their members and the households involved (Greiner 2011: 606). At the same time, they can reinforce socio-economic stratification and exclusionary practices by sending the few money-earners of poorer households into a downward spiral, unable to save or invest money for themselves, while a rural middle-income class successfully diversify their income strategies through the dynamics of translocality (ibid. 616f.). In the cities, a large exploited working class carries out three types of jobs: (1) all vital jobs within the service sector, for instance taxi drivers, nurses, cooks, or primary school teachers; (2) informal jobs that cover the necessities of “lower” social classes: egg sellers, meat cutters, taxi drivers, street vendors, etc.; (3) anglers, copper and diamond miners, and other jobs within the industrial labour force (Likuwa and Shiweda 2017: 33, 41). The qualification of a working class created new businesses and economic possibilities as well as new exploitation fields of work. The legal decay of apartheid led to an open socialization of capital. The freedom of enterprises and capital flow from imperialist consortiums strengthened a middle and upper-middle class. Independence struggles finally forced Namibia along with other African countries into a world economic system in which they had to accommodate enormous extractive economic projects, and now also deal with and justify the painful social and economic inequality caused by colonial administrations in the first place (Winterfeldt 2010).

Ongoing political grievances and the election in 2019

The period of our research stays coincided with the time of the pre-election period for the Presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for

27th November 2019. As voter registration had already started, daily conversations often turned to election-related subjects, for instance the generally still-present questions of land and its use/distribution, the current economic crisis, the fight against state elite's corruption and mismanagement, or conflicts over social distribution. Patterns of undemocratic practices are widely believed as if proven. The former liberation movements still shape the dominant public discourse to a considerable extent (see also Gorenflo, this volume) which they regulate according to rather strict concepts of inclusion and exclusion, which also come into play in our individual research contexts.

Trying to understand the political landscape nowadays demands that we engage critically with the processes of the Liberation Struggle, the subsequent consolidation of the SWAPO Party after independence, and an analysis of the inherent, often contrary decolonization and democratization processes. This is because these implied a socioeconomic and political regulatory framework unifying basically antagonistic social forces (Melber 2003: 16) under the pattern of a sovereign, formally and internationally legitimated Namibian state. The new political system, built by former armed PLAN liberation fighters – now democratically elected policymakers and representatives of the Namibian population – shows characteristics of a one-party state under autocratic rule. This is not just reflected in great election successes since independence, with the ruling party taking generally over 80 per cent of the votes while the estranged political opposition usually remains under 5 per cent, but also in the creation of a national narrative of a unified, patriotic and forward-facing Namibia. The construction of a national identity – while at the same time excluding something marked as “anti-national” or “unpatriotic” – hence “serves the purpose of justifying all kinds of authoritarian practices so that ‘anti-national’ or ‘unpatriotic’ can be defined basically as any group that resists the power of the ruling elite of the day” (Melber 2003: 11).

During our research we observed a growing number of critical voices, especially among younger people well aware of the briefly shown political deficits but also affected by an ongoing financial crisis which broke out in 2016.

Nonetheless on Saturday 30th of November the southern African nation's electoral commission officially announced the re-election of Hage Geingob for a second five-year term.¹⁰ The sharp decrease also affected the National Assembly's election as well as his ruling SWAPO party, winning only 63 of the seats in parliament, down from 77, which means they were losing the requisite two-thirds majority that for example empowered them to make constitutional amendments. The opposition leading party, the PDM, now holds 16

10 The expected voting losses manifested as Geingob only won 56.3 percent of the votes, compared with his winning 87 percent in 2014. The independent candidate Panduleni Itula came second with 29.4 percent of the total votes, followed by the leader of the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), McHenry Venaani, with only 5.3 percent.

seats in parliament (The Guardian 2019). The reasons for the loss of votes are seen in the widespread corruption,¹¹ the high unemployment rate, and also the biggest corruption scandal in the history of Namibia. Furthermore, the long-lasting drought, which has hurt the economy and ravaged agricultural export crops, fed into the voters' frustration. The election was marred by technical failures and a slow vote-collation and verification process but was described as mostly free and fair by The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN). The official announcement was boycotted by most of the opposition candidates, who argued that there were a lot of anomalies during the election (Iikela 2019).

Economy and tourism

Namibia has long had a reputation for being a relatively resource-rich country whose economy consists of the main sectors of agriculture, fishing, mining, and tourism (Melber 2014; Levine 2007). However, at the time of our research Namibia was suffering from an economic and ecological crisis. Since 2016 Namibia has experienced an economic decline, driving more and more people into unemployment. *The Namibian* attributed this development to "weak consumer demand for goods and services, as well as the impact of the drought exerting further pressure on the disposable income of households" (Erastus 2019: 2). Most heavily affected were the construction, wholesale, and retail sectors. In 2019, 2,641 people were registered as job-seeking. Through the economic crisis, many of those sectors that the nation relies on are unstable. The fishing industry has suffered due to the severe decline in fish stocks. The mining industry is also afflicted with the persistently low prices of minerals, especially uranium, which Namibia depends on (ibid).¹²

Commercial tourism, along with mining and fishing, is one of the country's most important economic sectors and is growing steadily (Christiansen 2014). Although the growing number of tourists led to the creation of new jobs in the tourism business, it also resulted in the neglect of the relevant infrastructure to the detriment of the local population. Once local attrac-

11 In November 2019 the involvement of some SWAPO ministers in doling out fishing rights to an Icelandic fishing firm in return for kickbacks was reported. As a result, two ministers were forced to leave office (Guardian 2019).

12 The main employment sectors in Namibia (fishing, mining, tourism) are strongly globalized by ownership and investment patterns of companies and by links to international market and policy fluctuations (Melber 2014: 132-133). The discovery of diamonds in the Namibian coastal desert near Lüderitz Bay in 1908 led to rapid economic growth. The country's mineral wealth (including copper, gold, zinc, platinum and other precious metals and stones, as well as uranium oxide) has since made investment attractive to foreign companies, who continue to control a large part of Namibia's resources (Sherbourne 2013: 129).

tions and excursion destinations were transformed into upmarket facilities for the privileged. The recovery of locals is sacrificed to the expectations and consumption habits of foreign, wealthier guests, so that there are only a few affordable recreational opportunities for the majority of the local population (Melber 2015; Beckert 2014; Jänis 2014).

The tourism representations of African countries are often about fantasies and an ambivalent nostalgia. Tourists often travel to experience aspects of past traditions. Therefore, the notions of people and places cannot only be seen as commercial representations but are historically determined and encompass political values and ideologies of society. Ideas of the “other” have mostly been constructed over centuries and shaped through intercultural contacts (Salazar 2012). Tourism advertising often appeals specifically to historical and cultural affinities. Black Forest cake, knuckle of pork, apple strudel or German beer consumed in the ambience of the remaining colonial architecture of Windhoek, Swakopmund or Lüderitz Bay still sell as a common cliché with nostalgic appeal. Namibia’s colonial history does not only leave traces inside the country to the present day, but also has special attraction as a tourist destination. The charm of the past paired with familiar elements of everyday culture make the country attractive for many travellers (Melber 2015; Christiansen 2014). Namibia is a striking example of the still-predominant imagination of Africa (Koot 2013). Travel businesses focus on nature motifs, common landscapes, and popular destinations such as Sossusvlei, Fishriver Canyon, and the Namib Desert. The national parks are advertised with the diverse wildlife – the “big five”: lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard, and rhino. Namibia’s most famous and largest nature reserve is the Etosha Park, which covers more than 22,000 km². The wild animals also represent the majority of the motifs, which decorate numerous objects on craft markets or in souvenir shops. A more detailed look into the production and consumption of Namibian crafts and their narratives has been provided by Paula Alexiou (see Alexiou, this volume).

Christianity in post-colonial Namibia

Christianity in Namibia had its beginnings before and during German colonial times. The *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* built protestant churches, which today remain some of the most important social institutions and gathering places. Sunday services act as platforms to demonstrate one’s status and moral values in public and within the community. Relations of distinction are shown and performed there as well (Pauli 2012: 414). After independence, supported by the SWAPO government, an attempt at a reappraisal of the past began. Questions about precolonial belief systems were made the subject of discussion. Under the new constitution, every religion should be equal. The Namibian constitution enshrined the clear separation of state and

church. But still the opinions and remarks of church authorities on issues of morality, for example the approach to homosexuality, are considered important, even though they have no direct influence on political decision-making or legislation (Vogel 2015: 193). Pauli shows that religious practices play an important role in social stratification and daily life, as well as their interplay with other social institutions (2012). For example, Sunday services and marriages are considered as occasions on which to “show off” one’s social status and distinction. People used to dress up in their best clothes and the services could last up to three hours. It can be said that the local protestant church, in this case in Fransfontein, is so successful, because it can connect and attract people of all different classes, genders, ethnicities and generations (ibid. 415).

According to Vogel (2015: 193), 76% of the population announced that religion plays an important part in their lives. Namibia is one of the most Christianised nations of the African Continent. Even if the Namibian constitution enshrines laicism, Christian Churches do get political privileges. President Nujoma declared that the churches (Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic and AME churches) that were active in the Liberation Struggle would get political rewards and influence. The contribution of Hannah Siegert (see Siegert, this volume) will offer a more detailed insight into the religious and political practices of Pentecostal churches in Windhoek.

Gender and sexual politics

The process of establishing colonial control is deeply sexualized and gendered, as e.g. the construction of racial boundaries as a sexual process strengthens heteronormative patriarchy and misogyny. In the Namibian colonial context for example sexualized and racialized myths about poisonous powers informed the genocide of the Herero and Nama populations in the Namibian wars 1904-1907 (Wieringa 2006). Also, legal discrimination against homosexuals stemming from the colonial rule and adopted after independence still exists in the Namibian legal framework. Colonial discourses of *deviant* and *peculiar* African sexualities continue to have an impact on current gender and sexuality discourses in the country (Becker 2007).

In a broader context in much of the Eurocentric literature the African continent is assumed as homophobic per se and poor in activism for sexual and gender minority rights (Epprecht 2013). The imaginations of post-colonial Namibian sexualities and gender roles are dominated by various, sometimes interlinking narratives labeling queer gender expressions and sexualities as un-African, Eastern or un-Christian (Ekine 2013). These claims are based on religious and cultural fundamentalism, which are gendered themselves, and are selectively approved by the former liberationists and post-colonial party politicians to acknowledge their own power as well as a masculinist, heteronormative and national imagination (Altman 2001; Currier 2011). Be-

sides, different actors, both state-sided and non-state-sided, intricately link the question of sexuality and gender to the topic of decolonization as well as to legal equality (Currier 2012). Both state leaders and political activists, with opposing opinions, claim the prerogative of the interpretation of the concept of decolonization for themselves, making the field of gender and sexuality a highly contested one (ibid.).

Still, there is a continuously increasing diversification of human rights and gender activism in the country which contests the long-established heteronormative power relations. Moritz Gemmeke (see Gemmeke, this volume) provides a detailed look at the manifold struggles and strategies of the LGBTI* communities in contemporary Namibia. The contribution reveals the broader social, cultural, and political tensions concerning gender relations and sexuality as well as it asks about the effects and relics of colonial and post-colonial discourses and politics on the communities and their allies.

Feminist movements have been on the rise over the past 30 years. Several feminist organizations sponsor debate and activism in Namibia on the subjects of gender equality, rape culture, and sexual and reproductive health, among others (Khaxas 2009). Masculine organization on the other hand is also on the rise. Various organizations are dynamic stakeholders, but share common foci: awareness, empowerment and fighting violence, especially gender-based violence (see Angola, this volume). In spite of the social and political guarantees listed in the national constitution, a common critical approach appeals to the State for factual support, justice and prevention (Khaxas 2008: 3, 5). Men have also been engaging in dismantling the attitudes that affect them personally and systematically as well as women, members of the LGBTI* communities, and children. Male organization thematizes the engagement of men by questioning societal structures and bringing other men into an exchange and encouraging emotional reflections. The aim is to question how to deal constructively with masculinity/the male experience and acknowledge the impacts of colonially imposed views of corporeality, sexuality and resulting socio-economic role-embodiment (Oyěwùmí 1997: 32, 121). In the end, understanding the current situation of unbalanced social dynamics from anti- and decolonial viewpoints leads to a practice that includes a thorough analysis of colonial concepts of hierarchy introduced amongst the peoples of southern Africa in order to erect and maintain an order of dominance and exploitation (Seroto 2018: 7) and a re-alignment with ancestral structure. After taking a brief look at the current and historical needs and limitations of the Namibian people with respect to the relations between different sub-groups in this society, Camilo Angola in this volume tackles the systematics of patriarchy and the role of male Namibian organization and offers a critical assessment of global colonial and imperialist dynamics (see Angola, this volume; see as well Lemelle 2010).

Art

Windhoek's urban landscape is marked by murals that inform passers-by with the protest, anger and demands of young artists; critical exhibitions and performances can be found all over town. While the relevance of art as a breadwinning profession appears to lack valuation, or rather demand, in rural areas, a professional, connected art scene is slowly emerging within Namibia's bigger cities, where crucial networks are being established. Self-taught entrepreneurs, students and graduates from different Arts institutions alike emerge as a self-conscious, urban generation that appropriates stages and galleries as catalysts for their articulate analysis of society's struggles. Their visual and performative art voices marginalized narratives, challenges stereotypes and creates awareness of the conflicts that determine the artists' realities. As such, the (de-)construction of gender, queerness, neo-colonial structures, violence towards children and women, child marriage and the plurality of identities appear as poignant themes. Such contemporary artwork incorporates features of global cultural exchange, yet it is often the reappropriation and revitalization of traditional artistic elements that lends them the power to move and challenge audiences.

For this volume Michael Pröpper has engaged in dialogues with the contemporary Namibian visual artists Reginaldo Antunes, Masiyaleti Mbewe, Vitjitua Ndjiharine, Urte Remmert and Erik Schnack (see Pröpper et al., this volume). Jointly they co-author and thematize exemplary perspectives on and interventions into post-colonial realities. Dialogues about selected art pieces and additional subjects like the healing of past wounds, visions of decolonization and the potential of art to reveal social complexities expose visibly how artists intervene very differently in the process of undoing colonialism. What becomes evident through looking at the images of the art pieces and the conversations about them is artists' suggestions for a different future, namely one that opens up a cultural space on earth for Black people's belonging; a post-racial world which is not subverted, devalued and discriminated against, and a space for the celebration of the uniqueness and innovation of Black or/and African culture.

Recently the promise of such local narratives in art has coincided with a discourse on contemporary Africa around the term Afrotopia. Its empowerment lies in a rhetoric of optimism that works as a counterpart to stereotypical neo-colonial narratives about the African continent that depict it as intrinsically defined by "failure, deficit, and defect" (Sarr 2019: 9-10). Contemporary Namibian art, it seems, is at least based on this partial glimpse, and holds the potential to offer nuanced ideas of a reorientation towards the imaginary constitution of a decolonized society.

Summary

What we have experienced is an encounter with a society where the colonial condition has not ended at all. The individual contributions in this volume are based on thematically different research approaches, yet the results and reflections reveal far more similarities than just the local setting. While our research endeavour has to be perceived as rather partial, we nevertheless encountered an omnipresence of questions/traces that are deeply rooted in colonialism. Whether in art, the culture of remembrance in museums, tourism, Pentecostal churches, the LGBTQ* community or concepts of body type and masculinity, the colonial heritage, as well as the entanglement of the colonial past with the post-colonial present of Namibia have become visible in all these fields.

One could attempt to organize these findings according to some core notions – however, this may simply serve as an initial suggestion for further debate.

Reclaiming seems to be something that is of key importance to many actors, whether in the context of land/wealth, identity, sexuality, language, energies, dignity, respect, history or heritage, as outlined most prominently in the debates, tensions and negotiations around heritage and memory culture. This process certainly includes the reclaiming of identity connected with the restitution of colonial artefacts. But it can also be seen in a negotiation around the (tourist) imaginations of crafts, and in the reclaiming of sexual orientations, spirit/body relations and alternative lifestyles, as well as in new ways of practising religion, or in multiple artistic expressions, thirty years after independence.

Closely related if not prior to this process is the act of *uprooting*. Uprooting of pain, vulnerability, conflict, discrimination etc. as prominently outlined in the voices and art pieces on gender discrimination, patriarchy and the wounds of a racialized past.

All this leads to a new self-awareness and self-esteem, especially in the younger generation, causing them to *challenge* the status quo that is being perceived as unsatisfactory (e.g. the established power structures with massive unemployment and corruption, heteronormativity, neo-colonial relations, the position of e.g. German elites in Namibia, etc.). Many of our interlocutors seek action, empowerment and ways to *intervene* and to redefine an alternative post-colonial Namibian future.

Lastly what remains open for further debate is the ways in which such societal discourses about restitution, solution of conflict, *healing of wounds* and redefinition of a future can be held and brought further. This is not only up to us but, primarily, up to the involved Namibians. With this volume we have gathered some impressions, to offer the reader a picture of contemporary post-colonial traces and residues and a glimpse of the complexity of decolonization in which the formerly colonized, the discipline of post-colonial

studies, and we, the researchers all are deeply immersed. It becomes apparent that the examinations and controversies have to an extent only just begun, or are just about to emerge as we all make our way forward.

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SWAPO and the appropriation of history Memory politics and resulting conflicts of remembrance in the post-colony

Tilman Gorenflo

Introduction

The past and the present are interwoven in the Independence Memorial Museum of Namibia in Windhoek that is made clear with the very first exhibit. Sam Nujoma, the “father” of independent Namibia, dressed in a military outfit with a Namibian flag in the background, surrounded by nine bronze busts of “Early Resistance Leaders” (Picture 1). Below Nujoma one can find a specific plant: The *Welwitschia mirabilis*. The *Welwitschia* is decorating the Namibian coat of arms too, and therefore is being referred to as the national plant. Because it can resist extreme harsh droughts in the Namib Desert and becomes several hundreds of years old, botanists gave it the Latin suffix *mirabilis*: The miraculous. As the national plant it fits the narrative of Namibian resistance. This frame which emphasizes the resistance characteristic of the Namibians as continuum in history, was used to unify all Namibian people as one nation (Melber 2003: 308; Nujoma 2001: 29). Therefore, the people’s will to resist colonial powers became naturalized as inherent to all Namibian people (SWAPO 1981: 160; Katjavivi 1982). This narrative is reinforced through the use of the *Welwitschia*, which can be understood as a naturalization of resistance as part of the Namibian soil.



Fig. 1. Sam Nujoma and the “Early Resistance Leaders” in the Independence Memorial Museum. Photo: Tilman Gorenflo, 16.8.2019

The Independence Memorial Museum was inaugurated in March 2014 on top of one of the most important hills in Windhoek. It tells a specific history: A history of resistance and victory against colonial oppression. It depicts the growth of a nation out of an arbitrary demarcation of land, which was made on the imperial drawing table. In its selective manner, it also tells a history of silencing and historical denials. Thirty years after the Namibian independence, I intend to show in this article how state memory politics follow a specific narrative of resistance in the Independence Museum. After a theoretical overview of memory culture and its connection to nationalism, I will conduct an analysis of selected exhibits of the museum. Therefore, I want to come back to the “Early Resistance Leaders”, Sam Nujoma and the naturalization of resistance. I will show how the museum is supporting the particular narrative of Namibian resistance against colonial oppression, that was made up during the Liberation Struggle in the 1960s and how the colonial history is appropriated by the SWAPO¹.

Additionally, I want to focus on the role of historiography and memory politics in the agenda of post-colonial nation-building. How has history been appropriated during de-colonial liberation movements and nationalism? Although memory culture in Namibia has been analyzed by many scholars before, there are just a few publications that mention the museum because of its relatively short existence. I see the museum as an important source for researching nation-building in Namibia due to its primary focus on liberation in combination with its North Korean design. I will argue that memory culture is an important aspect in the post-colonial Namibia and that the museum is just one example of that. In further examples, the restitution of the Witbooi Bible and the Bismarck Street controversy, I aim to illustrate how state driven memory politics are strengthening tensions between different ethnic communities and the government. In the end, I draw the line to a broader context and discuss the impacts of memory politics on the relationship with Germany and coming to terms with the colonial past.

This point is particularly crucial in connection with my own position. Doing a six weeks field trip in Namibia as a German researcher, reflecting my own privileges and position was very important for me. Anthropology played a significant role in the colonial administration by providing legitimation through racist science (Asad 1973: 17).² Considering this, it was crucial for myself to avoid setting up further (neo-)colonial hierarchies during my research – a goal which is nearly impossible considering my heritage and my own privileges. It is important to recognize that my own position as a *white*³ German man led me to a specific truth and shaped my research focus and methodologies (Abu-Lughod 2006: 156). As a consequence of this

1 “South-West Africa People’s Organisation”

2 See also the Editorial of this Volume.

3 “White” is a socially constructed category and therefore written in italics.

position, that is deeply ingrained in my body I was eager to avoid focusing on the “victimized” people – which were exploited for too long. Accordingly, my research is mostly based on the approach of “studying up” (Nader 1969) which focuses on institutions of power. Another aspect is the role of history and historiography in the post-colony and my position in it. I consider myself as an anthropological observer of *how* history is used and less as a historian who is examining historical wrongs. Particularly when I consider the constructedness of history and its connection to institutional power, a combination which occurs incidentally.

Memory culture and nation-building

Several theorists, like Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, stressed the importance of memory culture and historiography in the context of nationalism (Anderson 1998; Hobsbawm 2004). The majority of them put their focus on Europe and how nations emerged over a long period – mostly combined with the rise of language groups and a common feeling as a community (Anderson 1998). Post-colonial or de-colonial nationalism need to be discussed from another point of view. During colonialism imperial powers ignored and destroyed existing borders between societies. Groups and people were separated through arbitrary borders, while others were merged under one colonial administration (Hobsbawm 2004: 205). One thing, most societies under colonial rule had in common was the oppression by colonial administrations (Gellner 2006: 80). For them, the shared experience as oppressed people, became a source for their liberation movements because it could be mobilized against an outsider – the colonial power. This unity was tightened through the emerging nationalism, an aspect which is crucial when it comes to the Liberation Struggle and the road to the Namibian independence (Hobsbawm 2004: 194; Southall 2013: 2).

Ideologies of nationalism and nation-building are combined with a special understanding of history that is supporting their claim (Hobsbawm 2004: 7). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the interdependence of nationalism and memory culture and how the latter is used to legitimate the former (Anderson 1998: 176; A. Assmann 2009: 78). Aleida Assmann did an extended work on the concept of collective memory and how societies are using memory to define their identity and cohesion. In her understanding, memory can be channeled through political interventions with the concept of memory politics. In memory politics, cultural memory is directed and influenced through political guidance (A. Assmann 2006; A. Assmann 2009: 78). Those influences can be, on the one hand, constructed in physical traces like monuments, museums or street names. On the other hand, they can also be non-material interventions, like the creation of public holidays, celebrations or remembrance of ancestors (Anderson 1998: 17; A. Assmann 2009:

18). This can be seen in national holidays as they fulfill the function of connecting the constructed past with the present. Those days produce a common feeling as one nation – an imagined community (Anderson 1998: 176; A. Assmann 2006: 233). The central point is that the construction of memory is connected to the making of national identity and less about historical truths (A. Assmann 2009: 83). Another example are monuments, used to manifest and mystify a shared past of a nation and to imply a nationally shared and “modern” future (A. Assmann 2006: 41-42; Hobsbawm 2013: 7). To do so, states or political institutions often appropriate histories of individuals or specific communities to construct a shared past (A. Assmann 2006: 40). In the following I want to illustrate how the Independence Museum is fulfilling different aspects of memory politics and nation-building and how those approaches are simplifying and appropriating history.

Disruption of the colonial landscape in Windhoek

On top of one of Windhoek’s most prominent hills, one can find colonial traces like the *Christuskirche*⁴, the *Alte Feste*⁵ and the *Tintenpalast*⁶. Those buildings symbolize three aspects of German colonial oppression: religious, military and administrative.⁷ In addition, they indicate how Germany is still present and dominating the memory landscape of Windhoek (Becker 2018: 1; Zuern 2012: 506). But nowadays this dominance is disturbed. Right between the colonial landmarks one can find a new eye-catcher: The Independence Memorial Museum. The whole building was designed and built by the North Korean company “Manudae Overseas Project”.⁸ Through the socialist design and golden color, the museum disturbs the predominant unison of the German colonial architecture (Becker 2018: 2; Kirkwood 2013: 558; Zuern 2012: 506). In addition to the museum two monuments were built which replaced the former spots of the *Reiterdenkmal*⁹. One statue is Sam Nujoma,

4 Christ Church

5 Old Fort

6 Ink Palace

7 The *Christuskirche* is still hosting the “Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Namibia”. Inside are commemorative plaques to remember German soldiers who died during the colonial wars. The area next to the *Alte Feste*, was where the concentration camps with the imprisoned Herero and Nama, as a consequence of the wars, stood (Zimmerer 2003: 57). The *Tintenpalast* is the place where the German colonial administration was based. Today it is used by the Namibian parliament.

8 The company used their own workers and offered no jobs for Namibians, which led to continued criticism during the planning and construction of the museum (Kirkwood 2013: 558-560).

9 Equestrian Monument. In remembrance of Germans who died in the colonial wars the *Reiterdenkmal* was inaugurated in 1912. In the last years it was moved twice and today stands inside the *Alte Feste*. Its removal cause criticism especially from the German community.

the “founding father” of the Independent Namibian Republic and the other remembers victims of the German genocides. The design of those two matches the golden bronze appearance of the Independence Museum. This could be seen as a metaphorical representation of a golden future for an independent Namibia. At the inauguration of the museum the former president Hifikepune Pohamba supported this interpretation. For him, the colonial traces on the hill, especially the *Reiterdenkmal* “symbolize the victory of the Imperial German Forces over the Namibian people” (Pohamba 2014: 4). This symbolic supremacy should forever be broken as “we became the masters of this place, now and forever. Not the colonialists. Never again will our Motherland be colonized” (Pohamba 2014: 4). The use of the exceptional design points into the same direction. For the art historian Meghan Kirkwood the North Korean design is a way to cut the ties to the former colonial powers and to define an own post-colonial identity (Kirkwood 2013: 558). It could be an alternative approach to demonstrate the change of symbolic power by breaking with German domination. But the museum also embodies a new way of narrating the past as the following analyses will show.

The Independence Memorial Museum

The whole exhibition is divided into three floors.¹⁰ Due to the round construction of the building, visitors are walking through the floors in a circle – from pre-colonial times until the independence. This cyclical construction gives no chance for shortcuts; on the contrary a visitor has to follow a specific course which can be seen as exemplary for the displayed understanding of history: as singular and linear.

The approach of the exhibition follows a clear line. Information about the broader historical context of the displayed exhibits is mostly missing. One can tell from a frequent use of the social realistic style, a characteristic of socialist painting, that the past is romanticized and deformed (Kirkwood 2013: 551-552). Meghan Kirkwood pointed out that this style is used in North Korea to show the horrors of the Japanese colonialism and the resistance nature of the Korean people against their oppressor (Kirkwood 2013: 552). This suggests that a propagandistic message and the construction of a past is more important than to display the historical contexts and information.

Additionally, the neglecting of historical data and explanations is part of an approach of simplification – a feature I aim to chisel out with my following analyses. Therefore, I will introduce four different exhibits of the Independence Museum in a chronological order from the “Pre-colonial Society”, via “The Early Resistance Against Colonialism” and “The Dark Room” to the “Outlook into the Namibian Future” and locate them into the context of dif-

¹⁰ The museums administration is on the 4th floor which is closed for public. On the 5th floor is a restaurant with three balconies that offer a great view of Windhoek and the surrounding buildings.

ferent aspects of the Namibian memory culture. I chose these four exhibits because they primarily display the German colonial time and the Namibian future – most of the exhibition itself focuses on the Liberation Struggle and the achievements of the SWAPO.

Pre-colonial society

The second room of the exhibition is titled “Pre-Colonial Society, Peaceful Coexistence” and is filled with several wooden showcases. Different artifacts are displayed without clear inscriptions of the originating epoch or location. On the walls black and white photographs show the landing of the German colonial troops. Next to it, one can see a map of current Namibia which shows the different ethnic groups and how they were labeled by the German colonial administration. All in all, the title of the room “Pre-Colonial Society, Peaceful Coexistence” is the greatest eye-catcher because it is written in big capital letters.

It is a noteworthy fact that the Independence Museum begins with the display of the pre-colonial era without giving any further explanations about this time. By omitting the historical context, the topic of the room is the only thing one will remember after the visit: That the pre-colonial time was a peaceful coexistence between the different Namibian societies. Even the map indicates that the border of today’s Namibia limited the pre-colonial societies, without acknowledging that these borders were colonial constructions. Furthermore, the room illustrates how the pre-colonial time or even the present, as I will show later, is imagined as peaceful coexistence of different societies in the boundaries of nowadays Namibia.

Early resistance against colonialism

The room “Early Resistance Against Colonialism” is dominated by black and white photos picturing the German wars against the Herero and Nama. The third wall is filled with an enlarged photo of Jakob Marenga. In the room’s center are three bronze colored busts of Samuel Maharero, Hendrik Witbooi, and Iipumbu ya Tshilongo – symbolizing three Namibian societies: The Herero, the Nama and the Ovambo, by ignoring all other groups.

Again, it is conspicuous that further information of the exhibits and the context is missing – just a few notes about the specific photographs are given. This makes it hard to follow the intended argumentation of the room. Additionally, the displayed photos are mostly showing the German *Schutztruppe*¹¹ and their captives – since only Germans took photos. However, it is surprising that the room was not curated with more information about the “Early Resistance Against Colonialism” from a local point of view. This could have

11 Name of the German colonial troops

been an act of empowerment and strengthening of the own history, because it would consider own sources as equal with sources of the former colonizer.



Fig. 2. “Early Resistance against Colonialism”. Photo: Tilman Gorenflo, 16.08.2019

Furthermore, it is not explained how the three men in the center are connected to each other and why they got an own sculpture. Like the nine “Early Resistance Leader” at the beginning of the exhibition the resistance is broken down to a few historical key figures that represent some Namibian societies, while others were left out totally. The equating of Iipumbu ya Tshilongo with Samuel Maherero and Hendrik Witbooi in a room which focuses only on the German colonial wars, implies that the Ovambo were oppressed by the Germans in the same way as the Herero and Nama. By omitting the local point of view and the history of resistance by the Ovambo against the Portuguese in the north of Namibia, it is suggested that the German colonial-trauma was a *national* experience and every society suffered the same under the German rule (Gewald 2003: 300; Kössler 2003: 146). This is a historical misrepresentation because the German so-called “police zone” had its primary impact on the center and the south of Namibia whereas the Ovambo kingdoms in the north were affected indirectly by the foreign rule (Gewald 2003: 300; Kössler 2003: 146). Those three busts are exemplary for the Namibian nation-building through the appropriation of history where the histories of specific communities are displayed as national experience. The German colonialism and particularly the colonial wars are imaged to be the shared past of the whole nation and therefore the fate of all Namibians.

The dark room

The construction of a shared past through appropriation of history is present in the third room too – a room that can only be entered through heavy red curtains. It is dark inside, just a few spots of light shine from a low ceiling. The walls are kept in dark colors and depict bodies that are lying on the ground or hanging from ropes. The illumination is constructed in a way that the figures throw long shadows onto the walls, which generates an oppressive feeling for the visitors. There is no title of the room, just one date “02.10.1904” is written on the wall in gold letters (compare picture 3). Beneath is a drawing of a man who wears a German military uniform.¹²



Fig. 3. Dark Room. Photo: Tilman Gorenflo, 16.8. 2019

The gloomy atmosphere of the room in combination with dead bodies and the date gives a clear hint to the genocide of the Herero people. On the 2nd October 1904 the German general Lothar von Trotha signed the so called *Schießbefehl*¹³ in which he ordered the death of every Herero armed or unarmed, no matter if men, women or children (Speitkamp 2017: 86; Zimmerer 2003: 51).

This information is not provided to the visitors. It is a room to show the horrors of German colonialism where apparently no further explanation is needed. From an analytical point, the missing historical context suggests that the cruelties were done to all people in the former German colony. Though it is a history of specific Namibian societies, mostly of the Herero and Nama people – although the *Schießbefehl* of von Trotha, to whom the date of the 2nd

¹² The man on the wall looks like Viktor Franke who was the last commander of the *Schutztruppe* in the former German colony.

¹³ Firing Order

October 1904 refers, only mentions the Herero people. This is particularly important considering that the Herero are still fighting for recognition of their histories and its consequences for their communities in nowadays Namibia (Häussler 2018: 8). Through the lack of information provided, I again see a nationalizing of a specific history which implies that the horrors were *national* horrors and shared by all societies in the German colony. This assumption is strengthened because the exhibits in the previous rooms never distinguished between the several Namibian societies.

Outlook into the Namibian future

Different aspects of the Liberation Struggle, military and diplomatically, are the core of the museum, as the second and third floor are exclusively about the SWAPO and their achievements. The end of the exhibition is an outlook into the imagined Namibian future and at the same time a reference back to the beginning of the exhibition – the pre-colonial time. Opened by some exhibits of the first independent elections and the first Namibian parliament, a giant drawing follows, titled: “Long Live Namibian Independence!” (see picture 4). In the right corner a bright orange sun, similar to the one in the national flag, spreads its sunbeams into the whole picture – three of them in the Namibian colors: red, green, blue.¹⁴



Fig. 4. Long Live Namibian Independence. Photo: Tilman Gorenflo, 16.8.2019

14 The same colors are also the party colors of the SWAPO.

In the foreground ten different people face the same direction. A woman in a “traditional”¹⁵ dress stands next to a *white* farmer. A soldier is placed next to a young girl in a school uniform who is in front of a nurse. One can see two men in suits and another man in a wheelchair who are all assembled next to a woman with a broom. Behind her is a man in a construction worker outfit with a hammer in his hand. In the background are the silhouettes of a cheering and flag waving crowd of people. It is noteworthy that the people who are depicted as women are displayed in care jobs, while the people displayed as men are mostly shown as white-collar workers. Here different characteristics of gender roles are reproduced and set for the Namibian future, an aspect that is also found in the works of Angola and Gemmeke (both this paper). The *white* farmer, perhaps a descendant of former colonialists, is supposed to be a natural part of this community as well as the woman in the “traditional” dress. The whole spectrum of the Namibian society is united under the silhouette of Sam Nujoma who is in the sky above them, like a divine person. He seems to pose as the founding father of (t)his imagined community. This form of depiction suggests that under his rule the Namibian people can look forward to a bright future. At this point of the exhibition the imagined past becomes the present in the Independence Museum. The SWAPO and especially Sam Nujoma led them back to the already displayed “pre-colonial time”. A time where all different societies were living together in a “peaceful coexistence” though united as one nation. This is also expressed by the national motto “unity in diversity” (Becker 2011: 537). But the exhibition shows that national aspirations are paramount and more important than this diversity. One of the most important publications of the SWAPO during the Liberation Struggle “To Be Born A Nation” is supporting this interpretation (SWAPO 1981). The title of the book is a quotation which was used during the Mozambican liberation struggle “to die a tribe and to be born a nation” (SWAPO 1981: ii). It illustrates that the needs of different communities are subordinate to the nation’s interests. Specific “tribes”¹⁶ and their histories become nationalized as long as it serves the national interest, like the history of the Herero and Nama. The appropriation of history in the nation’s interest by the SWAPO is also an important aspect of the already existing memory culture in Namibia, which I will discuss in the following.

The exhibits of the museum fulfill different aspects of nation-building to form an imagined Namibian identity. Through the appropriation of history, a common past is constructed – a past that reinforces the narrative of resistance and bravery, broken down to key figures. This approach is supported by the method of historical simplification. Omitting data and context is a tool

15 The term “traditional” is often used to label people as “backwards” or „un-modern“. To avoid such interpretation and to indicate “tradition” as a construct, I write it in quotation marks.

16 I consider “tribe” as a colonial term to devalue local political structures in comparison with the European colonial powers. Therefore, it is set in quotes.

to tighten the own narrative and to provoke emotions without considering the chronological order of events. This understanding of history and further memory political interventions lead to conflicts and tensions between the Namibian state and several communities, which I will show in the following section.

Recent memory political battlefields

One example of memory politics and conflict about remembrance was the restitution of the Bible and whip of Hendrik Witbooi from Germany back to Namibia in February 2019. The restitution of those artifacts was criticized by parts of the Nama community, who claimed that the Bible and the whip belonged to them and not to the Namibian state. But for the German federal state Baden-Württemberg and their minister Bauer it was reasonable to give the artifacts back to the “*namibischen Volk*”¹⁷ (Baden-Württemberg 2019: 2). This argumentation is also based on the established memory culture in Namibia as it is concluded that: “*Er [Witbooi] ist heute ein Nationalheld Namibias, dem durch zahlreiche Denkmäler gedacht wird*”¹⁸ (Baden-Württemberg 2019: 2). Baden-Württemberg is following the narrative of the Namibian state instead of giving the artifacts of Hendrik Witbooi back to the Nama people as their Traditional Leader Conference had claimed (Kahiurika 2019). The case illustrates several layers of coming to terms with the past in the restitution debate. It raises the question about heritage, property and international relations.

The second case is the controversy that followed the memory political approach of the Namibian state and the Windhoek city council to change the name of the “Bismarck Street” in Windhoek. This initiative provoked the resistance by parts of the German-speaking community because they felt left out of the discourse in post-colonial Namibia. The German-speaking community are in a special position as the descendants of the former colonialists in this memory political “battlefield” for recognition and participation. In the following I discuss how their identity is connected with memory culture and what this means for their relationship to the government and other Namibian communities.

As an answer to the political intervention concerning the “Bismarck Street”, a German-speaking lawyer published an article in the largest Namibian newspaper where he argued that it is wrong to change the street name into “Simeon Lineekele Shixungileni Street”. Thereby he defended Otto von Bismarck as a “hero” for Germans by illustrating his achievements like the unification of Germany and the introduction of the social security system (Vaatz 2019a: 3). His main point is that the name change is a discrimination

17 Namibian people

18 He [Witbooi] is nowadays a national hero of Namibia, who is remembered by numerous monuments.

and additionally destroys the heritage of the German-speaking community in Namibia. Therefore, he raises the question: “[W]hy must the admired leader of one of the ethnics groups presently calling Namibia their home country be removed and *substituted* by a hero of one of the other ethnic groups” (Vaatz 2019a: 3; emphasis in original). The lawyer as well emphasizes that Bismarck was innocent about what happened in the former German colonies because he retired in 1890. Here he is, probably willingly, ignoring that Bismarck himself cleared the way for German colonialism which formally began in 1884. In a second article, in defense of his former article, he uses flawless colonial revisionist arguments to underpin his cause. “There have also been a number of benefits the colonial power have brought to Namibia, such as the education system, the road system [...] and generally speaking the administrative system” (Vaatz 2019b: 15).¹⁹ Which fits in his previous argumentation where he highlights the importance of the German community in “making Namibia what it is today” (Vaatz 2019a: 3). Both articles were discussed for several days in the newspaper and showed how the descendants of the former colonialist see themselves and how they use different relativistic arguments and money to keep the sovereignty of interpretation about their colonial heritage. They want to have participation rights and an equal treatment among the different ethnic groups in Namibia without acknowledging the colonial guilt and the inequality that is inherent in their position. This became clear on a meeting of the German community titled: “*Namibisch-Deutsches Selbstverständnis. Werden die Meinungen deutschsprachiger Namibier in der Öffentlichkeit genügend wahrgenommen?*”²⁰. The meeting was arranged by the *Namibisch-Deutsche Stiftung*²¹ and apparently the topic aroused great interest because around 150 people came to the discussion. The idea was to negotiate how the “German tribe” could increase its perception in Namibia since they felt a decline of their influence and presence in inner Namibian matters. Therefore, the *white* German-speaking Namibians negotiated how they can form a new organization or a voice and how this could be used to reclaim their position in Namibia.²² In the following discussion it became clear that the colonial era is still the core of their self-conception and the reason for their felt declining perception. As many agreed, such a voice should be used to defend themselves against verbal attacks from other communities, which were based on post-colonial questions about property and land. Particularly the Herero people and their verbal assaults against German-speaking

19 I don’t want to reproduce such colonial revisionist arguments uncommented: Every attribute that was mentioned above as a benefit of colonialism was primarily used to exploit the people in the former colonies.

20 Namibian-German self-conception. Are the opinions of German-speaking Namibians sufficiently noticed in public?

21 Namibian-German Foundation

22 There are about 20.000 German-speaking people in Namibia, which is around 1% of the population (Melber 2015: 16).

farmers were mentioned during the discussion. Apart from inner Namibian conflicts, their new organization could be a tool to reject generalizations and accusations that were coming from Germany – especially on topics about their colonial heritage.²³ A confident appearance as one united group should counter this felt paternalism from Germany-based academics and take back the agency to their community in Namibia. The initiative of the lawyer was appreciated by many during the discussion because he defended the “German tradition” against seemingly arbitrary governmental decisions. Many of them stressed that this should as well be an important attribute of their new organization. As a result their representatives could get in contact with the Namibian government and protect the rights of the German community, like the case of the “Bismarck Street”. An attitude that was shaped in the last years, especially since the debate about the *Reiterdenkmal* and the changing memory cultural landscape in Namibia (Melber 2015: 164). According to the impression at the event, numerous no longer want to face their colonial guilt and want to be proud again of their heritage and identity.

The return of the Witbooi Bible and the Bismarck Street are recent examples for different Namibian communities who deal with the impact of governmental memory political interventions in two different ways. Both illustrate several layers of coming to terms with the past in Namibia. The case of the Witbooi Bible shows that there are tensions between the Namibian state and several communities like the Nama when it comes to restitutions and memorization. Because it arises crucial questions about property in the post-colony. Who is the owner of colonial artifacts – the state, the community, or the descendants of specific people? Particularly in the international setting, this question is mostly ignored because it exclusively focuses on the negotiation between nation-states. Although, as the removal of the *Reiterdenkmal* showed there is also a connection between the German memory culture and issues of the Herero and Nama, even if for different reasons. For the German-speaking community the preservation of German memory culture is an act of preserving their own identity and past. For the Herero and Nama on the other hand this memory culture preserves memories of colonialism itself and therefore of the crimes committed by the Germans. This is particularly important in a time where the memory landscape is changing and focuses exclusively on the SWAPO and their efforts during the Liberation Struggle.

Memory culture and politics in Namibia

In the following I will show the characteristics of the Namibian memory culture by considering the current state of research and discuss the previous

²³ Especially Bartholomäus Grill was criticized from different people in the room. In March 2019, the German journalist published a book where he examined among others the racist continuity of German-speaking Namibians (Grill 2019).

examples. Most of the scholars agree that the Heroes' Acre, an areal in the suburbs of Windhoek to honor the heroes, is a good example for attributes of the Namibian memory culture, especially militarization (Becker 2011: 524; Kirkwood 2013, 557; Melber 2003: 307; Zuern 2012: 497). Becker stressed that the militarization is accompanied by a celebration of hyper-masculinity. Her focus on gender aspects of memory culture has shown that women are almost invisible in the Namibian memory culture (Becker 2011: 530). I would add by referring to Gemmeke that this invisibility also applies to trans, inter, non-binary and queer people (this volume). Another attribute of the Heroes Acre is that through the focus on masculinity, military²⁴ and heroism there is no space for mourning – a theme which became, according to Becker and Melber (Becker 2011: 535; Melber 2005: 102), essential for the Namibian memory culture. Both aspects are found as well in the exhibition in the Independence Museum.

During the liberation struggle the history of the German colonialism was used to unify all Black²⁵ people in Namibia against the colonial oppressor (Gewald 2003: 295). “In this manner, the Herero genocide became the shared history of oppression of all Africans living in Namibia, and not just the Herero” (Gewald 2003: 295). For Southall this is a typical method of liberation movements (Southall 2013: 6). In the propaganda of the SWAPO in the 1960s, attacks by the South African Defense Forces against the PLAN²⁶ were equated with attacks by Lothar von Trotha and his troops against the Herero (Bargueño 2012: 409). This approach is furthermore supported by the Independence Museum. The “Early Resistance Leaders” are constructed as the forebears of the SWAPO and Sam Nujoma. This singular and linear narration of history sees resistance against German colonialism as a prelude to the “real” liberation which was finally accomplished by the SWAPO. A reason why the memorization of the Liberation Struggle is deeply connected with the German colonialism and vice versa. Those events do not count as single historic events but as mutually dependent, while emphasizing the achievements of the SWAPO. With this attitude colonial experiences under the Germans are nationalized by the SWAPO which goes along with accumulation of power. Because the memorization focuses on their own achievements during the Liberation Struggle that outshines the period of the German colonialism (Zuern 2012: 496). The whole construction of the Independence Museum supports this mindset and therefore completes the idea of forming a Namibian identity.

After independence, appropriation of history was used to make up a Namibian identity. A characteristic that is also established in the exhibition

24 Melber has shown that the diplomatic operations were more important for the achievement of independence than the military ones (Melber 2003: 312).

25 I understand “Black” as a political category, therefore I write it with a capital letter.

26 “People’s Liberation Army of Namibia”. The military wing of the SWAPO.

of the Independence Museum and surfaces in debates about restitution and reparation payments. Especially on an international level of negotiations the communities are not valued as negotiation partners from both sides – Germany and Namibia. As a consequence, the SWAPO accumulates power while they negotiate with the German state by leaving out the Herero and Nama (Gewald 2003: 298). The restitution of the Witbooi Bible showed that questions about property and heritage are connected with this established history and narrative. The German state Baden-Württemberg followed this approach and gave the artifacts back to the Namibian state because they considered Hendrik Witbooi as *national* hero without even acknowledging his particular importance for the Nama community. Accordingly, conflicts about memorization become significant because they lay the foundation for negotiations about reparation payments and distribution of land (Zuern 2012: 513). In this, communities like the Herero or the Nama stress the unique experience of their people during the German colonial time and how this caused a marginalization which is still visible today (Häussler 2018, 8). But the Namibian Government downplays their experience by emphasizing that it is a national history and that they don't want to "favor" any specific group in the country (Kössler 2007: 381). An acknowledgment of their fate and the silencing of other histories²⁷ would furthermore be seen as a criticism of SWAPO, their achievements and the Namibian independence itself. Silencing history is a way to maintain steadiness – a stability that is considered to be more important than to tear up old wounds (Saul and Lyes 2003: 97).

Here, as Kössler illustrates, another important aspect becomes apparent: "Public memory in Namibia is deeply bound up with inequality, political actions of the state and political strategies, including those of party politics" (Kössler 2007: 382). Institutional power decides what is worth to be remembered and what is silenced (J. Assmann 2011: 54; Trouillot 1995: xxiii). This leads to a denial of specific histories and to a strengthening of those who have seized power (Trouillot 1995: 26). The museum as a memory political intervention itself is always forming and reproducing power. Through its selective manner it decides what is going to be preserved and moreover how this memory is sorted and contextualized. Different items are put together to create a common feeling, while others are left out for not fitting into the predominate narrative. This observation was also made by Schildkrout in her research about the Namibian museums in the early time after independence (Schildkrout 1995). She pointed out that most of the museums focused on a narrative that supported nation-building to overcome old conflicts (Schildkrout 1995: 65-66). The lack of information and historical context in the Independence Museum follows this nation-building approach, because it suggests that Namibia as one nation has one common singular history where nobody is favored – besides the SWAPO.

27 Like the fate of prisoners of the SWAPO.

Looking on the bigger scale of memory culture and reparation payments, the power is not in the hands of SWAPO. The Namibian state is still dependent on the goodwill of the former colonizer, the German state.²⁸ Namibia is receiving voluntary “development” funds from Germany and therefore they lose their bargaining power since they can’t confront Germany harshly. But this is just one side of the coin. I talked to many Namibians who stressed that paying reparations can only be one step of a greater path of recognizing the German colonial heritage and ongoing guilt. Next to reparation payments and restitution of colonial artifacts, for many Namibians it is important that the German state apologizes for the colonial atrocities – in Namibia but also in other (African) countries.²⁹ Consequently, it is important for an inner German debate to challenge the pre-existing assumptions about an unproblematic *Kaiserzeit*³⁰, the self-concept of a neutral position³¹ in Africa and the mystification as well as the romanticization of the colonial era (Krüger 2003: 122; 130; 132). This could also affect the German-speaking community in Namibia and their way to position themselves.

Conclusion and outlook

In their memory politics the SWAPO appropriates history to maintain power which leads to tensions and conflicts about memorization and heritage in the post-colony. This article showed how the new Independence Museum in the Namibian capital Windhoek fits well in the pre-existing Namibian memory culture. With its prominent location it breaks the symbolical dominance of German colonial memory culture in downtown Windhoek. The exhibition itself illustrates how history is used in different ways in the post-colonial setting. Through the appropriation of history, specific events like the Genocides of the Herero and Nama become nationalized. The museum fulfills what the former president Pohamba announced at its inauguration; that it should built up a Namibian identity. Additionally, the exhibition of the museum follows the established naturalized narrative of bravery, heroism, and resistance and lays the foundation for the self-staging of the SWAPO. Consequently, the Liberation Struggle against South Africa is emphasized while early colonial resistance against Germany is downplayed as the prelude to it, as the analyses showed. People and societies who do not fit into this SWAPO narrative are left out and their remembrance is silenced. In this article, I demonstrated

28 The initiate of the Herero and Nama to sue Germany before a court in New York brought no success apart from attention.

29 For example the brutal Maji Maji war in nowadays Tanzania which where around 300.000 people died.

30 Imperial period

31 The German Africa policy is based on the assumption that Germany is, apart from other European states, a neutral power in Africa because they lost their colonies so “early”.

that the understanding of history in Namibia is used to imagine a post-colonial future where peaceful societies coexist next to each other under the fate of Sam Nujoma and the SWAPO. The cases of the Witbooi Bible and the Bismarck Street illustrated how memory politics is causing tensions and conflicts in this setting. They showed the inherent power of memory culture, its connection to questions about equal rights, participation and financial compensation. The nationalization of the genocides is used by the SWAPO to negotiate with the German state about reparations payments while excluding responsible people of the Herero and Nama. The created memory culture and the historic narrative that is told within it legitimizes the SWAPO to do so. An acknowledgement that some communities were more affected by the colonial oppression than others and still suffer from their marginalization, would weaken the narrative by SWAPO and their political position. It makes clear that “unity in diversity” – which should emphasize the specifics of each community – is still subordinated to national, thus SWAPO’s, interest. The expansion of the educational institutions in Namibia, especially the humanities, could oppose the nationalizing approach of history. In this way scientific data would be available for all the communities and strengthen their position. But also the former colonizer, the German state, follows this narrative as the restitution of the whip and Bible of Hendrik Witbooi showed. The case of the German-speaking community in Namibia illustrated how descendants of the former colonizer lose influence and struggle with their own identity and facing their colonial heritage. Many of their struggles are connected to Germany and the predominant colonial amnesia. Therefore, it is important for Germany to set up a self-critical memory culture. Sculptures and Street names that honor former colonial officials or traders should be replaced and memorial sites about the genocides and colonial guilt should be erected. This could be a first step of the recognition of Germany’s own responsibility as a former colonial power.

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Claiming craft, claiming culture The creation of value in post-colonial Namibian craft markets

Paula Alexiou

Introduction

A man, a woman, and a boy (about 10 years old) walk across the parking lot towards the entrance of the Craft Centre. The boy tries to follow the lion's footprints painted on the floor. "Namibia Craft Centre – 100% Namibian Craft" is written on the board in front of the entrance. The family stops just before James¹ stall, which is outside to the left of the entrance. James is a craft producer who has his own stall at the craft centre. On his shelf are a number of different (wild) animals made of wire and beads, wire and recycled plastic or metal. "*Das haben wir gesehen, und das auch, und das und das...*"² the boy begins to enumerate in German, pointing alternately to an oryx antelope³, an elephant, a giraffe and a lion. "*Lass uns reingehen*"⁴, says his mother and takes the boy by the hand. The three enter the Craft Centre, walk past the stand with the wooden bowls and wooden giraffes, past the woven baskets, the Makalani stones, the colourfully embroidered pillowcases and bags, the leather bags, past the colourfully printed fabrics and dresses, up the stairs. They walk past the table with the ostrich eggshell jewellery towards the café, where they are greeted in German by the Austrian manager and then sit down at a table on the terrace. On the wall of the café hangs a framed blackboard on which is written in neat chalk in German: "*Träume nicht dein Leben, lebe deinen Traum*"⁵. The Craft Centre, located in the centre of Windhoek, resembles a place like in a dream, a place that radiates creativity through its bright colours and diverse forms. Only the post office, which is also located in the Craft Centre and where a queue of locals forms every morning, stands out for its plain design among the other stalls. It seems a little out of place: a place of reality and everyday life in the middle of a place for travellers looking for souvenirs as a reminder of their holiday.

The Namibia Craft Centre is home to 40 craft shops run by different individuals or community-projects. The core activity of the Craft Centre is the promotion of objects as "traditional" Namibian crafts. As I will outline in

1 All names have been changed.

2 "We have seen that, and that too, and that, and that..." (translated by the author)

3 A Southern African oryx, also called gemsbok, is a large antelope and native to the arid regions of Southern Africa such as the Kalahari Desert.

4 "Let's go inside" (translated by the author)

5 "Do not dream your life, live your dream" (translated by the author)

this paper several processes of choice, redefinition, valorisation, and power take place. Although the focus is on selected handmade objects and their producers, in fact the idea of traditional handicraft often comes from a group of post-colonial elites who play the role of middlemen and -women between producers and consumers. I define post-colonial elites as a group of people who had a privileged position in society during colonial times due to their origin (mostly Germans or white South Africans) and who continued to benefit from economic wealth and power even after Namibia's independence. Along the production chain, certain narratives of objects and people are created and are redefined in interaction with the tourists who buy handicraft objects and their narratives at the market.

What effect does tourism have on Namibian handicraft objects and their narratives? To what extent do tourists' ideas about Namibian handicrafts contrast with the history of the objects? How do tourists' perceptions influence the production history and value attribution of the objects and vice versa? To answer these questions, I will use a case study to trace the history of an object, its production chain and the actors involved along the way. The history of the object will then be contrasted with the perspective of the tourists. Based on these representations, I argue that the acquisition of (Namibian) craft objects is about the claim to a narrative. These narratives are negotiated between producers, traders, and consumers of crafts. As Appadurai argues, "[v]alue is embodied in commodities that are exchanged. Focusing on the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is *politics*, constructed broadly" (Appadurai 1986: 3). The presentation of the history and journey of the objects will show how different agents in the field of crafts - manufacturers, traders, buyers - try to impose their own cultural values and ideas on things and people. I will furthermore argue that the creation of value in the Namibian craft market is defined by notions and definitions of craft, culture, and "authenticity". However, this way of giving meaning is far from being egalitarian in both local and global contexts. By presenting the production chain of the craft objects, including the involved agents, and contrasting it to the tourist's perception, I will expose colonial traces in the creation of value in the Namibian Craft Market. I will use the term commodity fetishism to describe the way in which the craft object is alienated from both its producer and its consumer by concealing the conditions of production.

During the field research process, I tried to be aware of the way in which I, as a white German ethnographer, also claim and negotiate academic understandings of the crafts. I have often found myself in the role of a mediator between producers and tourists, when producers have asked me about the expectations of (German) tourists and tourists about my knowledge of the history of objects. In this way I have certainly partly influenced the process of

negotiating the meaning and narratives of the objects. I would therefore like to point out that the meaning of crafts changes over time and place through interaction with different groups of people (including myself) and should by no means be understood as being static.

The article is based on a six week field research stay in Windhoek in July and August 2019 and a two month field research stay in February and March 2020, focusing on the objects and actors of the Craft Centre in central Windhoek. However, objects and actors of other Craft Centres, Markets and Shops in and outside Windhoek (mainly Swakopmund) were also considered in order to provide a general overview of the craft landscape in Namibia. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews with producers, managers, and tourists as well as participatory market observation, participatory art and multi-sited ethnography were conducted.

What is craft?

There are different ideas and perceptions about characteristics that classify an object as craft. Even though the lines that distinguish craft from other objects – especially from (higher) art – are blurred, there are some common assumptions about how and by whom craft objects are or should be made. As I will outline in this paper, the conception of craft as something old and pre-capitalist by many tourists has an influence on the creation of value in Namibian craft markets. Therefore, the following part provides an approach to a definition of craft.

In the evening of 5th March 2020, I attend an exhibition opening at the National Art Gallery of Namibia (NAGN) titled “Reflect. Namibia at 30 years of Independence”. The exhibition includes various works by individual artists in the field of visual arts. The artworks are for sale. A small note next to the artwork provides information about the name of the artist, the title of the artwork and its price. While walking through the gallery I notice an artwork, more precisely a collage, which I had seen before. The collage was shown last year in the Craft Centre. As shown with the photograph (*see Figure 1*), it was offered for sale in the Craft Centre among several other collages and other craft objects for the price of N\$ 2500⁶. Here at the National Art Gallery, the same collage was for sale for N\$ 8125 (*see Figure 2*). On the photograph, one can see that it is not surrounded by similar pieces but is represented as individual piece. How is it possible that the same artwork is offered for sale as craft at the Craft Centre for N\$ 2500 and as art at the National Art Gallery for N\$ 8125? In the Craft Centre, the collage was presented as craft among many others, while in the National Art Gallery it is offered as individual and unique art, which apparently increases its value drastically. What is the difference between craft and art, and can an object be both?

6 ~16 Namibian Dollar (N\$) correspond to 1 Euro



Fig. 1. Collage at the Craft Centre.
Photo: Paula Alexiou, 19th August 2019



Fig. 2. Collage at the NAGN.
Photo: Paula Alexiou, 5th March 2020

Sennett states that one of the ways art and craft can be sociologically distinguished is by the relative roles that agency and originality are considered to play in their production (2008: 68-73). Labelling objects as work of art is based on ideals of originality and creativity. Works of art gain public value because they “exposed and expressed the inner character of [their] maker” (ibid. 69), a belief that still influences popular understanding of art production today. In contrast, the public value of craft objects is based on the idea of socially or communally produced productive skills and abilities that are often thought to reflect localized local traditions or cultural identity, rather than exposing and expressing the internal creative processed by individuals. Thus, Cant argues that one aspect by which craft is distinguished from art concerns definitions of authorship (2016: 20). Craft objects are generally perceived as being ‘from places’ rather than ‘by people’.

That a work of art should be an expression of the artist’s character and his personal world view leads to a paradox: “art is sold like a commodity but is produced [...] as an object of intense personal expression” (Plattner 1996: 23). Art commodities are different from other commodities because its quality cannot be discerned solely by its visual attributes. The price of an artwork is less influenced by its physical nature than by social and historical factors. The value of the object is thus determined by its socio-historical context rather than its physical quality (ibid. 19). There is practically no relationship between production costs and price of a work of art. In contrast to craft objects where the main criteria for their prices are production costs which can be divided into material costs and invested time.

The contemporary sense of ‘craft’ did not appear until the late 19th century with the beginning of the Arts and Craft Movement (Dormer 1997: 5-6). Craft, which was one of the categories of art, became divorced from art and the design during the 20th century. This divorce has led to the separation of ‘having ideas’ from ‘making objects’ as well as to the idea that comprises a mental attribute named ‘creativity’ that precedes the knowledge of how to make things (ibid. 18). Furthermore, art usually seeks to address and reflect on an experience, world view or current problematic situation, while crafts

are expected to represent local commonalities and traditions. Crafts are considered suitable markers of cultural identity. For many craft makers, the distinction between art and craft is a question of status that has to do with money. When an object has the status of art, it is mostly more valuable than an object without that status. According to the philosopher-critic Arthur Danto, art can be anything, but only if it's recognised as such by the so called "artworld" (Danto 1964) which includes "a loosely organised community of artists, art professionals and interested bystanders" (Metcalf 1997: 68). Thus, the collage (see *Figure 1 and 2*) was first presented in the Craft Centre as one of many craft objects produced with productive skills and abilities. However, the "artworld" declared it to be art that expresses and exposes the individual character of the maker through creativity. The status of art that the collage gains through its presentation at the National Art Gallery makes the object more valuable than without that status which allows the maker to sell it for a much higher price that it was intended to be sold as a craft object. The status of craft mainly depends on the separation of 'making' from 'meaning' and the separation of the arts into categories of 'higher' and 'lower' (Dorner 1997: 19). Thereby 'higher art' is attributed an aesthetic value that has an inspiring, spiritual, or emotional character and has no practical everyday utility. Craft work, on the other hand, does include objects with a use value (Greiner and Pröpper 2016: 216).

Metcalf defines craft based on the following characteristics: First, it has to be a physical object. Second, it must be made predominantly by hand, and third, traditional craft materials and techniques are used. With "traditional" he means "materials, techniques and formats that survive from pre-industrial production" (1997: 70-71). The Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and Small-and-Medium-Sized Enterprise Development (MITSMED) of Namibia uses the following definition: "Craft is the production of a broad range of traditional and contemporary items, made predominantly by hands as individual pieces, utilising rudimentary tools and uncomplicated or traditional skills and involving some combination of functional, aesthetic, innovative, decorative and cultural traditions; heritage; and sometimes religious significance" (MITSMED 2017: 7). In both definitions the term "tradition" seems to play a significant role. Not only in those definitions but also in conversations I had with tourists about the characteristics of craft, crafts were defined as "traditional" – often meaning "old" – objects made by the local population primarily for their own use. Craft means "*mit einfachen Mitteln Dinge zu machen, die man bei uns nicht kennt, nicht mehr*"⁷ (Isabell, a German tourist). "Tradition" appears to be something from the past, something old, even pre-industrial. But, as Hobsbawm argues, tradition is often invented by people from the present. Repetition of materials and technics implies a continuity

7 "to make things with simple means that are not known where we live, not anymore" (translated by the author)

with the past (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). But “the continuity with it is largely factitious (..) they [invented traditions] are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition” (ibid. 2). Crafts are often seen as the production of pre-capitalist, non-market-oriented objects. At the same time, they are now strongly integrated into the globalized and capitalist market. Greiner and Pröpper similarly argue convincingly that crafts are a global practice, a production in a globalized economy (Greiner and Pröpper 2016: 220).

An unambiguous definition of craft is difficult, since there will always be objects that cannot be clearly assigned or that are viewed differently by different people. We have also seen from the example of the collage that one and the same object can be classified both as a craft and as art, depending on context, location, and presentation. Although differences in the expectations of art and craft and their status can be identified, the transition from craft to art is fluid. “At each point in its movement through space and time, an object has the potential to shift from one category to another and, in so doing, to slide along the slippery line that divides art from artifact from commodity” (Phillips and Steiner 1999: 15). In the following part I will sketch the Namibian craft landscape and present some craft objects as examples.

The Namibia Craft Centre – An overview of core objects

“For centuries, the traditional production of handicrafts served utilitarian and cultural purposes and was linked to individual tribal identities in communal areas” (MITSMED 2017: 8).

The quote from the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development shows that crafts were historically considered as objects that have a practical use for their makers. As tourism increased a few years preceding Namibian independence, the production of traditionally made items from mainly natural resources on a commercial basis for the urban market evolved (ibid.). NGOs initiated interest in handicraft which led to the establishment of craft outlets. For the producers, craft making was “a supplementary activity, to gain cash when there were no other agricultural or household demands on the producer” (ibid.). The involvement of various organisations, especially NGOs increased around the time of independence (ibid.). The Namibia Craft Centre opened in 1990 in Windhoek, hosting 40 different stalls today. The craft objects are mostly bought in craft shops, street markets or craft centres, the Namibia Craft Centre in Windhoek being the largest and best known. Many of the stalls are run by NGOs or different community projects, some of them are run by individual producers or traders. Most craft producers are based in the communal areas in the northern regions of Namibia, while mainly traders and managers are based in the capital. “Producers rely on

community-run craft centres, a few retail and wholesale buyers and lodges to access markets for them” (ibid. 22). The following is a short presentation of some objects that can be found in the Namibia Craft Centre - but also in various craft shops and street markets.

Wood carvings

One of the most represented craft objects in Namibia are wood carvings. You see them in every street market, craft shop and craft centre (see *Figure 3*). Most popular are wooden animals, especially giraffes and elephants, but also larger bowls that people usually use as salad bowls. Wood carvings are not uniquely Namibian. They are sold in many countries all over the world, mainly on tourist markets. In Namibia, most of the wooden animals and bowls that are sold to tourists are not produced locally but are imported from Kenya because “it’s cheaper and easier to get it from other countries” (the manager of the Namibia Craft Centre). A few times a year, people from Kenya come to Namibia with loaded trucks full of woodcarvings to sell it to the Namibian traders who sell it on the street or in craft shops with a profit to tourists.



Fig. 3. Woodcarvings at the Craft Centre. Photo: Paula Alexiou, 17th February 2020

Beaded animals

Also very popular in the Namibian tourist market are beaded animals (see *Figure 4*). The beaded animals are considered Namibian craft because they are produced locally. The material (wire and beads) is sold in Namibia, but the beads were made in China. The animals are mainly giraffes, elephants,

oryxes, lions and geckos. When I asked James why animals, he answered “*Why animals? Because people they buy what they see here*”. Most producers of beaded animals – including James – come from Zimbabwe. The beaded animals are also one of the few types of objects that are only made by men. The question why men from Zimbabwe living in Windhoek produce the beaded animals was often answered with “*They know better how to make it*”.



Fig. 4. Beaded animals at the Craft Centre. Photo: Paula Alexiou, 17th February 2020

Makalani kernels

“*You don’t find it [Makalani kernels] anywhere else in the world, only in Namibia. They are the only Namibian souvenir that I have seen*”, tells me my interview partner on the street market in Windhoek. Makalani stones resemble chestnuts in shape and size. They grow on palm trees, called *Hyphaene petersiana* which can be found in south central Africa. In Namibia they grow in the northern regions where the kernels are collected by the Makalani carvers to be sold in Windhoek and other towns. Animals (lions, elephants, giraffes, zebras, etc.) are carved into the stone with a knife. Often the stones are provided with a small leather band and sometimes beads to sell them as key rings (see Figure 5). Many Makalani sellers work on the streets and try to sell their pendants there. Most Makalani carvers have learned the skills from family member. Usually, it was reproduced what has been seen with other carvers. The kernels almost always show the same motives: wild animals in different variations and compositions. The answer to the question why animals, is the same as for the beaded animals. “*The reason for them [the tourists] to come here is to see animals*” (a Makalani carver).



Fig. 5. Makalani kernels as pendants at the Craft Centre.
Photo: Paula Alexiou, 12th August 2019

Woven baskets

Woven grass baskets are probably one of the objects with the oldest history at the Namibian craft market but were historically not considered as craft but as functional items for domestic use. They were made in the north of Namibia and were used for harvesting, winnowing, carrying goods, and for storage purposes. The baskets are made from natural materials, such as the Makalani palm (*Hyphaene petersiana*) leaves which can only be found in those northern regions of Namibia. With the introduction of plastic boxes and especially Tupperware at the beginning of the 20th century, plastic largely replaced wickerwork and more plastic boxes and less woven baskets were used. When tourism increased after independence and the market for “traditional” craft started growing the basket weaving techniques were revived and regained importance (conversation with the manager of the craft centre and the manager of a basket weaving project). Today the market around basketry – as well as many other craft production – is run by NGOs or community projects who are “supporting sustainable livelihoods of marginalised communities in Namibia through the development, sales and marketing of innovative crafts” (Omba Arts Trust). Historically the women used plain patterns and natural-coloured palm leaves but since the community projects started and the baskets were sold on the tourist market, new different co-

lours and patterns were implemented (see Figure 6). Different and individual colours and patterns are important because “rarity increases the value. [...] The more unique the more willing are people to pay” (one of the managers of the community project).



Fig. 6. Woven baskets of Omba Arts Trust at the Craft Centre.
Photo: Paula Alexiou, 17th February 2020

Ostrich eggshell jewellery

Ostrich eggshell jewellery is the oldest craft production in Namibia. The ostrich eggshell bead is the oldest man-made bead and believed to be more than 10,000 years old (Miller and Sawchuk 2019). They were mainly made by the Ju/Hoansi in northern Namibia. The eggs were usually eaten, and the eggshell could be used to store water. The broken eggshells were made into beads for trading and decoration and today for selling on the tourist market.



Fig. 7. Ostrich eggshell jewellery at the street craft market.
Photo: Paula Alexiou, 12th August 2019

Just like the woven baskets, the ostrich eggshell jewellery is merchandised and sold through NGOs and community projects. After the production in the rural areas in the northern part of the country, they are sent to the Craft Centre or craft shops in Windhoek to be sold to tourists. However, since there are not as many ostrich eggshells in Namibia today as there were a few decades ago, they are often imported from neighbouring countries such as South Africa or Botswana (Interview with a project manager). Even though groups of the Ju/Hoansi who are part of community projects which are supported and managed by NGOs are producing the ostrich eggshell jewellery locally, many of the jewellery one finds on street markets from individual traders is imported from neighbouring countries, as several traders on street markets told me.

This is only a small selection of products that are sold as Namibian Craft. Other products include leather bags, metal animals, sewn Herero dolls, pottery, animals made from recycled materials such as plastic cans or espresso capsules, colourful fabrics, batik bags and tablecloths, and embroidery. Some of them, like the Makalani kernels or the woven baskets, are produced locally in Namibia from natural resources, some, like the woodcarvings, are imported from other African countries and many others are produced or elaborated in Namibia, but the material for them comes from other countries, like fabrics from Ghana or beads from China.

“You got an elephant, a wooden elephant, it’s a wooden elephant to a tourist, you know, we know, that one comes from Kavango, that one is from Zimbabwe, this giraffe is from Kenia [...] We live in a global world, so everybody produces anything [...] you got the Chinese who produces African print dresses that looks like it comes from Africa, so you can’t say: this is South African or this is Namibian, you know, it has its origin perhaps in South Africa or in Kenia” (the manager of the Namibia Craft Centre).

We live in a globalized world, but where does the need to take something local come from? And what does locality mean for the tourist at the craft market? Many of the objects offered at the Craft Centre are part of community projects run by post-colonial elites. Often the products are not made locally or are made from imported materials. Woodcarvings are imported from Kenia, Zimbabwean men are making Namibian craft out of beads produced in China, ostrich eggshells for the as typically Namibian advertised “San jewellery” are imported from neighbouring countries and new shapes, patterns and colours are invented for “traditional” baskets because uniqueness seems to increase the value. Neither the origin nor the design of the objects is traditional. Locality seems to play only a marginal role, which contradicts the often-stated definition or idea of craftwork as something rooted in old “traditions”. In the following section, I will look closer at one specific craft object or

respectively one kind of craft object: embroidery. I will follow the production chain – more specifically the part of the chain that takes place in Namibia – and the valorisation process of the object before I take a closer look at the tourist’s perspective on Namibian craft objects. The case study will show that neo-colonial value chains dominate the production of embroidery.

The history and journey of the object: The case of embroideries

The art of embroidery is the craft of decorating fabric or other materials using a needle to apply thread or yarn. In Europe, the technique flourished as an important household skill for young women as a means of decorating otherwise drab textiles. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women from Germany, as wives of missionaries, brought their technique of embroidery to Namibia and imparted the skill to the Namibian women (Travel News Namibia)⁸. Through colonialism a German practice was imported to Namibia. Embroidery is thus a colonial invented tradition. Today, embroidery products at the Namibia Craft Centre and in various craft shops are sold primarily to tourists and advertised as “products that celebrate Namibian rural life” (Travel News Namibia). The women who are making the embroideries are part of community projects, which are either run and managed by NGOs or by a group of post-colonial elites, which means German or South African families. I will now have a closer look at the story and the production of the embroidery products from a community project called “!khoba”, but I will also reference to and draw parallels with the products from another NGO community project called “Penduka”.

Penduka, based in Katutura, the former township of Windhoek, is an NGO founded 1992 that offers training in craft production – mainly, but not exclusively in embroidery techniques – to “*low income and disabled Namibian women to support themselves*” (Penduka flyer). *Penduka* is selling the products in a local shop as well as online and is exporting to the Netherlands and South Korea (interview with the manager of production of *Penduka*). They are working with women in rural areas as well as with women who came to the city without employment opportunities and now live in Katutura. The women are trained in embroidery techniques and “how to tell stories through embroidery”. They call it “storytelling embroidery” or “village embroidery”, because the design is based on the women’s life at their village. With different colours, they are stitching their life stories on various fabrics, which are then processed into pillowcases, tablecloths, bags etc (ibid.).

“!khoba” is another community project, which is not run by a NGO, but by a German-Namibian family. The word “!khoba” is taken from the San language and means “wild animals of Africa”. The *!khoba* project is a community project founded 1983 by three German Namibian sisters on their farm in

8 <https://www.travelnewsnamibia.com/news/koba-project/>

the Otjiwarongo District. The idea of the project was to provide income to the wives of the farmworkers. The sisters started to teach the Namibian women embroidery techniques and were selling the finished products on a monthly street market in Windhoek. They soon expanded their business, employed more than 300 women who were doing embroidery and opened a stall at the Craft Centre in Windhoek and various craft shops in Windhoek and Swakopmund. In 2005 the headquarters of the project was moved from the farm to Swakopmund.

Otjiwarongo

On the farm in Otjiwarongo, the *!khoba* project was started in 1983. It is the oldest community project with embroiderer groups in Namibia. The materials – the fabric (cotton) and yarn – are bought by the project leaders in shops in Windhoek. The fabric and yarn sold there are imported from South Africa or North Africa. The materials are then delivered to the women on the farm, who stitch the fabric. The design is given by the project founders and managers and is usually pre-drawn, so that the embroiderers only have to re-stitch the patterns. The women are not permanently employed but are paid according to the number of pieces. Until 2005, the production hall was located on the farm, then the headquarters and workshop were moved to Swakopmund. Many of the women can work from home. Most of the women still live on the farm and work from there. Once a month Heidi⁹, one of the founders of the project, travels from Swakopmund to Otjiwarongo to the farm to collect the finished embroideries and distribute new fabrics and yarn.

Swakopmund

The studio is located in Swakopmund, where the finished embroideries from Otjiwarongo are processed into pillowcases, tablecloths, bags and kitchen towels before being transported to shops in Swakopmund and Windhoek. This is also where Heidi lives. She is responsible for transporting the embroideries from the farm to Swakopmund, organising the further processing and the delivery of the finished products to shops in the surrounding area and to Windhoek. I met her in August 2019, and she took me to the factory and to one of her shops. In the studio were two seamstresses who transform the embroidered fabrics into finished products. In contrast to the embroiderers in Otjiwarongo, they are on a permanent contract. The studio is not very large, there is space for two tables with a sewing machine and four other tables for storing. When I entered the studio, a woman was working at the table with a sewing machine, the unfinished fabrics piled up on the tables next to it. Heidi showed me some samples and explained the designs. They

9 The name has not been changed because of the publicity of the project and the founding family.

now have two employees in Swakopmund who draw on the designs before the fabrics are brought to the embroiderers in Otjiwarongo. At the beginning the sisters themselves drew the patterns. As the name of the project indicates, it is mainly wild animals (elephants, giraffes, lions, etc.) that are chosen as designs. From time to time new designs are added and the type or shape of the animal changes, but the motifs remain essentially the same. For the animal motifs the carvings of the Makalani kernels are often taken as a model. New designs are usually created and painted by the founders themselves. Sometimes they also let the embroiderers stitch their own designs, but these usually do not sell well. The women on the farm prefer to create motifs of village life, people and chickens in many bright colours, or more abstract patterns. They have no connection to the wild animals they are given as patterns. Framed embroidery patterns hang on the wall of the studio. They show people working on the farm, village life or more abstract patterns (see Figure 8). These are the creations of the women on the farm and the initial motifs of the embroidery group.



Fig. 8. Framed embroidery patterns at the !khoba-studio in Swakopmund.
Photo: Paula Alexiou, 22nd August 2019

Windhoek

The finished products are picked up by Heidi's sister or niece from Swakopmund and brought to the Craft Centre in Windhoek. Here the embroidered pillowcases and tablecloths are sold to tourists. The pillowcases mostly show animal motifs on subtle fabric colours. "*Bunt ist nicht so für alle. Die Leute,*

*die hierherkommen, mögen das zum Anschauen, aber nicht zum Kaufen*¹⁰ (one of the managers). Popular fabric colours for tourists are beige, olive-green and grey. “Sometimes the African style is very wild with all the prints and the colours, but I like it more basic, maybe two colours, not too loud” (Nils, a tourist from the Netherlands). Most tourists who come to Namibia visit national parks like *Etosha* to see wild animals. They associate wild animals with Namibia or more generally with Africa, which is why animal motifs sell most well. In addition to the animal motif, the name of the respective embroiderer is stitched on each product (see Figure 9). This should give people the feeling of having acquired something personal and individual and makes them feel more connected to the producer. Until a few years ago, *Penduka* also had a stall at the Craft Centre, where they sold their embroideries. However, they did not make enough profit and gave up the stall again. According to the manager of the Craft Centre, this is because their colourful designs and village motifs were not well received by the tourists. The designs of the *Penduka* embroideries differ from those of the *!khoba* project. *Penduka* motifs show the village life of the women in many different colours. They are similar to the initial motifs of the *!khoba* project, which now only hang on the wall of the studio, but are no longer sold.



Fig. 9. Embroidered pillowcase of “!khoba”. Photo: Paula Alexiou, 19th August 2019

At the stall in the Craft Centre and in the shops of the project salespeople are employed. So while there are permanent and non-permanent employees at the respective locations of the production chain – the embroiderers in Otji-

10 “Colourful is not so for everyone. The people who come here like it to look at, but not to buy.” (translated by the author)

warongo, the seamstresses in Swakopmund and the salespeople in Windhoek – the managers of the project are mobile and travel back and forth between the locations of the production stages. At the same time, the German Namibian managers represent both the beginning and the end of the production chain. The beginning by founding the project, deciding on the products and designs, placing orders, and procuring materials. The end because the profit from the sale of the products goes back to them, which they then administer and from which they in turn pay wages, procure new material, and place new orders. So while the embroiderers – as well as the seamstresses and the salespersons – have only limited and temporary control or influence over the product, the project managers have control over it at any time during production.

The tourist's perspective(s)

“Was ich überhaupt nicht leiden kann, ist diese Massenware. [...] Ich such’ schon etwas Authentisches”¹¹ (Susanne, a tourist from Germany).

Various encounters with tourists at the Namibia Craft Market illustrate the paradox of authenticity, which manifests itself in the search for an adequate representation of the country's culture and tradition on the one hand, and for something unique, not (tourist)market-oriented and non-capitalist on the other. Susanne bought an embroidered bag from the *!khoba* project. It is important for her to know that the object was produced in Namibia. *“Das ist von ‘ner Fraueninitiative. Das finde ich immer gut, wenn ich sowas weiß”¹².* The fact that the name of the embroiderer is stitched on the bag makes it both individual and Namibian for Susanne. She classifies as mass-produced goods the small carved wooden elephants, which in her opinion always look the same and are offered at all craft markets. The practical utility plays a key role for the purchase decision as well.

In subsequent conversations with other tourists, the phenomenon of searching for something authentic, but at the same time unique and not produced for the tourist market, was to become a main criterion in the choice of crafts. In total I spoke with 15 tourists, 14 of them from Germany. Although tourists make different purchasing decisions and value various objects differently, there are common values and perceptions that manifest themselves in the buying criteria. The search for something authentic, something not mass-produced and not primarily produced for the tourist market became

11 “What I can't stand at all is this mass production. [...] I am really looking for something authentic” (translated by the author)

12 “This is from a women's initiative. I always find it good to know something like that” (translated by the author)

evident in all conversations I had with tourists. However, there are different perceptions of what is considered authentic and what is not.

For Oliver and Maike, a married couple from Germany, the practical value of the objects is important. Decorative objects are usually only bought as gifts for friends at home. Oliver and Maike bought several wooden bowls, beaded animals, tablecloths, embroidered pillowcases, baby clothes and a rock crystal at the Craft Centre. Maike is especially fascinated by the beaded animals. *“Ich find die ganz typisch afrikanisch, das gibt’s nirgend woanders. [...] Das sind ja die Tiere, die leben hier in diesem Land und das verbindet”*¹³. Oliver, however, rejects the wooden giraffes and elephants. *“An denen geh ich einfach vorbei, weil das sind Massenprodukte”*¹⁴. Both found the woven baskets remarkably interesting but considered them as too expensive. *“Wir hatten erst nach Körben gesucht, aber dann haben wir die Holzschüsseln gefunden. [...] Die waren günstiger”*¹⁵.

Nils, a young tourist from the Netherlands only bought four postcards because he was travelling with his bicycle. Two of the postcards show nature motives, one the dead valley in the Namib desert and the other the dune landscape. The other two cards show the Himba women and the San in supposedly “traditional” clothing.

“They [the postcards] look beautiful and they show things that you don’t really see normally. They also have postcards of elephants and lions and they are nice as well but I like to send postcards that are really unique, that really show specific things about this country and elephants, you see them at other places [...] especially the San, I really like this because I like cultural traditions, and I want to see these people also in the real. [...] You don’t see this anywhere else and they look so happy” (Nils).

Like Susanne and Oliver, he classifies wooden animals as inauthentic because they are *“specifically made for tourist. [...] I don’t see people making animals for themselves. I mean, what are they gonna do with that?”* (ibid.).

That the authenticity of a craft object often depends on its practical value for the local population is also demonstrated in an interview with Jonas, a student from Berlin who travelled to Angola and Namibia for a biology project. Jonas tells me that he hardly buys any souvenirs because they lack practical use. Moreover, the objects of the Craft Centre, which are tailored to the tourist market, do not appeal to him, as he does not see himself as a tourist

13 *“I find them very typically African, you can’t find that anywhere else. [...] These are the animals that live here in this country and that is connecting”* (translated by the author)

14 *“I just walk past them, because they are mass products”* (translated by the author)

15 *“We looked for baskets first, but then we found the wooden bowls. [...] They were cheaper”* (translated by the author)

and has not visited many of the tourist destinations. In Angola, however, he had bought fabrics, as they have a practical use. “*Das hab ich auch benutzt und das benutzen auch die Einheimischen und deswegen ist es ok, wenn ich das mitnehme*”¹⁶ (Jonas).

The paradox of authenticity became most clear during an encounter I had with Thomas. I was sitting on a bench at the Craft Centre talking to one of the dealers when Thomas, a tourist from Berlin, came by and sat down next to me. It was his first day in Namibia. I asked him what he thought about the Craft Centre and if he had bought anything. He told me that he usually always buys souvenirs as a memory of his travels “*um ein Stück von der Reise und vom Land mit nach Hause zu nehmen*”¹⁷. But that day he did not find anything at the Craft Centre. Things at the Craft Centre were too much geared towards tourists. “*Touristen sind ja immer die Anderen*”¹⁸, he said with a smile. Two weeks later I met him again. He described Namibia as “Soft Africa”, a travel destination that offers enough comfort, but also adventure. On his journey through the country he has meanwhile found suitable souvenirs for him. He told me about a medical stick and a mask from an antique shop in Swakopmund, about a ceremonial hatchet made of bone that he bought in Okahandja and about two rock crystals that he had discovered near the Spitzkoppe at a stall of a street vendor. On the one hand the objects should be unique and special, on the other hand they should be recognizably “Namibian” or have a “traditional” utility value. It seems that it is the combination of “uniqueness” and “tradition” that makes an object desirable and classifies it as “truly genuine”. At the same time, an object gains value and significance if it has a supposed practical value for the local population. It was important to Thomas that the souvenirs he takes home from his trip have a cultural value. By this he meant that they are also produced by the producers for their own use and not just for the market, as he believes is the case with the Craft Centre.

The examples show that tourist’s notions of authenticity differ from one person to another. Some tourists find some objects at the Craft Centre that they consider as “authentic” Namibian craft. Other people regard the Craft Centre as too commercial and not authentic, which is why they look for authenticity in other places. The differences to the own culture are often emphasized. Tourists are looking for something “special” that they do not know from home. When I asked Monika, a tourist from Germany, if she also takes souvenirs or crafts from other countries, she replied that she has only been to the USA and Europe so far, “*und da will ich nichts mitnehmen. Das ist mir*

16 “I used that one and the locals use that one too, so it’s ok if I take it with me” (translated by the author)

17 “to take home a piece of the trip and the country” (translated by the author)

18 “Tourists are always the others” (translated by the author)

*zu gleich*¹⁹. Even though the purchasing decisions of the tourists vary, it is nevertheless evident that a practical value is linked to the idea of crafts. The objects gain in value and significance if it is assumed that they also have a practical value for the local population. Tourists consider “authentic” Namibian craft as objects, which are not primarily produced for the market, but for own purpose and use. This leads to a paradox, because the Namibian craft market is highly integrated in the capitalist mode of production whereby the product is alienated from the producer and the conditions of production are hidden from the consumer.

Commodity fetishism – The creation of value in the Namibian Craft Market

Marx (1867) was concerned with the issue of how goods are presented and perceived in a peculiar way under capitalism. The basic condition of capitalist production is the separation of producers from the means of production. The labour market that emerges from this process is the ideal condition for the appropriation of foreign labour by the owners of money and the means of production. The producer possesses only one commodity, which he can sell, and which has no immediate use value for him without the means of production, namely his labour force. The fetish character of the commodity derives from the peculiar social character of commodity-producing labour (Marx 1867: 87). The capitalist mode of production and socialization is itself the result of the separation of producer and means of production. It is based on the class division, which itself constitutes the peculiar character of commodity-producing labour: owners of the means of production and capital on the one hand, and workers who possess only their labour force as a commodity, on the other. Our everyday experience has nothing to do with the social labour relations between people. We buy a commodity and take it home with us without knowing what form of work and what kind of production process is hidden behind it. All we see is the exchange relationship of the work products in the form of their price. The market disguises the origin and production of the goods. The product is objectified work. The objectification makes it possible to separate the worker from his product, i.e. to alienate him. In capitalism, the product does not belong to the producer, but to the capitalist who owns the means of production. Thus, the worker loses the control over his product (Quante 2009: 87). More original than the alienation of the product is the alienation of labour itself. The worker cannot decide about his work, he must do what the capitalist tells him to do (ibid. 87-89). The product made for the market is the reaction to demand, that is, the fulfilment of other people's needs. But since the goal of alienated labour is merely to secure one's own

19 “and I don't want to take anything with me from there. That's too much the same for me.” (translated by the author)

physical existence, the worker does not establish a relationship with the buyers of his products. The concrete needs that his work is supposed to satisfy are as unknown to him as the people behind them (ibid. 255).

The same applies to the production of crafts in Namibia. The people and processes that are part of the production of an object and its marketing are camouflaged. More than that, certain aspects of production are highlighted in order to conceal others. Stitching the name of the embroiderer on the pillowcase is intended to suggest a direct connection to the producer. This imagery of a direct link between producer and consumer ignores the managers, the middle-(wo)men who stand between producer and buyer. Even though dependant on tourist's desires and therefore tourist images about Namibia, the managers solely decide about the design, material, production process and value of the craft object, as the example of the embroidery project shows. As cultural "mediators" they act as knowledge producers and experts and are central to the movement of handicrafts in the (inter)national market. Tourists are looking for things that correspond to their ideas and criteria of authenticity. They want an object that has a cultural (utility) value for the local population – or the group they identify as owners of local culture and "tradition". Those who want to sell things to tourists satisfy this need through images that encapsulate and manifest the tourists' ideas and expectations. In the case of Namibia, these are mostly pictures of wild animals or people in supposedly "traditional" clothing. Such images are in turn perceived by the tourists as a definition of cultural values. This fetishization "hides from view not just the machinery but also the competitive capitalist way in which it operates" (Carrier 2010: 682).

Conclusion

Souvenirs have been used to evoke memories of exciting trips and "exotic" holidays. The pressing issue is not why tourists desire a souvenir. Visitors want to take home something to remember Namibia by. The more interesting questions is what specifically attracts tourists to certain craft and how do they choose what is worth taking home. They are claiming a piece of their trip and experience in form of a craft object that they can easily take back home. The claim to craft as a piece of the journey is therefore also always a claim to culture. Claiming a narrative in form of a craft object means claiming a piece of the local culture because craft is considered to be a suitable marker of cultural identity and the material expression of a local culture. The creation of certain narratives of objects and of people takes place in interaction with the tourists who buy craft objects and their narratives at the market and take them home with them. Definitions and discourses are conducted within a framework of power relations in which some, but not others, assert their ideas about craft. In this paper I have tried to show that the creation of

value of Namibian craft is influenced and shaped by definitions of craft as “traditional” objects made of pre-capitalist materials and techniques, by tourists’ perceptions of “authenticity”, and by the production chain and traders who respond to tourists’ assumptions. Using Marx’ concept of commodity fetishism for my argument, I tried to show that the actual processes, conditions, and people (including the German-Namibian managers) involved in the production of the tourism crafts are absent from the value that the tourists-consumers attribute to the crafts they buy. The Namibia Craft Centre is a trans-nationalized and globalized craft market, in which post-colonial elites decide on designs, means of production and price and where the locality only serves as a reminiscence. The case of the *!khoba* project is a striking example for the colonial heritage in the craft market. A technique that came to Namibia through German colonialism is today sold to German tourists as “traditional” Namibian. In addition, it is a German-Namibian family – descendants of the former German colonial officials – who guide and determine the production of the embroideries. The producer has only marginal authority or power over the object. Embroidery is thus a colonial invented tradition. The paradox, that the producer of craft objects who is usually seen by the tourist as the real holder of “authentic” cultural identity and “tradition” but has almost no influence on the product itself, remains undetected. Tourists are looking for something that does not exist in this way. Authenticity – as desired by the tourists – turns out to be an illusion. The managers camouflage the conditions of production in order to meet the tourists’ expectations and images of authenticity.

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Belonging and friction – how tradition is negotiated within two Pentecostal congregations in post-colonial Windhoek, Namibia

Hannah Siegert

Introduction

“[...] because without Christ you are nothing. He took all our sins [...] for you to be set free, for you to be saved, for you to be restored [...]” (Interview extract: Hidaya, Pentecostal Pastor, Windhoek).

After the sermon at the Pentecostal Protestant Church Windhoek (PPC)¹ all participants came to the front, where we formed a circle, kneeled down and put our foreheads on the floor to surrender to the Spirit². After a short while, personal prayers could be requested by the congregation. We prayed to God to make the streets safer, we prayed for equality, for politicians to consider people’s needs and, of course, we prayed for rain. People who needed special comfort and strength stepped into the middle. Others came to them, laid their hands on them, touched or hugged them while praying. Everybody who stood in the middle was handed the microphone so they could voice their troubles and share them with the congregation. A young woman came to me, took my hands, and held them tightly. We stood closely to each other, almost face to face, holding each other’s hands, sometimes touching each other’s shoulders.

1 Pentecost Protestant Church (PPC) is situated in Hochland Park, which is considered an upper-class resident area in Windhoek (Kader 2016). The church building can hold 500 people and 350 can sit outside. The church leader, Ps. Johnny Kitching, claimed that the Spirit prepared him, and the Lord showed him how “nations of hungry people will flock together”. During this sermon, a strong emphasis was put on “nation and community”, as well as “the healing of the community”. Ps. Johnny Kitching talks there about “the healing of Namibia, financially, mentally, and physically in miracles.” <http://www.ppchurch.iway.na/about-us.php?PHPSESSID=c045be5f1388cf1f41c733aeedaf066e>; accessed 04 October 2020.

2 In Christianity, the Trinity is perceived to be God, the Holy Father, Jesus Christ, his son who came to Earth, who saved believers from sin and gave the opportunity to defeat death and rise to heaven, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came down on the Pentecost to the Apostles and made them speak in different languages, so that they may carry the story of Jesus Christ into the world. At Pentecostal congregations in Windhoek, the Holy Spirit plays an important role and is sometimes referred to simply as “Spirit”.

She cried silently, mumbling prayers that her family should be saved by receiving and accepting the Spirit. She was shaking as she swayed her body front to back with her eyes closed. Many women in the middle of the circle repeatedly said the same things, as though they were in a state of trance. In the end, one of them collapsed. The woman's eyes turned to the back of her head; her movements were contorted and convulsive. Her state was interpreted as a visit of the Spirit. The congregation immediately surrounded her, holding each other's hands, and prayed for her. Subsequently, we stood there, arm in arm, rhythmically swaying and chanting together. The room was filled with relieved crying and laughter.

The woman recovered after a while but kept lying motionless on the floor. When the prayer-meeting was dismissed, I was told by the young woman who was my praying partner that Jesus loves me.

Pentecostalism constitutes about a quarter of the world's two billion Christians and numbers are still growing. It stresses an intimate and joyous relationship with God and focuses on healing, prophecy, and God's direct intervention in the material well-being of his people (Kalu 2008: xiv). People are attracted by Pentecostalism because of its message and by its hermeneutics of trust and certainty. Religion has the potential to preserve collective memory and can therefore establish belonging within displaced communities (Schmidt 2008). Besides, in colonial and imperial settings, religion was often used as a legitimization of inequalities and therefore as tool of oppression (Mbambo 2000). At the same time, religion, and particularly Pentecostal belief systems, can be employed as politicized and de-colonizing efforts in struggles of liberation and empowerment (Kalu 2011). Religious symbols and their reference system can be interpreted and used to emphasise creative resistance (Schmidt 2008). This can mean a creation of a utopian and eschatological sphere in which enslavement or colonial dialectics are suspended. Such an employment of religious practice can be essential for the construction of a collective identity (Schmidt 2008: 167). It is one way in which people may unite within a "community of feelings" (Hervieu-Leger 2000). Nevertheless in neo-/post-colonial settings, Christian-inspired beliefs, such as Pentecostalism, must locate between the tense poles of "inculturation and liberation" (Martey 1993). This can be a part of a difficult, complex and multi-layered search for colonially stolen or occupied identities and belongings (Martey 1993, Oduyoye 1995, Schmidt 2008, Pui-lan 2014).

This article's opening sequence of a prayer meeting at the Protestant Pentecostal Church in Windhoek illustrates my encounter with Pentecostalism as a supportive network performed by collective weeping and rather intimate bodily performances. Identifying as a member of a Pentecostal congregation in present-day neo-/post-colonial Windhoek holds promising opportunities as well as potential challenges especially in familial contexts. Being a Pentecostal believer tends to involve a strong identification with the congregation.

Relatives who identify themselves as members of a so called “traditional” or mainline congregation may reject the religious affiliation of those who are part of Pentecostalism. Pentecostal congregation interviewees are still experiencing being compared with or dismissed by members of mainline churches. This tension originates in the relatively strong distinction, which is drawn in Windhoek between pre-dominantly Protestant mainline congregations and Pentecostal congregations.

Mainline congregations can constitute a neo-/post-colonial reality in Windhoek, due to their missionary and colonial background (Mbambo 2000, Kathindi 2019). Special attention is given in this context to the complex use and meaning of the term “tradition”. Members of both Protestant and Pentecostal congregations use this label to elevate their own practice and performances and to downgrade those of their respective counterpart. The mainline congregations use the term to portray their ways of worship and practice as more conforming and longer established as Pentecostal ones. In their view, this also justifies their better institutionalization in the political landscape of Windhoek. Pentecostal congregations use the word “tradition” to emphasize their potential and fluidity to integrate “traditional elements”³ in their worship practices. Nevertheless, the ambivalence between paying respect to “traditional elements” and revitalizing them, as a perceived need to modernize practices labelled “pre-colonial and paganist”, is also a field of debate in Pentecostal congregations.

In this article, I will first introduce my sample, then retrace the historical and ideological journey of Pentecostalism in the South of Africa. I will pay special attention to decolonizing efforts to colonial Christian-European missionary engagement (Kalu 2008). These de-colonizing powers are enforced by statements of an interviewee re-claiming the liberation history of Namibia within a Pentecostal message. This re-claiming of religious worship and practices within a liberation narrative is then taken to relational and personal levels of members of the two Pentecostal congregations studied. Thus, I will show a sense of belonging is established and what friction it can cause. Finally, I will reference the motivations of believers to withstand this friction.

The Setting: Ethnographic sample and methodology in Windhoek

My findings are based on observations and interviews undertaken in August 2019 during a research excursion of the University of Hamburg within the two congregations: Model Prayer Ministries (MMP) in Rocky Crest⁴ and Emmanuel Church (EC) in Pioneer’s Park. MMP was the only congregation

3 “Traditional elements” weren’t clearly specified by the people interviewed. I assume that these vary, depending on the contexts and background of members of the congregation as well as the congregation’s lead.

4 Kadar (2016): <https://labor.beuth-hochschule.de/geovis/abschlussarbeiten/eric-kadar/>, accessed 30 September 2020.

where I had the opportunity to conduct a formal interview with the founder of the church, the Bishop. Born in Nigeria, he leads the ministry together with his wife. I attended one deliverance service and a Sunday meeting. Anisa, an 18-year-old woman at the time, was my main interview partner in this congregation. MMP, as is rather common for Pentecostal congregations, boasts a vast social media presence⁵, as well as several ministries and counselling services for members. MMP also offers financial support in case of sickness or funerals. According to the Bishop and Anisa, a main aspect of the congregation is its focus on and respect of so called “traditional elements”. Within the second congregation, EC, I attended two Sunday services, a prayer meeting and a “Blessing Bus Tour”, which is an outreach to less privileged areas in Windhoek. Emmanuel Church describes itself on its homepage as an “inclusive, missionary church” whose congregation is built like a “big multicultural multi-generational family that exists for the glory of God”⁶. EC, too, has a huge online presence and even livestreams various of its services. I met several members of the congregations:

- Suna: born in the South of Namibia, in her 20s, studies medicine.
- Jara: born in D.R.C, also in her 20s. She takes a break from her studies at UNAM and works in tourism.
- Anayo: born in Zambia, Media Student at UNAM and artist.
- Hidaya: born in South Africa, a Pastor in her 50s, works as an accountant. She does not see herself as official member of the congregation since she has her own chapel in her backyard in which she occasionally holds wedding ceremonies.

Historical background of Pentecostalism in the South of Africa

“African Pentecostalism” has changed in every decade and befuddles easy labelling through its diversity (Kalu 2008). The development of African theology must be regarded within the larger context of the struggle to define African cultural identity and autonomy (Pui-lan 2014). Oduyoye (1995) argues that within Pentecostalism, one does not necessarily have to give up one’s cultural identity to become Christian, which she calls “crossroads Christianity”. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) approach, Oduyoye simultaneously holds a critical stance: according to her, it is clearly difficult to generalize cultural elements. Myths of homogenous national or cultural identity tend to be created to benefit those who are in the majority or who are in power. In this section, I will examine Pentecostalism in Africa, the ideological and historical journey of Pentecostalism in mainly Southern African countries drawing on Kalu’s (2008, 2011) work. I will then investigate whether the efforts of

5 Model Prayer Ministries (2020) <https://www.facebook.com/gracecitympmi/>, accessed 02 October 2020

6 Emmanuel Church Windhoek (2020): <http://www.emmanuelwhk.com/about/mandate-vision-and-values/>, accessed 30 September.2020.

Windhoek's Pentecostal churches' to differentiate themselves from mainline churches holds de-colonizing elements.

In 1792 early African American evangelization in Africa started in West Africa with charismatic spirituality that carried the spirit of antistructure and resistance to colonial Christianity (Kalu 2008: viii). Ezekiel Guti, Mensah Otabil and Barrister Emeka Nwankpa inspired Pentecostal cultural policy that recognized the powers of the formerly oppressed and crafted a theology of salvation that honed cleansing and witchcraft eradication strategies of the "ancient days" (ibid.: ix). Pentecostal policy of Guti, Otabil and Nwankpa was "a quest for identity through charismatic spirituality and constituted the historical rise of Pentecostalism in West Africa" (Kalu 2011: 212). Since independence from colonial regimes, progressive church leaders and theologians in African countries have campaigned for the abolition of the colonial trappings of Christianity (Martey 1993, Pui-Lan 2014). The world wars scattered missionary infrastructure and raised a new perspective on African religious initiatives. Political and social forces were also mobilized as Europeans consolidated their holds on African lands and economic resources and exploited and abused the African labour force. The African response, according to Kalu, included nascent political mobilisation and radical religious movements predominantly bearing the marks of charismatic spirituality (Kalu 2008: x). Kalu argues that in the post-independence period, a "charismatic wind" blew through the African continent that first hit the youth and women, and later oversaw the resistance of the mainline churches and various strands connected across national boundaries. External Pentecostals and evangelical forces swamped Africa. International initiatives provided contacts and built confidence, visibility and high public profiles for individual Pastors and their ministries. Leaders became the "big men of the big God" and performed like movie stars and virtuoso healers (ibid.: xii). This networking created "a global Pentecostal culture" (ibid.: 228). According to Kalu, "African Pentecostalism" may be criticized because of the movement's capitulation to the materialism and individualism of American cultural values. Charismatic ministries can be threatened by malpractice. Kalu (2011) argues that the rise of Pentecostalism in African countries did not start from the Azusa Street movement and therefore attention should be paid to the case of Southern Africa. Supposedly, Pentecostalism started in the second half of the 19th century with the separation of the Baptist and Methodist Movement (Gierse-Arsten 2005). Charles Fox Parham, a Methodist Priest, and William Joseph Seymour are considered the founding fathers of the typical Pentecostal-movement (Hollenweger 1997). Because Seymour was rejected by a bible school, due to racist segregation, he founded the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission which was established as starting point of the spreading of Pentecostalism (Anderson 1987). One way of how Pentecostalism arrived in African countries was within Pentecostal African American missionary engagement.

Anderson (1987) states that the expansion of evangelization-campaigns to Africa started in the 1950s, with American “healers” travelling to Africa and the additional acceleration of decolonizing and modernizing agencies (Gierse-Arsten 2005: 17). Within African American missionary engagement, national strains were fused with charismatics, identity, social justice, and Black Nationalism (Kalu 2011). This can be also illustrated by the role of Nicholas Bhengu (1909-86) in South Africa. He was influenced by the nationalist ideology of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and became a central actor of Pentecostalism in southern Africa (Kalu 2011: 223). Nicholas Bhengu’s ministry – analogous to spiritual movements of the nineteenth century - addressed a combination of personal renewal and social justice. It “turned prayer, land deliverance, and intercessions into political praxis” (Kalu 2011: 223). Anderson and Pillay (1997: 227) consider the rapid expansion of Pentecostal Churches in South Africa as a result of their ability to address core problems of South Africa: ill-health, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, sorcery, and spirit possession. The popularity of Pentecostal churches is strongly promoted by the belief in miracles and healing (Bate 1999). Considering living circumstances in South African townships, the need or quest for healing has also an economic dimension of inequality (Bate 1999). Bate highlights that the need for healing for the South African community can be related to societal-economic challenges characterized by crime and violence (ibid., Gierse-Arsten 2005: 25).

Pentecostalism can have liberating and inclusive elements (Kalu 2008: 2011). The historical and ideological framework of Pentecostalism in mainly Southern Africa presented above elicits the question if these de-colonizing elements can also be observed in Pentecostal congregations in current Windhoek. This will be discussed in the following section, which draws on statements by a member of the Association of Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches in Namibia (ACPCN), the main political organization for Pentecostal congregations in Namibia. Examining closely the relational sphere within the two Windhoek-based congregations, I will further investigate potential de-colonizing efforts in Pentecostal practice.

Pentecostalism in Windhoek: Politics and decolonization?

One of my informants from the Association of Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches of Namibia (shortly put: ACPCN) enthusiastically outlined to me the growth of Pentecostal churches in Namibia. Currently, 220 churches are organized within the ACPCN, and my informant was convinced that this was an ongoing trend. “The churches have grown”, the Pastor explained: “[...] religion is no longer that hidden kind of thing [...] now it has become a little bit open” – clearly, to the pastor, “people are moving towards Pentecostalism” (all quotes direct from Pastor [ACPCN]). The Pastor’s efforts and beliefs are

an example for “political engagement within religiously motivated beliefs” (Kalu 2011: 223). He is a leading member of ACPCN which currently (2019) works on a proposal for the Namibian government to establish a council of Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches. In the Pastor’s views, this is an effort to elevate Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches to the level of the traditional, mainline churches. These churches already have a council in the government. The council is supposed to control Pentecostal churches and prevent “malpractice” and “church-mushrooming” for the creation of legitimacy, to upgrade the social standing and reputation of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches (Interview: Pastor [ACPCN]). Members of the council identify their legacy in early resistance against German colonization in Namibia:

“[...] our first Pentecostal Pastor was Hendrik Witbooi. [...] The one whose bible was taken to Germany and was returned to Namibia now. Those years he had visions and consulted God for his plans of war against the occupiers of that time, so we take that as starting point of Pentecostalism in Namibia [...] although he was not labelled as such. But today you can see by the way he consulted God and prayed with his people for victories that was the introduction of Pentecostalism basically in Namibia. Because the other religions existed, of course, but this was a new thing that he observed. You know in general Pentecostalism is not a new religion. Basically, it comes right through the scriptures from the Bible” (Pastor [ACPCN]).

Nicanor Panduleni Kathindi published an article in “The Namibian” (19 July 2019), a popular daily newspaper in Windhoek, which stated:

“Christianity fostered a kind of enslaved morality that suppressed the desires contained in the human will. Christianity and colonialism are often closely associated, because Catholicism and Protestantism were the religions of European colonial powers and acted in many ways as the ‘religious arm’” (Kathindi 2019).

The article further states that an image of God requiring death and suffering of Jesus to cause reconciliation with humankind is immoral. Ethics in the bible should be criticized, because – especially in the Old Testament – it portrays a God who commits genocides. This makes the statement of the Pastor (ACPCN) even more challenging when he labels Hendrik Witbooi, a major freedom fighter and symbol of resistance against colonial powers, as a Pentecostal Priest, “because of the things he preached and how he lived, which contained other morals than the ones of the colonial forces” (Pastor [ACPCN]). This leads to my first finding that Pentecostal beliefs in Windhoek can be interpreted as a de-colonizing strain of religious practices. Kathindi (2019) associates Christian religious practices with a devotion and enslave-

ment. For the Pastor, Pentecostalism can have de-colonizing elements. For him, Pentecostalism signifies a liberation from colonial oppression. Pentecostalism to him boasts a renewed eschatological and empowering meaning to it. Unlike Protestant or Catholic practices, Pentecostalism adopts new morals, which stand for liberation nationalist effort and unity, rather than for devotion and enslavement (Pastor [ACPCN]).

Pentecostal flexibility: Openness to change and create new forms of practice and worship

“[...] In the past, in the traditional churches, the Pastor would pray, and the Pastor would teach the word of God. But with Pentecostalism comes the power of the Holy Spirit. So, people are seeking this power, miracles, quick solutions to their problems and that is one of the aspects that connects people” (Pastor [ACPCN]).

This statement can be directly connected to the above mentioned motivations within South African Pentecostalism and Africa-American missionary engagement: Liberation from the oppressor by the consultation of God, physical and mental healing, as well as the healing of communities, and direct rewards for worship (Bate 1999). The Pastor (ACPCN) explains the protruding popularity of Pentecostal congregations in Windhoek with their difference to Protestant congregations. According to him, there is a trend towards greater openness to new forms of worship and practice and faster solutions to perceived challenges. “Traditional” churches are assumed to be more static and opposed to change (Interview: Anayo [EC]). In this line of thought, mainline congregations can be interpreted as a more devout form of practice, a practice equipped with a different sense of suffering.

Pentecostalism, on the contrary, changes the eschatological dimension of religious practice away from suffering and emphasis the present moment. Believers feel empowered to a direct impact of their religious practice in their life. They may have a more active role – they are not forced to submit to and accept God’s given destiny since the Spirit can intervene.

In the next section, the statements of the Pastor (ACPCN) will be juxtaposed with a personal, relational level in Pentecostal congregations in Windhoek.

Belonging and friction: Blurred boundaries of family and Pentecostal community

I attended the City Bus Tour from Emmanuel Church, which takes the church members to different stations in Windhoek. They drive to congregations they

stand in connection with, hospitals and streets of informal businesses, settlements, shebeens or places known for sex work – to pray either with or for them. Some streets of Katutura and Hakahana were described as the “satanic world, where the ones live that have fallen from grace” (Anayo [EC]). This emphasizes a strict contrast in evil and good Pentecostal belief practices in Windhoek, as also mentioned by Gierse-Arsten (2005).

While driving to the different stations of the tour, we prayed, some spoke in tongues⁷ and sang for the people in the streets who were following their daily routine. This was done without asking for permission and partly elicited opposition: some of the people were not amused by the prayers and rejected being classified as “fallen from grace” and “living on the dark side”. They expressed their disagreement using offensive gestures. We visited congregations called “Hakahana Christian Ministries” in Hakahana, as the name suggests and “Torch” in Chinatown. Hakahana Christian Ministries showed us their large soup kitchen and supportive projects for the marginalized community. Torch offers English courses and legal assistance and functions as sort of community centre for Chinese migrants and their families. The Bus Tour displayed Emmanuel Church’s network with other congregations throughout Windhoek. On this Blessing Bus Tour, I met one of my key interviewees, Anayo (EC). In the following, I present his reflections on this outreach: Anayo (EC) explained that, to him, these bus tours were about “reaching out to the lost and forgotten. The ones who think they got too far away and feel like they can-not come back home.” Pentecostal practice meant to him a refuge, addressed to “[...] mostly outsiders when they feel they need to find a place, where they can feel like a part of a family. Most people are homeless.” Anayo (EC) described the congregation as home and as a space where worries and pains can be communicated, where counselling and engagement in several ministries is offered.

For Anayo, Suna as well as Jara (all members of EC), going to church was a sign of belonging, home, refuge and being involved in a community which shares the same values – like a second or chosen home which “unites in diversity and welcomes everybody” (Suna 2019).

“[...] In Emmanuel we are trying to encourage a culture, where everybody is the same. Whenever they are white, black, yellow, purple. Whatever it is, that we are all the same. And to be part of the church means, you have to be involved in diversity. And that is the culture we are trying to encourage [...]” (interview Suna [EC]).

All the interviewees considered their religious affiliation as related to their family lives. For Anisa (MMP), church is clearly “a family thing”. Anayo and

7 “Speaking in tongues” is a Pentecostal expression, which means that the Spirit speaks through you, mostly in unrecognizable and unknown languages.

Jara mentioned that a joint baptism may be a ritualized familial phenomenon. Likewise, Anayo told me that his familial background had motivated him to join the Pentecost when he was 19. This was “a family decision” – a “very symbolic” decision indeed. The church community was considered a good influence by his mother. Simultaneously, Anayo stressed his personal motivation to stay in the church:

“[...] It’s a place where I can communicate to God [...] and socialize and talk about the creator of heaven and earth and how he has a purpose for you”.

Being in the church meant to Anayo the comfort of shared values and belief systems.

But being a member of a Pentecostal congregation can trigger conflicts or frictions with the original family or home, as both Suna (EC) and Anisa (MMP) mentioned. According to Suna, the main cause is the division between so called “traditional”, mainline churches, which generally means Protestant and the Pentecostal congregations. In Suna’s view, her family is somewhat judgmental towards Pentecostalism and its practices. Suna’s and Anisa’s families take a critical stance towards Pentecostal forms of worship – indeed they are among those who refer to Pentecostal practice as “Oshiwela”.

Suna: “[...] it’s known as “Oshiwela” and it’s seen as a bad thing. Down in the South people tend to be a little more receptive, than up in the North. So, we don’t get shunt out of our family. [...] So generally, and personally it depends what your background is. For me personally there is a little bit of friction, because of disagreement how the traditional church does it and how the Pentecostal church does it. So, when you declare yourself as being Pentecost you are put under a certain category. Sometimes it’s not positive, sometimes they see you as you have gone mad. That is just the general view of how people will see you.”

Suna came from a Protestant background and was the first in her family to join the Pentecost. Later, other members of her family also joined Pentecostal churches. This change of religious affiliation was characterized by Suna as the daring undertaking of being “born again” and overcoming their “traditional backgrounds”. Joining a Pentecost church in her family required a challenging “coming out” among immediate family and relatives.

In conclusion, being a member of a Pentecostal congregation can cause a sense of belonging and community with shared values and morals, as the statements illustrated. People can unite and take refuge in a congregation as a chosen home. Being baptized can be interpreted as a family ritual, like Anayo (EC) did, when he mentioned that he got baptized out of respect for his parents. However, Pentecostal membership can also lead to frictions, even

within a family, particularly when members belong to a “traditional” mainline church. In those cases, as described by Suna, the members might be concerned about the Pentecostal way of worship and prayers.

Respect for tradition and the perceived need to revitalize/modernize practices

Anisa pointed out to me that “Africa is big on religion”, and that MMP, is influenced by “cultural elements”⁸ and tries to also “pay respect to the tradition”. According to her, MMP works against witchcraft but is indeed often and falsely called “Oshiwela” by people who are not members of the Pentecost movement. She continued that the mainline churches hold many prejudices against the Pentecost churches, because they equate it with “Oshiwela” – which can cause friction, as also above mentioned by Suna. In Anisa’s opinion, the so-called mainline church has a considerable influence on Oshiwambo⁹ speaking people which “goes back to the colonial influence of German and Finnish people and then to people from South Africa”. A “European way of life was adopted”, Anisa argued. Anisa said that criticism comes from the Pentecostal form of worship and praying, which is most intensively experienced within the deliverance services. The Bishop of MMP also stated that Deliverance-Services are an important branch of his church, as of Pentecostal Churches in general.

For the Bishop of MMP it was very important to distance himself and his congregation from ritual practices from Nigeria, which he experienced as ineffective. By not obeying the religious and labelled “traditional” rules of his family, according to him “his father and him broke a curse” and found a new source of power within Pentecostal practice. For him, this practice is more powerful and has more direct outcome than some of the Nigerian practices he mentioned. The Bishop stated that people in Nigeria still believed in “dead religion” and that the Pentecostal belief simply showed more results.

Bishop: “[...] Paganism won’t do, we realized that when we recall on those techniques, we call on those in the 70ies, 80ies. You find out that most of our parents still belief in dead religion.”

Hannah: “Dead religion?”

Bishop: “Dead religion. [...] we come into Christianity, we call the name of the Lord, the name of Jesus Christ and we see reactions, we see positive reactions, we get positive answers. [...] No, no, no, our Pentecostal here is far away from tradition. They take

8 “Cultural elements” weren’t specified by Anisa. I assume that they vary, depending on the contexts and background of members of the congregation as well as the congregation’s lead.

9 Oshiwambo is the largest language group of Namibia.

tradition as something that doesn't want change. But change is important.

[...] The Pentecostal is not saying that tradition is bad, like our church here we believe in the tripartite laws of marriage. In this church you cannot marry without fulfilling the tradition."

Pentecostalism, according to the Bishop and the Pastor, tries to distance itself from tradition, but does not condemn it. In their opinion, Pentecostal Churches can easily adapt change and react flexibly to the believers' needs.

Pastor [ACPCN]: "Yes, there is these days what we call the African spiritualism, where people say that this is not our religion from first, it was brought in by like what you said, by the colonials. [...] But that is not associated with Pentecostalism. Because these religions are purely, I would even say that they are not based in Jesus, they are based sometimes on ancestors. You know they speak about their roots; they are not about Jesus. [...] There is a kind of spiritualism, let say African spiritualism, where people seeking an identity, because of the long-time of colonial rule. So, they sort of go into religion or they mix religion and some traditional ways of...but we have not observed it so much in Namibia, although it is sort of popping up. We see people coming up and we see people kind of claiming that we need to have our own religion and that unfortunately is not based on the bible, not based on Jesus [...]."

This quote emphasizes the complex meaning of tradition. It can be interpreted as not only pre-colonial. The bible is not necessarily seen as a colonial remain, but understood as an even deeper truth, which is even stronger than ancestral beliefs. Like mentioned above, what becomes apparent is the challenge of Christian inspired beliefs in a post- or neo-colonial setting in African countries to position themselves between the tense poles of "inculturation and liberation" and the controversial search for colonially stolen or occupied identities and belongings (Martey 1993, Schmidt 2008). In conclusion, it can be stated that the differentiation of "traditional", mainline, and Pentecostal congregations manifests itself on an institutionalized level. The Bishop stated that mainline churches receive financial support and have a better representation in the government; similarly, the Pastor lamented his lack of institutional acknowledgment for the ACPCN. Furthermore, on a relational level, being a member of a Pentecostal congregation can offer shared experiences, but also distinction in its values and new forms of relations, forms of worship and practice. On the other hand, it can lead to friction with the intermediate kinship family. Being a member of a Pentecostal congregation can be a marker of belonging, but also of distinction. The main point of criticism

against Pentecostalism, voiced mainly by members of mainline churches, is the inclusion of strong bodily performances, speaking in tongues and Spirit possession in Pentecostal worship. To Pentecostal believers however, these are empowering aspects of different approaches to religion and God, within another force to the Spirit. Members of Pentecostal congregations in Windhoek perceive its way of prayer and worship as more fluid and open to change and direct rewards from God.

Discussion

After describing two spheres of the distinction between mainline and Pentecostal congregations, I want to return to a question raised at the beginning, inspired by Kalu (2011), whether the Pentecostal understanding of God and its belief in the powers of Spirit can have de-colonizing forces.

Pastor (ACPCN): "You know in general Pentecostalism is not a new religion. Basically, it comes right through the scriptures from the Bible."

Suna: "The Pentecostal movement started in the days of the apostles. If you read Ex Chapter one. The Pentecost are known as the Pentecost because they believe in the Holy Spirit and the Power of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost basically mean, the out-pour of the holy spirit. And because of that, I believe it is so successful."

As these quotes show that the beginnings, and origins of Christian denominations weren't directly associated to the arrival of missionary or colonial German enterprises in Windhoek, neither to encounters within Pentecostal and charismatic African American missionary work in other states of Southern Africa. Suna, the Pastor, as well as Anayo took their belief further than the arrival of the Bible under German colonial rule since they relate their form of worship and practice to a greater truth and existence.

Pentecostalism in Windhoek is not explicitly seen or named a de-colonizing force by my interviewees. Nevertheless, the connection to colonialism is made, when informants like Suna and Anisa mention so called "traditional" mainline churches. Pentecostal congregations still face daily comparison, judgement, and denial of a representative position in politics. Nevertheless, a de-colonizing response and interpretation of religion within Pentecostal worship and practices, connected to shared values within a sense of community, can be identified (Anayo, Anisa, Suna, Jara). This is most obvious in the statements of the Pastor, when he mentions that Hendrik Witbooi was the first Pentecostal Priest, which can be also read in the re-appropriation of history (compare Gorenflo, this volume). The Pastor (ACPCN) had a different approach to worship and practice than the mainline churches. This entails a

different relationship between humans and God, also mentioned by Anayo, especially in terms of interpreting the powers of the Spirit as closer to its believers. This leads to a different experience in the eschatological dimension of belief. Incorporating values into daily lives and not exclusively in a church context stretches the effective force of Pentecostalism and extends its impact on its believers (Anisa). This is also taken to a relational and interpersonal level in the congregation itself, by worship practices being more fluid, inclusive, as well as liberating stricter forms of prayers and other connotations of the relation to God (Anayo, Bishop).

Conclusion

Hannah: “Why do you say Pentecost is not a religion? What is it then?”

Anayo (EC): “It’s a relationship.”

The Pentecostalism I found in Windhoek is a political and relational force which attracts mainly young people. By means of it, a sense of belonging can be established. Pentecostal worship and practices are experienced by my informants as new, more liberating, and more open to change, as well as promoting a novel, promising relationship with God. Importantly, people use the narrative and appropriation of history that Hendrik Witbooi read as first Pentecostal Priest fighting for liberation against colonial oppression. At the same time, friction between family members can be experienced when some members belong to a mainline congregation and others belong to a Pentecostal church. Believers do not frame their belief as explicitly de-colonizing, but as opposing and comparable alternative to “traditional” churches, especially concerning its form of worship. Anisa described Pentecostal believers as more strict in terms of incorporating values and moral ideas into their daily lives and not simply “going to church” like the members of the mainline congregations. Suna thinks that these moral concepts should be also aspired in political or more representative contexts.

This is attempted by the Pastor of ACPCN. Mainline congregation members call their churches “traditional” to emphasise their influence and history as an established institution (Anisa, Suna). “Tradition” is used to downgrade Pentecostal forms of worship as less established and institutionalized in this context. The term tradition is hereby selectively employed. According to my interviewees, Pentecostalism integrates “elements of tradition” into the lives of its believers and is thus seen as a more powerful practice to accomplish one’s hopes and wishes. This can be described with the concept of “Crossroad-Christianity” from Oduyoye (1995), which establishes that one does not necessarily have to decide which elements of tradition should be dismissed in order to be Christian. Not everything that is considered “tradition” is in-

corporated into Pentecostal practices. As the Bishop states, Pentecostalism worships even exceed former “traditional” ones as a more powerful and effective tool. Pentecostalism is seen as modern approach opposed to “traditional” worship forms. Additionally, it is seen as a new set of relations, as “revolutionary kind of love”, setting new moral standards and a better way of life by its believers. Pentecostal congregations give their members a sense of belonging and refuge and they unite people in a “community of feelings” (Hervieu-Leger 2000) through perceived shared values and moral ideas.

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Beautify yourself – struggles and strategies of LGBT*-communities in contemporary post-colonial Namibia

Moritz Gemmeke

Introduction

On one of these Windhoek-typical mild Saturday evenings we, a group of German university students from Hamburg, make our way to Khomasdal, a district in the west of Namibia's capital. It is already dark as we stop two cabs to drive us to the location we had been given, the Ella du Plesis Secondary School. We have been invited by friends to join an event with only a vague idea of what it will be about. But when we reach our destination, an inconspicuous building surrounded by a dark parking lot, the admission ticket reveals more about our evening arrangement: we are going to watch the *MissTransgender Namibia* election of 2019, the first event ever of this kind in Namibia.

When we reach the site and push ourselves past the bouncers into the hall through a tangle of excited, chattering and laughing people, I am struck by the volume, the sheer size of the room and its confusion. A huge, illuminated stage has been set up in the gym. The VIP guests of the evening are sitting around the stage at nicely prepared round tables strewn with food and drinks. The bar opposite the stage is already benefiting from great crowds, non-VIP. Beer, wine and lemonade are served for a small price. The mood is merrymaking, almost exuberant. The smell of freshly applied perfume wafts past me again and again and covers up the stuffy indoor air. We are a little late, so the presenter is already loudly introducing the evening's participants through an overamplified sound system. Meanwhile we are looking for some free seats in the rows of plastic chairs, generally already occupied by groups of mostly young people. So, I lean against the wall at the edge of the gym to have a good overview of the stage and the auditorium.

As Mr. Gay Namibia, one of the judges at *MissTransgender Ambassador* 2019, explains: „the contestants will be judged on advocacy activities conducted prior to the event and in four categories on the day namely their introduction, casual wear, traditional wear and evening wear” (Namibian Press Agency 2019). Following their performances, after their run on the catwalk, all the participants have to face some questions from the judges, a group of

country-wide known LGBT*¹-activists, questions such as “What does womanhood mean to you?” or “Which role does education play in the LGBT*-community?”.



Fig. 1: At *Miss Transgender Ambassador 2019*: The crowd runs closer to the stage after recognizing a special song during the performance. Photo: Moritz Gemmeke

- 1 In this article the term LGBT* is used as an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. The abbreviation I previously used in academic training, LGBTQI+ (Q stands for queer and I for intersexual, the + stands for all other forms of non-binary gender identities), was not used for the different gender and sexual identities described by informants and Namibian gender and sexuality activists I spoke with in the field. As various scholars urge caution in the chosen terms used in one’s research (Currier 2012), I decided to use the self-given acronyms used by my informants and the experts in the field. The * stands for all non-binary gender identities who experience discrimination due to their sexual and gender identities.

These questions are related to the individual sensations, the own belongingness within as well as outside the communities and to the self-expression and -assertion in direct interaction with the audience; it will be the duty of *MissTransgender Ambassador 2019* to create visibility for trans-persons within and outside the LGBT*-communities. Furthermore, the aim of this event, and others like it, is to motivate and raise awareness on issues affecting the LGBT*-communities and to transcend societal norms and social exclusion for transgender-persons (Hipondoka 2019).

The current climate in the country can be described as highly dynamic. Growing Namibian LGBT*-activism, increasingly run by a younger generation, raises not only the visibility of LGBT*-persons in public but also the pressure on politics and institutions to deal with colonial relics. The overarching goal of the activists is to get current colonial laws abolished and replaced by laws that will finally guarantee institutional, legal and ultimately social equality for all Namibians in the long-term. The growing diversity of the LGBT*-communities is also reflected in the increasing number of different organizations and events: since 2016, pride parades have been taking place regularly in different cities across the country (Interview Strauss), in 2017 various LGBT*-organizations joined to form an umbrella organization, the *Diversity Alliance Namibia*, and together with events such as the already mentioned *MissTransgender Ambassador 2019*, the transgender-community also hopes for more visibility and influence in the fight for equality, not only within the LGBT*-communities but also in Namibian society in general (Sauer 2019). Courage and determination are growing, formerly fixed narratives and ideological convictions on gender and sexuality, education, religion and family are on trial. Conversely, this change challenges prevailing norms and values, narratives and stories and therefore also long-established power structures.

However, despite all the visible progress made in recent years, besides being legally discriminated, LGBT*-people are still exposed to social and public pressure and stigma, especially in everyday life. This stigmatization is expressed through a wide range of discriminatory practices such as hate speech on social media and through actual verbal and physical attacks in public. LGBT*-activists have long pointed out that LGBT*-people still encounter homo-, bi- and transphobia on a daily basis in Namibia (Kangootui 2020).

The aim of this article is therefore to understand the current strategies, struggles and challenges of Namibian LGBT*-activism, its historical origins as well as its interdependencies with the colonial and apartheid eras. The first section gives a brief overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches, as well as of the peculiarities and connections of queer-sensitive and post-colonial research on which this article is based. Building on these approaches, the following questions are at the center of the next sections:

What strategies and practices do the Namibian LGBT*-activists use, which alliances do they forge and what are the political convictions behind them? How do they relate to patriarchal structures of Namibian politics and society? Furthermore, against the background of ongoing colonial continuities, this article will subsequently trace how the constructions of the Namibian nation and a Namibian identity affected and still affect not only the LGBT*-communities' activism but also their daily lives. More specifically, in that step the article identifies the historical and political origins of contemporary gender and sexuality discourses in the Namibia of today, especially the ones belonging to topics relevant to the LGBT*-communities.

The article is based on a 6-week field research collaboration which took place in Windhoek in July and August 2019. During my research, I focused on the LGBT*-communities, especially on the activism and work of some LGBT*-relevant NGO's based in Windhoek. The city's selection as my only research location resulted from the central role it plays for the political and social debates in Namibia, as most of the NGO's and institutions are located there (Interview Baumann; Interview Strauss). Besides semi-structured interviews with some key actors of the communities, I draw on ethnographic observation of the activities of the feminist and LGBT*-organization *Sister Namibia* as well as the earlier described event *MissTransgender Ambassador Namibia 2019*. Additionally, my research is informed by newspaper articles as I analyzed the discourse around LGBT*-relevant issues in articles that mention "homosexuality" or "LGBT" as a term. Given the extent of the research project, I sampled articles of the privately-owned nationally distributed newspaper *The Namibian*. At this point, it should be mentioned that *The Namibian* has traditionally played an important role in distributing and publishing texts and articles by LGBT*-organizations or LGBT*-friendly journalists and as such represents an opportunistic sample on my part.

Theoretical accesses and challenges of queer-sensible, post-colonial research

My research is theoretically and methodologically embedded in intersectionality and inequality theories as well as in post-colonial and queer-sensible theoretical approaches. The concept of intersectionality has its roots in the Post-colonial-, Queer- and Gender Studies stemming from feminist anti-racist movements of Black women in the US in the 1980s. It builds on the conviction that discriminatory social categories such as class, gender or *race*², among others, are not only categories of marginalization but appear and act interactively, intersecting, with one another (Crenshaw 1989). Hence

2 In this article, I italicize the noun *race* referring to its ideological construct-
edness. 'Races' do by no means depict biological realities but continuously
affect the present at a social, economic, political and psychological level as a
concept.

people can be oppressed in several overlapping ways due to these patterns of subordination. For this research project, this interactivity necessarily means involving an analytical focus on power gaps along these social inequality categories and also along a Global North-South gap. Additionally, this focus marks the knowledge production of research as powerful in creating narratives and stereotypes constructing the “others” permanently in contrast to the assumed self. In the colonial era contexts and categories that once served as a guide for the individual and collective action of oppressed communities were replaced by those of the colonizers with the aim of acquiring the resources of the colonized bodies and colonies. Additionally, the discourse around LGBT*-relevant topics is also shaped on national, transnational, continental and global levels (Currier 2011). Research on gender and sexual diversity therefore often struggles with bias and generalization in the academic context, too. For example, the widely prevalent misconception that there is little LGBT*-activism in the area of the Global South is supplemented by generalizing assumptions about widespread homophobia, which is sometimes associated with cultural and political ‘backwardness’ (Epprecht 2013).

The aim of this work is therefore to counter these ethnocentric generalizations with qualitative insights, which is where my motivation also stems from. The discipline of Anthropology and ethnography as its principal research method, is acutely well positioned in this respect as it is so centrally concerned with describing lived everyday life worlds shaped by marginality and otherness (Boyce et al. 2017). Even if the origins and history of the discipline are deeply racist and always have to be considered reflectively, the methodology still has an empowering, progressive potential. As always, context matters:

“Postcolonial feminist approaches have to be applied in a context-sensitive and situation-specific manner. There is no universal object and knowledge interest in postcolonial feminist research, but the need to reflectively and responsibly conceptualize the tension between local and global situations.” (Hornscheidt 2012: 220).

The identity terminology used in the international field of queer-sensitive research and its rapidly progressing innovations and discussion standards alone require thorough work beforehand and a specific adaptation of local terminology and codes in the field itself. There may be various reasons for that, one of which is language. In part, English is not the first or second language of the communities’ constituents and furthermore represents colonialism. Secondly, research on personal LGBT*-identity construction in Namibia has shown that bisexual- or transgender-identity terms have been relegated to secondary positions by homosexual-identity terms but could describe the same preference or identity-related sense of belonging (Currier 2015; Lorway

2008). The rise of gay identity and culture from the Global North also exerts its influence on the Global South with general labeling practices often not used in the local contexts before (Altman 2001; Currier 2015).

Methodological considerations

Given these theoretical challenges, one consideration of my ethnographic research in these manifold post-colonial contexts, as well as in the context of structural discriminations, is the unconditional exclusion of personal, potentially re-traumatic, coming-out narratives or personal experiences with trans-, bi- or homophobia and violence. I did not ask any questions about these topics during my research stay. If testimonials of this kind appeared in the course of research, these were excluded as much as possible from this article and from the research process as well. The existence of boundaries in my interviews and in my ethnographic observation in this regard is based on the fact that the dismay and suffering of others must not be part of one's own academic work.

“We cannot study gender in isolation from other inequalities, nor can we only study inequalities’ intersection and ignore the historical and contextual specificity that distinguishes the mechanisms that produce inequality by different categorical divisions” (Risman 2004: 443).

Furthermore, it is essential, especially in the research field of gender and sexualities that draw upon post-colonial contexts implying the personal concern of potential informants, to disclose the researcher's own position from the outset. This disclosure should be the case not just with regard to one's own sexual and gender identity but also with regard to one's own academic background, political sense of belonging (ally³) as well as to social and political factors related to discrimination (*race*, class, gender and sexual orientation). As I am a white, heterosexual cisgender man from Germany with an academic background, the research process also requires me to check on my various privileges stemming from this position. Therefore, I am not able to entirely relate to the various forms of discrimination my informants experience throughout their lives. Additionally, the thematic approach requires a discussion and reflection with possible own internalized patriarchal and/or

3 In this case the bywords ally, straight ally or heterosexual ally stand for heterosexual and/or cis-gender persons actively advocating for equal rights and gender equality of LGBT*-persons and their communities and rejecting homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. But not every person referred to by this description automatically identifies with it. An ally also acknowledges the social, political or judicial discrimination and its resulting social disadvantages. Given that, allies try to utilize their social and political privileged (meaning heteronormative) standing/position to react to these forms of discrimination.

racist patterns of thought and behavior. Under no circumstances should this reflection be understood as a one-off, closed process. It should therefore be open to criticism continuously during the research process, as critical academic research should always be.

The indispensable need for transparency and foregoing consultation and queries is also proven by more drastic cases. For example, LGBT*-activists from the Global North have been criticized in the past for being prompted to intervene in the issues of African gender and sexuality policies. Especially with regard to the rhetoric and narratives of the governments of some African countries, which view non-heteronormative⁴ sexuality as a neo-colonial continuation of Western interference, local activists can get caught in the crossfire. Additionally, international pressure is applied on Namibians to change their norms and structures, a pressure some see as a form of post-colonial interventionism. The dynamics and conflicts of and between human rights, cultural practices and gender equality are ideologically charged by a global dialogue (Currier 2015).

Beautify yourself: Strategies, struggles and challenges of the LGBT*-communities in contemporary Namibia

“As a trans-woman, we all come from different cultures and I think beauty is just a way to show, [...] that you are also part of a woman and you need to beautify yourself so that the people can see your beauty. Not just your visible beauty, but the beauty that you have from inside.”⁵ – The newly appointed MissTransgender Namibia 2019, Penelope, said in a television interview after the election.

There is a tension between LGBT*-communities’ conception of culture and conceptions of ‘traditional’ culture in Namibia’s heterogenous social and collective relations (Interview Strauss; Interview Baumann). Fundamentally, a human agency perspective on gender,⁶ which is represented by most of the actors of the LGBT*-communities, entails revisiting the notion of tradition and culture as closed corporate systems. Following the seminal concept of tradition by Hobsbawm and Ranger (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), social and cultural anthropologist Heike Becker states that “tradition is generally understood in contemporary Namibia, i.e. that it is supposedly based

4 Besides the assumption that the social gender corresponds to the biological sex, heteronormativity in this context also means the structural favoring of opposite-gender sexual pairings and gender conformity (Currier 2011).

5 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWoeQbm3cP8>).

6 A human agency perspective insists that human beings are active agents in history and not just passive, hapless victims of circumstances (Becker 2010).

on fixed cultural norms which represent a largely imagined African past” (Becker 2010: 174).

In her statement, Penelope was referring to the meaning and potential that the *MissTransgender Ambassador Namibia* has in store for her personally. When she spoke of cultures in the plural, she consciously pointed out that, due to ethnic diversity in Namibia, generalizing statements about cultural conceptions were hard to make. In contemporary post-colonial Namibia, gender and sexuality are strongly shaped by rigid, inviolable conceptions of ‘culture’ defining the idea of culturally accepted, standardized behavior and thus made policeable (Bhana et al. 2007). The category ‘traditional wear’, which was one of four categories on the evening of the election, challenged these perceptions of culture by questioning individual semantics and perceptions of beauty in the patriarchal norms of clothing and appearance. Theoretical debates, especially those of Judith Butler, emphasize the fluidity of sexuality and gender (Butler 1999). Accordingly, gender is a performative act, an idea essential for understanding gender as doing, as a “stylization of the self that is open to repetition and reinvention” (Bhana et al. 2007: 135). At the same time, these theoretical approaches emphasize fixed gendered identities and heterosexuality as compulsory. Penelope also demands to be perceived and referred to as the woman she describes herself as. Concepts of beauty, as she makes clear, are not tied to heteronormative gender concepts. Rather, beauty depends on the invisible, inner beauty – values, convictions and moral ideas.

Events such as the *MissTransgender Ambassador* not only fulfil the function as a competition between the individual participants in terms of showcasing their perception of beauty. More to the point, they can be seen as a sociocultural network in which important information is being exchanged and useful contacts made. They are events to celebrate oneself and one’s community; they empower and let one feel free from social and public pressure and stigma. Moreover, such events are a dynamic place of dialogue where key issues such as community, family, and sexuality, belonging and politics are negotiated. These events are also the chance for younger people who are not yet active in these communities to acquire an overview both thematically and organizationally. There is a sort of collective identity arising organically from these kinds of events, more precisely from the now shared experiences, desires, emotions and beliefs that previously were separated identities. All this was buzzing around me standing in the gym of a secondary school in Windhoek willing to catch some of these vibes.

Educate ambiguity – the feminist educational programs of *Sister Namibia*

In the blazing afternoon sun, I am sitting in another collective cab on my way to the *University of Namibia* (UNAM) campus, located a little outside Wind-

hoek. I am on my way to an event organized by *Sister Namibia*, which will be a talk to UNAM university students about the concepts of *toxic masculinity* and *gender-based violence* (GBV) under the title “Broken Silence – How we use arts to influence social justice”. The hall of the university’s local theater group serves as the venue. Before I enter, students who have taken a seat at plastic tables in front of the hall give me a form and ask me to fill it out. In addition to some personal information and information about one’s own sexuality and gender affiliation, the form primarily asks for the participant’s understanding of topics such as feminism, gender and masculinity.

When I finally enter the hall, there is hardly any space left, so I sit on the floor between two chairs. The participants are young, the majority probably students. They are seated in a semicircle around a small stage. The event is already in full swing and the curious students are eagerly watching the performance on stage. There are always short bursts of laughter; the mood fluctuates between exuberance and tension. The young people often whisper briefly to their neighbors. The organizers depict everyday situations of sexual assault in scenes. These discriminatory practices, such as *catcalling*⁷ for example, are to be problematized by means of the acting performance. Following the scene in which suggestive and sexual offensive terms are shouted after someone, intended at a woman on the street, the students are confronted with the question of the potential options for women in public to oppose these practices. Strategies of verbal and physical communication are explained by these scenic performances.

I am amazed at the openness with which the participants share their personal, everyday experiences with sexualized violence in quite such a public setting. At the same time these experiences uncovered the everyday occurrence of sexual violence. The workshop aims to sharpen conceptual definitions: what does feminism mean? What are toxic patterns of behavior and where do they stem from? The event then works out possible courses of action. In addition, one’s own (male) entanglement should be shown. Therefore, the male participants are always explicitly addressed and encouraged to reflect on their behavior. The various forms of sexuality and gender are also discussed. The point is raised that a dual gender conception produces exclusions and contains toxic notions of masculinity for all members of a society, constraints and disadvantages. But in the extreme, it also harbors concrete manifestations of violence.

Compared to those in other African countries, the Namibian LGBT*-activists began early to organize in strategic alliances with feminist groups and human rights organizations (Currier 2012). One consequence of these

7 *Catcalling* possesses characteristics of stranger and street harassment and is “use of crude language, verbal expression, and nonverbal expression that takes place in public areas such as streets, sidewalks, or bus stops” (Chhun 2011 cit. in Farmer and Jordan 2017: 4).

coalitions is the close personal, organizational and thematic overlap of feminist, human rights and LGBT*-organizations. The described event, part of the educational programs of *Sister Namibia*, shows these close interlinkages and intersections. A broader example can be seen in the activism and engagement of Linda Baumann, who holds leading positions in both contexts and focuses her work on thinking the two topics in context and connecting them more closely, in terms of content and organization (Interview Baumann). Baumann has been active in feminist and LGBT*-organizations since 2000 and has seen the movement growing since then. She was also the founding director of *OutRight Namibia*, the largest human rights organization in Namibia specializing on LGBT*-issues. Today Linda is head of *Namibia Diverse Women's Association*, a young feminist organization that works with “minority women such as lesbians, bisexual women who have sex with women and trans-diverse women” – as Baumann stated (Interview Baumann). When I asked her in an interview about her understanding of what feminism means to her, Baumann responded:

“So being a feminist it basically means I challenge any norm that is there and through that I've been doing transitioning work in the country that strengthens the intersectionalities of the women and the LGBT-movements”* (Interview Baumann).

Above all, the education programs of *Sister Namibia* that I attended addressed the rising gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) as urgent problems, but sexual education also is a main part of the education programs (Interview Baumann). In fact, the lack of access to information in many regions of Namibia, especially outside Windhoek, is one of the main reasons for sexual violence, as *Sister Namibia* states. This connection has led *Sister Namibia* to shift its educational activities to rural areas in the past few years, where it had been far less available (Interview Baumann, Interview Strauss). The goal is to stimulate a process of thinking about sexuality and gender that is not heteronormative and rigid and makes alternative, fluid identities conceivable (Currier 2015).

Besides the strong, early feminist influence, intersections of gender and social class also appeared in the movement's buildup. Especially in the early days of organization after the declared independence, it was primarily upper- and middle-class actors who determined the political agenda framing (Lorway 2008). In 1991, when the former president Nujoma called for the arrest, detention and deportation of all gays and lesbians, young people from Katutura, the biggest impoverished district of the city of Windhoek, started to join in huge numbers *Human Rights Week*, organized by *The Rainbow Project*. It was the beginning of an opening process so to say, in which the communities' dynamics changed as youth and younger LGBT*-people joined the movements with great interest and different experiences as they mainly

suffered from the violence stemming from the *political homophobia* rampant at that time in Namibia, especially in Katutura (ibid.).

Up until the mid-2010s, not only did non-binary gender identities in particular fall not only from the mainstream social discourse but also the LGBT*-organizations complained about the low number and consequently the invisibility of transgender and bisexual members in their own ranks. This invisibility was seen as a problem. It is also reflected in the fact that those with transgender and bisexual identities are more often affected by violence (Currier 2015).

Why visibility matters – political representation of LGBT*-communities

With the beginning of the resistance against colonial oppression and the following independence movements of many African states in the 1980s, the new rulers often committed themselves to the principles of democratic participation and to implementing rights such as the protection of social, gender and sexual minorities. This commitment is historically important, as it had an impact on creating visibility around queer activism in many African countries (Ossome 2013). Of course, such generalized statements should be treated with caution, but a stronger visibility can also be determined for Namibian LGBT*-activism. The creation of public visibility, which is also achieved through pride marches and non-heterosexual beauty pageants, is intended to generate a broader understanding of and tolerance for being bisexual and transgender among the Namibian population, an understanding that already exists in the broadest sense for homosexuality (Links 2019). The process of increased visibility and organizing is also reflected in a greater number of explicitly LGBT*-organizations in the country.

Multiple social discourses and identities tend to reproduce norms and values and therefore also constantly shape and reshape conceptions of gender and sexuality through social practices in everyday life. They are mediated through processes of compliance and acceptance, but also through those of change and resistance; they may even be competing (Becker 2010; Cole and Thomas 2009). Inspired by post-structuralist thinking, this article understands politics as debates and struggles over meaning. This approach is particularly useful when complemented by an analysis of the historical processes of State formation and the differences in the ways women, men and non-heteronormative gender identities have experienced them at a particular time and space (Becker 2010; Spronk 2012). The exclusion of LGBT*-liberationists by SWAPO officials is just one example of making non-heteronormative and alternative approaches invisible in the process of nation-building, of which the male heroism of the liberation struggle is a core feature (Saunders 2007). In 1997, Dr. Sam Nujoma in a speech to the *SWAPO Youth League*

even asked were lesbian and gay Namibians were “when we sacrificed our lives during the bitter liberation struggle” (Currier 2010: 123). This exclusion is by no means due to the fact that there were no homosexual or gender diverse fighters, but due to the lack of an “identity political logic” on the basis of which non-heterosexual combatants could have organized (Currier 2012: 450). As a result, these one-sided current post-colonial debates strengthen the invisibility of non-heteronormative identities and practices until today: “Within the postcolonial project of nation (re)building, the ‘truth’ of Namibian sexuality – as ‘traditionally heterosexual’ – is produced through the silencing of alternative practices and identities” (Lorway 2006: 448).

Marginalized positions therefore need a way of articulation before they can generally bring about changes by contesting hegemonic narratives. How these forms of articulation are generated in the post-independence context will be exemplary illustrated by a short extract from an interview with Baumann. In the year 2004 the aim of *Sister Namibia* was to attract attention to the regularly published magazine of the same name in the Namibian parliament:

Baumann: *“When I worked for Sister Namibia, we had a strategy. We went to drop magazines in the parliament. They [the ministers] threw away the magazines and then we found a strategy to put the magazines in envelopes and in beautiful letters about what the magazine is all about. That’s how the ministers started reading. The lady we just saw there, the old lady, Rosa Namises, has been a parliamentarian. And has been the only parliamentarian that brought issues of the LGBT* up and the only parliamentarian who brought up issues of sex work.”*

Interviewer: *“The only one in the whole parliament?”*

Baumann: *“Yes, all these years. So, she has been our anchor. She has been labeled to be lesbian, she’s been labeled to be a sex worker and she didn’t care. So that magazine she was our promoter for in parliament. She said: guys, read! They are calling me a homosexual [...] there is an article for you to read.”*

Interviewer: *“Yes. And it had success?”*

Baumann: *“Yes, and that become a great success and now the magazine goes into parliament without any questions.”*

From this account, some conclusions can be drawn about the possibilities of articulation of LGBT*-relevant issues in institutional settings. The political representation of LGBT*-relevant topics is marginal, a situation that has changed little or not at all in the years since 2004. The activists’ efforts make it clear that LGBT*-narratives always face resistance, sometimes even hostile-

ity in their work against hegemonic political structures. This further reveals, on the one hand, the scarcity of information to which even parliamentarians succumb and, on the other, the unwillingness to remedy this scarcity. The extract reveals the importance of political representation in institutional and parliamentary contexts. Only with the help of a long active parliamentarian did the magazine make its way into parliament. As is clear and as the critical legal studies movement has revealed, legal doctrines have developed in ways that protect the privileges of the powerful. According to those studies, strategies focusing on legal frameworks are “doomed to re- create the relationships of power and domination that gave rise to oppression in the first place. Legal rules may prohibit overt sexist or racist expression in some social relations but do nothing to redress the structural racism and sexism that resides in many institutions” (Bernstein et al. 2009: 4; see also Crenshaw 1989).

The time of my research stay must also be understood in the context of the then upcoming national general elections in 2019. LGBT*-relevant topics were hardly on the political agenda, but some election programs still commented on them (Miyanicwe 2019). Given that, the need for political representation also came to force through the urges of the first ever elected *Miss-Transgender Namibia*, Penelope Delapoirte, who in a later interview with *The Namibian* requested that the communities vote wisely in the upcoming elections (ibid.). The interactions with political parties may also be an important strategy in achieving social participation for the communities. For this purpose, it will also be necessary to study the parties’ various manifestos concerning explicitly LGBT*-relevant issues (ibid.). When it comes to the political and social participation of marginalized groups, many of the election-approved parties are still citing an alleged incompatibility between traditional and religious views and LGBT*-rights. In addition, they refuse a constructive debate, arguing with reference to protect one’s privacy, which is a relic of the moral order of Christian morality and colonial rule, a discourse thread that runs through the entire history of LGBT*-activism in Namibia and silences sexuality and non-conform gender identities by marking them as *private* (LaFont 2007a).

Colonial residues, law reform efforts and the case of the anti-sodomy laws

As the article has pointed out so far, colonial residues are omnipresent in contemporary Namibia. Their effects are often subtle and can only be identified at a second or even third glance. Besides the more or less subliminal, internalized discriminatory dynamics and abstract principles described above, the legal framework of rights and responsibilities can uncover official, obligatory values and practical reality. Namibia’s constitution is considered to promote guaranteed gender equality rights, as the *Fundamental Human*

Rights and Freedoms, Article 10 reads: “(1) All persons shall be equal before the law. (2) No persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status” (Republic of Namibia 2020). The framing of LGBT*-rights as inherent in human rights is also crucial for the work of many LGBT*-organizations in Namibia and, as such, a response to the dehumanizing efforts of SWAPO-officials in the early days after independence (LaFont 2007a). Furthermore, the Namibian Constitution is one of the few constitutions that uses a gender-neutral language (Hubbard 2007). Nowadays there also is a Namibian policy, more precisely the *National Human Rights Action Plan*, that is inclusive of the LGBT*-issues.

But there are still laws in effect stemming from colonial rule, such as the Anti-Sodomy Laws.⁸ Introduced by the former German colonial power and anchored in Namibian law since independence they are still affecting people’s lives today. Decolonization, as the southern Africanist Henning Melber puts it, does not amount to democratization (Melber 2003). The decolonization programs of the newly elected Namibian state leaders have failed to consider the colonial-era legislation criminalizing homosexuality besides other declared policy aims and goals. The law on sodomy marks an interesting point in the Namibian discourse on gender and sexuality because, as Liz Frank and Elizabeth Khaxas, both former members of the feminist organization *Sister Namibia*, commented: “no one we have asked, including the State Attorney, can remember a single case of legal persecution of lesbian or gay men in this country” (Frank and Khaxas 1996: 115). This condition persists to this day. But even though there is no persecution, Tatum Strauss, who organized many pride marches in Windhoek and in Swakopmund and also worked for *Sister Namibia* in the past, clarifies:

“The Sodomy laws still have an effect in the perception of the LGBT-community, specifically towards the gay community.”*

8 “‘Sodomy’ is part of the Roman-Dutch common law inherited by Namibia at independence. Historically, it was the legal label given to all manner of ‘unnatural’ sexual offences including masturbation, oral sex and anal intercourse between people of the same sex or opposite sexes, sexual intercourse with animals, and even heterosexual intercourse between Christians and Jews. Gradually, much of the broad content of ‘sodomy’ fell away, and the prohibited activities were split into three separate crimes in South Africa: sodomy, bestiality and a residual category of ‘unnatural sexual offences’. Today the common law crimes of ‘sodomy’ and ‘unnatural sexual offences’ criminalize only sexual contact between males. Anal intercourse between males is all that is left of the once wider definition of ‘sodomy’, but ‘unnatural sexual offences’ covers mutual masturbation, ‘sexual gratification obtained by friction between the legs of another person’ and other unspecified sexual activity between men. None of these sexual acts are illegal if they take place between a man and a woman, or between two women.” (Hubbard 2000: 1)

Gay people still have this notion that being gay especially is against the law. Because they don't have a proper understanding around the sodomy law itself. So, sodomy is criminalized even within straight communities, right? So, a straight couple who are engaging in any form of sodomy, male to female, female to male, is also criminalized. But obviously nobody has ever been persecuted for it. So, it's more like this underlying background fear of being persecuted.” (Interview Strauss 2019)

In the same interview, Strauss told me about the direct consequences the law still has in the daily life of some Namibians. For example, the distribution of condoms in Namibian prisons is prohibited, although many prisoners become infected with HIV after being sexually abused. The Anti-Sodomy Laws were stated in the reasoning of the judgment (Hubbard 2000; Oliveira 2019).

And thus, one of the key strategies of international, continental and also Namibian LGBT*-organizations for years, besides educational programs as a second key strategy, has been legal tactics such as law reform campaigns to challenge the legal landscape and promoting court cases, as such precedents can push forward a law reform (Currier 2010; Hubbard 2007). Some of these cases gained wide attention and triggered debates about sexuality, gender and social equality in the country. For example, there have been several cases where the ban on gay marriage has been challenged in a court (Becker 2007; Shikongo 2019). As the literature on social movements in the context of gender and sexuality reveals numerous different approaches, the effectiveness of these legal tactics is not uncontested. Some theorists and activists even argue that an engagement with the law is detrimental to advancing social movements because “the law normalizes some lifestyles and identities through legal recognition at the expense of others with less normative genders, sexualities and family structures” (Bernstein et al. 2009: 5).

The *Legal Assistance Centre*, a public interest law firm specialized in human rights and based in Windhoek, was a very helpful source for this aspect as it documents and comments on various cases. The firm also works together with other LGBT*-organizations. In addition, the documented discussions held in parliament provide information about the background and key areas of conflicts.

The impacts of national and cultural imaginary on Namibian gender and sexuality concepts

It is impossible to overemphasize the impact of colonialism and foreign rule on Namibian sexual and gender relations. Previous to European colonization, besides class, marriage and kinship were crucial structuring features in many regions of Africa, also in what is now Namibia (LaFont 2007b, Pauli 2019), colonized by the Germans in 1884. Before the colonial invasion, women

often held high social positions. With the beginning of Christian missions in what is now Namibia, patriarchal and puritanical doctrines stemming from the concept of the European national state entered as well, which introduced African sexuality as *primitive* or *perverse* in order to reinforce the racist, gendered, colonial hierarchy (Steinmetz 2007: 83). Sexuality and gender so became tools for the exercise of power (LaFont 2007b). Until today, there has been and continues to be a strong impact of conservative Christian moral obligations on sexuality and its concepts and practices in Namibia (ibid.).

These colonial discourses also exaggerated African men's heterosexual masculinities, while at the same time ignoring a wide range of same-sex relationships and the diverse local sexual and gender identities that the data suggests existed in pre-colonial times in Namibia (LaFont 2007b). Homosexuality and not explicitly mentioned non-binary gender identities were constructed exclusively as white, European idiosyncrasies. In 1966, at the same time as the armed struggle began, the resistance fighters of the SWAPO also ideologically opposed the apartheid regime. They devised a counter-concept to the humiliation and stigmatization that the colonial pathologizations and emasculations had meant to them. By this, African male 'virility' was reversed into confident African nationalist masculinities by living out a "*hyper-heterosexism*" with a strongly national character (Currier 2010: 113; Epprecht 2004). These conceptions of masculinity came to be defined in opposition to white, apartheid masculinities, but within the same racialized, masculinist and heterosexist parameters (Currier 2010). As a result, 'un-masculine' behavior was associated with homosexuality. Additionally, "boys and men intentionally use homophobia to deflect attention away from un-masculine behavior and to reinforce their masculine identities" (ibid.: 125). Furthermore, these masculinist ideas were influenced and sharpened by the socio-psychological influence of the military struggle and its conception of a heroic, military masculinity, which had a lasting effect on the consciousness and the mentalities of post-colonial Namibian society (Melber 2014).

Aside from those issues, women and womanhood were constructed along, and limited to, reproductive, procreative and heteronormative gender roles in favor of Namibia's survival and to fulfill the needs of a strong nation⁹ (Currier 2012: 444). The described fragile construction of masculinity had its effect on visibly non-heteronormative gender identities. To that fact, this is also expressed in large numbers of violent acts against people of non-conforming gender identities. Black, lesbian and "masculine" women in particular, due to the visibility of their gender variance, became victims of the fragile notion that they would take other women away from men and were not themselves sexually available for those men (Currier 2015: 102).

9 Until today, the economic situation of women female-headed households is among the poorest of the poor because of care and reproduction conflicts with income productivities. (LaFont 2007b)

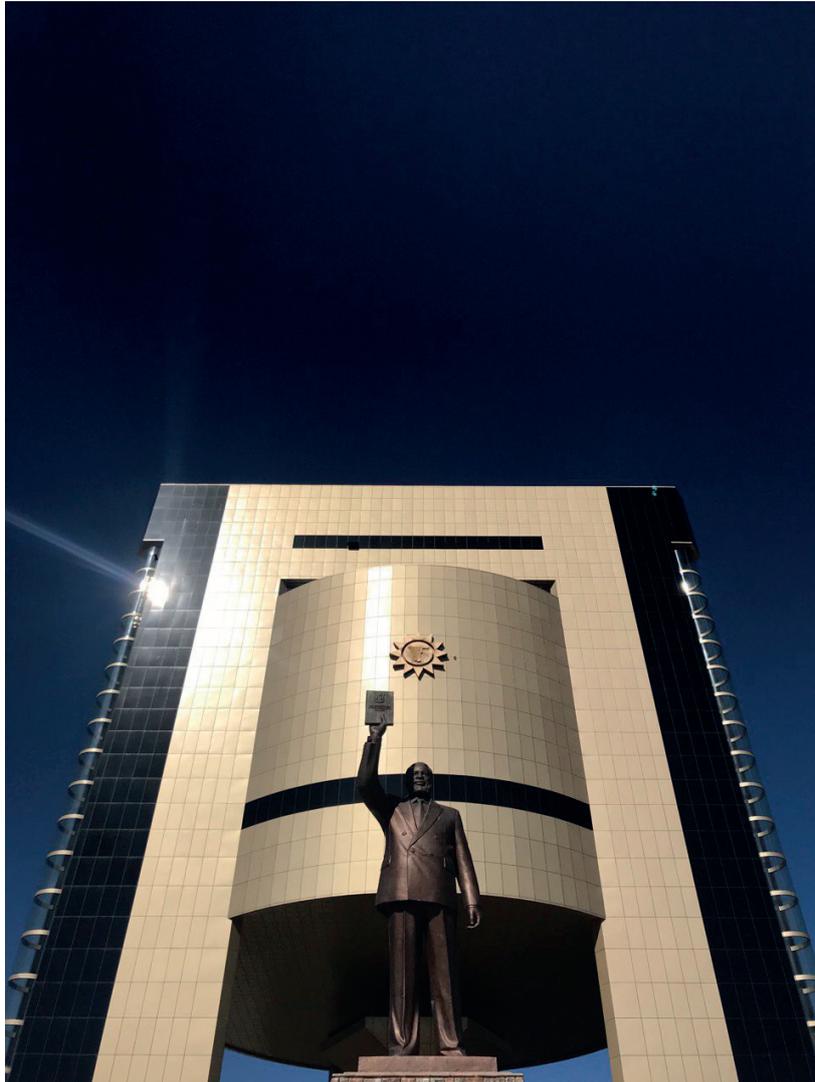


Fig 2: The figure of Sam Nujoma in front of the Independence Museum in Windhoek. A Symbol of patriarchal nationalism. Photo: Moritz Gemmeke

From 1995 on, leading party politicians at SWAPO began framing same-sex and non-heteronormative sexualities as “Western”, “un-African” and “un-Christian” (Currier 2010: 112). The aim of the expressed *political homophobia*, as Ashley Currier calls it, was not just to spread hate against LGBT*-activism but to preempt criticism and suppress political dissidence in general (ibid.: 124). The construction of the “un-African” is problematic in several ways. On the one hand, the sheer diversity as well as the complexity of gender identities and sexualities in pre-colonial Africa, also in what now is Namibia, are obscured by this construct. On the other hand, the discourse suggests a static, homogeneous and ultimately authentic African culture that does not actually exist. The rhetorical recourse to the “un-African”-discourses follows on from other religiously and anti-feminist motivated narratives of the sup-

posedly ‘true African’, which were mostly used selectively when marginalized social groups advanced their right to participation and self-determination (Tamale 2015).

Imaginarities interact with each other and are shaped by those in power producing and maintaining their masculinist authority. Independence marked an important turning point because, since then, LGBT*-people have organized themselves and contested the power over imaginaries and their transmission. Until then, the SWAPO party claimed these interpretive agencies for itself through the creating of a univocal, linear historic narrative of the liberation struggle and especially through the projects in the name of decolonization. From this point on these national, cultural and religious imaginaries of gender and sexuality were questioned and renegotiated on a social and institutional level by the LGBT*-communities.

The narratives mentioned are strikingly homogeneous along clear dichotomies. Dichotomous thinking not only structured ideologies of colonialism and nationalism but is also deeply rooted in the structural thinking of Namibian society that the entire gender and sexual discourse also runs along dichotomous, heteronormative boundaries.

The broader picture: historical dichotomies – colonial and post-colonial references on namibian gender and sexuality discourses

In his seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon attested to the colonial world a binarity (Fanon 2004). A deathly binarity that was structured strongly hierarchically and nevertheless, or precisely because of that, inscribed itself in the mentalities and ideologies of both the colonized as well as the colonizers itself in a dialectical way (ibid.). Crenshaw even points out, referring to Derrida, that dichotomous thinking forms the core of Western thought, in that the *other* is always also constructed as the inferior (Crenshaw 1995). The manifold worldwide anti-colonial struggles for liberation in certain cases reproduced specific parts of the colonial character through the liberationists that they thought they were defeating: its hierarchical order and features of the authoritarian, but to a certain extent also its dichotomous worldview; both the social structure of colonialism and that of nationalism are, besides their fundamental differences and very own characteristics and dynamics, deeply sexualized, gendered and *racialized* (Kim-Puri 2005; Steinmetz 2007). Traces of these dichotomies, sharing the common ideological element of minority exploitation and exclusion, were also evident in the consolidation phase of the Namibian state and the structures and concepts of its governance planned and executed by SWAPO officials’ decolonization programs (Melber 2014). When it came to create a common, national narrative, a main operational aspect in the process of unifying Namibia, the new elites and former liberationists may also have subconsciously used an internalized

authoritarian mentality, stemming from the liberation struggle as well as from colonial oppression itself (ibid.). In this selective approach to decolonization, the ruling parties endorsed only those cultural and political decolonization projects that helped consolidate their own rule and rejected those that “lie outside the masculinist, heteronormative national imaginary”, all of which consequently produced exclusions (Currier 2015: 24). In many places, especially in the Global South, gender and sexuality have become contested subjects in the course of national liberation movements, which can be used to draw conclusions about the national discourse on cultural and *racial* authenticity (Currier 2012). To understand how the state constrains and regulates the lives of marginalized people, this section gave a short historical insight into the cultural construction and formation of the Namibian nation with special regards to its gender and sexuality concepts. By analyzing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic tendencies in society as just a result of failing democratization efforts or authoritarian rule, one easily partly excludes the very characteristics of these gendered and sexualized contours (Currier 2010). Also, it fails to acknowledge and name the material consequences for LGBT*-Namibians. Just to name a few not yet mentioned, besides structural invisibility for example when it comes to HIV/AIDS prevention and education programs by state agencies additionally some even had to flee the country when political homophobia was rampant back in the years after 1995 (Lorway 2008; Currier 2010).

Conclusion

Today’s post-colonial situation in Namibia is highly dynamic. Different conceptions of gender and sexuality have an impact on larger social struggles and debates over the conceptions of tradition and culture. Generalizing assumptions regarding the situation of LGBT*-communities are barely possible. However, the increasing number and simultaneous diversification of different Namibian LGBT*-organizations in recent years suggest an increased need for articulating the struggles and debates of the communities. In the course of my research, some key strategies of their work could be identified in the multidimensional political, cultural and legal campaigns: The visibility of non-heteronormative identity conceptions in Namibia helps to stimulate an alternative examination of gender and sexuality and is actually strengthened by many different events such as pride marches or non-heterosexual beauty pageants (Links 2019). The legal discrimination caused by the still existing sodomy laws stemming from colonial rule is not actively implemented, but continues to act as a stigmatizing factor and in some cases has real consequences in the daily life of especially Namibian male homosexuals. That is why law reform has been an integral part and requirement for many years, especially from LGBT*-organizations, but also from various other NGOs.

In the rural regions of the country in particular, access to information on LGBT*-related topics is often difficult, but there are education programs that teach non-heteronormative identity concepts and want to educate people about gender roles and sexuality. The movement is growing, and former rigid narratives and conceptions of gender and sexuality are becoming more and more contested.

Constructions of the Namibian nation and a Namibian identity are still subject to male traditions, that are a byproduct of colonial and apartheid domination and affect all other gender identities. Imaginaries are ideological constructs, interact with each other and are shaped by those in power by producing and maintaining their masculinist authority. They use homo-, bi-, and transphobic statements as a political strategy to maintain their power. Independence marked an important turning point because, since then, LGBT*-people have organized themselves. From the beginning, feminist ideas played a central role in the organization of the LGBT*-communities in Namibia. They started to contest the power over imaginaries and its transmission that the SWAPO party claimed for itself through the creating of an univocal, linear historic narrative of the liberation struggle and especially through the projects in the name of decolonization. From this point on these national, cultural and religious imaginaries of gender and sexuality have been questioned and renegotiated by the LGBT*-communities on a social, cultural and institutional level.

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On the relation of coloniality and masculinities in Namibia

Camilo Angola

Introduction

In this text the reader will encounter a contribution on the relations that exist between masculinities¹ and coloniality in Namibia. I firstly ought to mention coloniality as a central element in this work and as a starting point for problematizing masculinities in a first place. Taking these aspects into consideration I will also try to go into the Namibian notions of collectivity and community developed ancestrally as a reference to grasp and contrast coloniality or rather how the lifestyles of the peoples of the nations² from the nation-state now called Namibia were modified due to the imposition of colonial ideology, organization, spirituality, feeling, etc. since the beginning of colonial invasions in Afrika³ several centuries ago (Ani 1994). This is to say that coloniality in Namibia is closely related to coloniality in other Afrikan and even world regions. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 338). A final moment of this relational approach will take into account a critic assessment of capitalism, imperialism and modernity as crucial elements for a multifaceted statement on coloniality and colonial economics.

I would secondly introduce the concept of black masculinities as academic and empiric production of black men who have been building the way for the articulation of black male theory from black male experience which is not only decisive for the understanding and conceiving the sense of this text but also determining for a fair and responsible delineation of this specific framework. It has poorly been written about the experience of Afrikan men and even less about the experience of black men from colonially occupied non-imperialist countries and subjectivities (Curry 2017a: 5).

- 1 I use the plural form of the word in order to ensure a wide understanding of how *being a man* is a heterogeneous process that contains several contradictions: amongst Afrikans and men in general.
- 2 By nation I refer to the different groups who identify with local ancestral identities with own languages, spirituality and territory. The nation-states founded after the “independence movements” are not meant by the usage of this term.
- 3 The term “Afrikan” and “Afrika” is written this way because it implies not only those peoples and territories from the Afrikan continent but also those of the historical diaspora. On the other hand, the classical spelling fails to recognize the political agency of Afrikan identities beyond geographical and/or national sense of belonging.

In this text I would rather refer to theoretical and empirical sources that focus on the experience of the black male and its political, bodily profundity. Classic feminist and black feminist literature on this regard are inaccurate and pursue a different goal. Often are black men portrayed and situated in ways that remotely contribute to this essay. The aim of several racialized men for domination⁴ when speaking about the male experience is (as it is in my case) to politicize the male *body-type's* experience within racist and imperialist entanglements in order to break down and revise concepts like *patriarchy*, *male privilege* and *toxic masculinity*.

Alongside to the diversity of tools and elements present in this study I will constantly offer a materialistic dimension in order to grant a political completion to these reflections. A materialistic view situates cultural phenomena's origins on a material/economic sphere and regards material dealings as the basis and/or of special importance in social and cultural constructions.

Hence, this essay will state a connection between politically problematized masculinities, gender politics and coloniality. It will also be treated how coloniality shifts masculinity and sexuality as well as how it also affects other institutions of culture and organic structure such as communal ways of life and ancestral collectivity in Namibia.

Drawing attention to the colonial dimension of contemporary masculinities is a way of thematizing the male black experience in the framework of possible/imaginable new experiences and new collective realities. Conclusively I will pursue an approach to engage diversely and through a multi-perspective undertaking in an assessment and eventual healing of Afrikan masculinity. This essay's topic is a multi-sided conversation on colonial material realities, the resulting ideology and how they shaped the understanding, embodiment, theory and praxis of the black male in Namibia. Summing up the previous aspects, the text's question is what are the difficulties and challenges black men face in organizing and where do they come from?

So, based on the obtained data we will touch on current forms of Afrikan, collective, positive male organizations in Namibia. This is a conviction that by all means derives from the feeling that masculinities are cultural constructs based on and therefore fundamental for spiritual, cosmological, energetic pillars of (Afrikan) culture. In other words an experience that should also be studied and comprehended within the global patterns' parameters of structural hegemonies chiefly based on the *coloniality of power*.

From where do I speak and what I pursue: I see this contribution as a continuation of a personal search for clarity regarding the safety, wellbeing and factual liberty of Afrikan and historical diasporic black communities. I

4 Every person and group of people is racialized in every context therefore I do not utilize the term BIPOC since it fails to portray the fact that white people are also racialized, however not for domination but for dominance.

was born and raised in a dispersed black diasporic community in the heart of Colombia, the country where I grew up as well. My family moved from the country's pacific region off to the capital city. While growing up I fully identified with an Afrikan ancestry in a country whose national identity discourse was not only created and shaped by former and current colonial domination's requirements, but also deeply harmed by Spanish colonial occupation between the 16th and 19th centuries. This occupation generated similar power-amalgams to those in Namibia. My family's and thousands of other Afrikan families' origins in Colombia and other countries in the region are in fact one of the key elements within the structuring of a global colonial system: the brutal and continuous kidnapping of millions of Afrikans by European colonial states between the 15th and 20th century and latter enslavement in Abya Yala⁶. Throughout the time spent in Namibia I engaged in powerful discussions with touching people and circumstances, with whom I was able to share not only deep interest in the subject but also a transcendental synchrony of the mutually unveiled emotions expounded in several occasions among brothers and sisters who accompanied me in this process. Moreover, I have been able to sense a notion of urgency dwelling around issues of masculinity, sexuality, identity and their relation to power and violence within Afrikan communities in Colombia, Germany, and Namibia. A process that I believe to be part of a larger, detailed and thorough effort to restrain and fight contemporary systemic violence.

Towards a basic understanding of the theory of coloniality

Throughout this essay that relates black male experiences with colonial power, the presence of decolonial and anti-colonial theory shall play an explicatory role on how colonialism established a model of global domination upon the entire world and not in specific and isolated areas. The understanding of coloniality as a very wide concept that explains colonialism as much more than a simple historical episode "located in the past" but a large and complex interweaving of power and culture among others (Quijano 2000: 201). This is to say that colonially occupied territories and their peoples are imbued in a global scale of colonial domination that manifests in the imposition of a colonial culture and share therefore very similar economic, political, social, etc. traits (Grosfoguel 2011: 15, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 345, Dei and Asgharzadeh 2001: 301). Coloniality is a matter of power: the power to explain and

5 Post-colonially assuming that the process of liberation ends in a culminated non-colonial country in August 7 of 1819 at 4PM.

6 Abya Yala is the Name that the Kuna people who reside in the current territories of the nation-states of Colombia and Panama gave to a major territory comprising lands and countries beyond those of the Kuna. This term is politically utilized in opposition to the foreign Name (Latin) America given by European invaders.

narrate, power to produce and validate information, power over social behavior and relations between people, and finally to control and determine resources and work as well as how and by whom are production and consumption supposed to take place (Dei and Asgharzadeh 2001: 304, Mignolo 2007: 468, Wa Thiong'o 1992: 4). Coloniality presupposes that colonial schemes are still valid in spite of the evaporation of colonial administration. In short, colonial protocols, codes, and covenants still exist in the form of a global domination systematic. Domination occurs at several levels beyond the classic colonial paradigm empire/colony – racialized for domination/racialized for being dominated. The understanding of decolonial theory also breaks down power structures to the level of relations between colonial subalterns and is able to frame the relations between e.g. impoverished and dominant socio-economic classes, peripheral and metropolitan inhabitants, men and women (Grosfoguel 2008: 8, Lugones 2008: 78).

In order to frame the issue of black masculinities I will refer to theories developed by Afrikan males as internal agents of reflection of a bodily and political experience. This afrocentric perspective stresses the necessity for own subjects and collectives to theorize over their own subjectivity/collectivity, as it is in the case of black males to speak about sexuality, body-type gender and genre from the own experience (Wynter 2003: 312, Curry 2017a: 39, 245). To conceive them through the lenses of a black male theory radically shifts the political range of actions if compared to theoretical frameworks that rather pathologize and tend to an ontological stigmatization of the Afrikan male commonly conceived as an individual (Lemelle 2010: 97). Other male and non-male Afrikan's considerations will be included as theoretical inputs for this article, for other subjectivities have also contributed to a further understanding, conceiving and construction of the mentioned Afrikan masculinities. The political agenda of the black male is closely related to that of the community, the shared abstract and physical spaces, and (applying the sense of anti-colonial praxis) an appeal to the Afrikan ancestral principles (Oyewumi 2001: 80, 83, Oyewumi 2002).

As Oyewumi states in her work, the concept of genders were culturally politically produced by external non-Oyo colonial domination programs by rewriting and revising ancestral history, for that reason a thorough analysis of power structures for which the role of black Namibian men and other racially oppressed will be pondered and located in a global structure of colonially-based imperialist system (Connell 2000: 46, González-López 2006: 75).

Methodology and procedure

This essay is empirically based on an eight-week research stay in Namibia between the months of July, August and September in 2019. Methodologic processes were chiefly carried out in the city of Windhoek, however other

rural and urban locations were included in the conceiving and deploying of methodological procedures. In order to reach out to interested parties I arranged casual meetings, informal conversations later led to common interest and motivation to participate and organize events. Afterwards I conducted different kinds of interviews with several people, then this allowed me to carry out participant observation in different contexts.

A central method applied was a panel discussion event in order to gather different political views and convictions on a range of interrelated topics and political agencies. This panel discussion was planned and conducted in cooperation with activists, politically motivated people and interested private individuals who were later welcome to use as a platform to convey own ideas and proposals. A virtual flyer was distributed and functioned as an invitation for those who acknowledge masculinity, gender and genre, sexuality and sexual identity, etc. as relevant agendas.



Flyer designed by *Prince*, a panel discussion collaborator and participant, to reach out to interested parties. The flyer displays the event and the range of topics covered by five speakers.

This multi-sided encounter was a sole frame which was appropriated and furnished by the panel speakers. In other words, those interested in making

a statement and sharing it publically (including me), co-designed the event and filled it with contents. I then drew on the topics and conclusions from the speakers as well as the audience's in order to 1.) sketch out logistical later steps for the research process and 2.) obtain an approximation on what participants believed in and motivated them. Collective interviews as well as semi-structured interviews were then conducted with different interlocutors in different constellations. Besides interviews and recorded group meetings I applied participant observation as a method in the context of work activities and events regarding activist or topic related purposes. So, not everyone who participated was subsequently interviewed; those who had a practice and a personal motivation to be involved in activism and/or those who manifested special interest as well as other activists referred by the former were involved in further and detailed examination through the means of interviews.

In the course of my investigation process the following topics emerged as central discussion points in the conducted interviews and the fundamental material for the already posed question: "Masculinity", "Why men should organize", "General reflections on patriarchy and colonialism" and "The construction of black manhood".

Breaking with the fundamentals of a theory of Afrikan Masculinities

In the course of my fieldwork it quickly became clear that an examination of the concept of gender in its colonial topicality is crucial for the accompanying discussion of the theme of African masculinity, given that, not few interlocutors that I got to know in the panel discussion constantly emphasized the importance of understanding and labelling the experience of women and eventually of members of the LGBT⁷ communities based on gender-framing discourses. Throughout the interviews conducted numerous understandings of gender and common traits amongst the definitions appeared, which however can be synthesized as follows: Gender as a term that is able to tolerate several definitions throughout time, there was nevertheless a relative consensus of gender as a socio-cultural construct typically conceived as accompanied by biological sex-assignment and/or dual genital categorization, culturally explained but perceived as natural. It was too usually defined in conjunction with social behavioral roles, meaning a culturally justified bundle of conducts and regulations for members of certain a cultural group. In the end, gender as a term was employed to wrap up and deal with different questionings surrounding the (black) male experience by the virtue of the fact that they were directly connected to experiences of violence and/or trauma; in short, an inquiry towards the experience of black males was in most

7 I encountered that other possible letters for this acronym were rarely used in Namibia. I acknowledge the importance for other identities and embodiments but I am willing to reproduce what was transmitted to men by those I collaborated with.

of the cases led to an account of violent non-male experiences, gender based violence (shortened GBV)⁸ and patriarchy.

It is a remarkable detail and a significant demonstration how the flyer design chosen by the one of the male collaborators for the event logistic, utilized a darkened and troubled image of an Afrikan female as the foremost suitable theme for an event on male, female and communitarian issues of sexual politics. The title “Gender Awareness” corresponds in the same manner to these essential assumptions, in this context, in regard of the narrative aesthetics of gender.

Gender was shown to be a political category suitable for feminist agendas which seek to tackle political phenomena such as GBV, female empowerment and identity, body sovereignty, gender equality, birth control rights, and the like. Under this light, the black male existence as a political agency relative to gender was either not considered, relegated or simply categorized as inexistent while female and LGBT issues would naturally surface. This has been constructed as primary gender theory and dominant discourse about sexuality, (sexual) corporality and sexual identity based on the paradigm of oppression from predominantly black male subjects or “black patriarchy” (Curry 2018: 142, 203, Lemelle 2010: 49, 53).

This observation brings us to the question of what does gender then mean under the light of black masculine studies. Throughout the panel event black males were portrayed by several interlocutors as dominant individuals with factual patriarchal power. Masculinities and all male experiences, regardless of different personal and collective contextual settings were situated at the same oppressive level with same oppressive capacity only with circumstantial nuances. Being masculine or a man would lead to the realization that power is inherent to the ontological condition of such, yet oppression is carried out individually by every man drawing on *patriarchal privilege*. This usually meant, that men were generalizable and fairly homogeneous and at the same time are to be held individually accountable for their violent actions, discarding any linkage with a systemic structure.

Patriarchy is still there, is still dominant. Men are holding up power. “No, I am the man...” He enacted and carried on. “As long as I have a penis. I got everything”... You know? “I have all the world.” (Interlocutor A)

The implications of such focalized narratives on negative experiences and privilege to define and delineate sexual politics were clearly manifested by several of the interlocutors that participated in the panel discussion as part of the audience, especially those working with, advocating for or addressing

8 Gender based violence is a term coined to refer to the violence that takes place over those who socially and culturally represent certain gender and/or gender attributes, categorically oppressed by male dominance/patriarchy.

LGBT rights, women's issues or gender as the agenda. This is by no means to say that violent actions of any nature have to be justified, trivialized or indulged due to the incidence of power structures. It is rather an observation on how hegemonic sexual politics discourse and praxis dismisses black masculinities from constructive articulations for collective transformations and with them, the space for constructing positive, communal and emotionally equilibrated/loving dialogues (Watkins 2016: 285).

Educating men is important but education is about what you want to communicate, then you need the methodology, that is the how. So once you have a man network talking to men, men are most likely to change. (Interlocutor Q)

Interviews showed repeatedly that an obvious lack of male organization is perceived in Namibia. Black male organization was pointed out and exhorted by few interlocutors and participants throughout the panel. They referred to political processes based on the black male experiences as a political intention and are seen by all means as one of the main goals in order to recreate a practice from a communal, Afrikan and masculine agency. Also, according to Interlocutor Q in order to eschew erroneous portrayals stemming from external political paths, Afrikan male organization should represent a mode for black men to assemble different strategies to develop own narratives and build consecutive sovereignty over them.

Gender, complementarity and body-type

As it will be stated latter, several interlocutors stressed that quotidian work in all Afrikan-Namibian societies have been divided by the corporal type of person that one assumes: men and their bodies are culturally conceived for a certain type of tasks whereas women rather for another kind. Despite of the local praxis of globalized interest in gender discourse and its current debates on breaking down the binary understanding of gender, queerness, etc., the attention to the issue of Afrikan Complementarity was a central moment in my research. Afrikan Complementarity was thematized as a manner of ontological structuring as follows. Certain interlocutors elucidated a keen and fundamental sense of complementarity between the male and the female energies/experiences. Beyond sexual and labor complementarity, there was a clear association between ancestral/traditional balance and equity in terms of Afrikan values. Such a balance was also interrelated to the praxis and belief of complementarity: there is balance because there is complementarity not only amongst "individuals" but amongst the different possible sub-groups within the main community – male/female, old/young, etc. (T'Shaka 2012: 29).

I think it was more respectful. It doesn't matter if she stays at home, it does not matter if I endanger myself going to the forest... I still appreciate what you do. But now is like: "now I am going to the mine, I am digging and what, what. Cleaning is nothing!" [...] Women felt more appreciated because men will say thank you. (Interlocutor L)

This quotation stems from a collective interview conducted with a group of female interlocutors on the impact of social roles and colonialism.

Identity based on body-type is much of an old concept for the nations that have ancestrally lived in the territories of today's national state of Namibia. The way body-type identity is conceived and described has been at the same time multifaceted throughout time and space. In the end, it was stated that it leaves a mark in every one of us beyond our bodies. According to my interlocutors bodily identity is well known to be affected by and fused with other social and political institutions of culture.

Men in my village know how to talk to cows. It's like when they talk to them, they know from their inside how to communicate with them... and women sing and dance to the food and it tastes so good because they already have it in them. (Interlocutor V)

Corporal identity and economical practice are interdependent in Afrikan ancestral social constellations; the cultural system determines the roles and bodies on the other hand ascribe sense to the system by performing these economic tasks.

Subsistence economy and models for complementarity

Subsistence economy systems like the Bantu subsistence organizational scheme as well as hunters and gatherers like the San have traditionally established that men were those in charge of herding and agriculture (Likuwa 2014: 55). Women on the other hand were given the administration of the homestead, food and diet among others. This is, conclusively, a system constructed upon the designation of certain groups of people to hold accountability for, carry out and feel intrinsically connected to specific and general social and economic affairs necessary for the subsistence of a group instead of forcing "individuals" to perform unwanted duties. Rituality understood as the transcendental motive inherent in one's vocation and behind quotidian actions to carry out a task imbued in the sustainability of the group.

Did you know that before the European invasions in Africa there was equality? Have you seen the paintings of the San people? [...] in the mountains... you can go see how significantly women are put on those drawings... there is the story of a San man who

interprets them for tourists and he will tell the story: apparently in the San community, the first architect was a woman, because those guys are hunters and gatherers. When the men went to hunt it started to rain while the woman had a baby at home and she had to find a means to protect that baby and then she built something. When the man he found that wat the woman had done was really safe for the baby, so the man came up with the idea, how do we strengthen this shelter to protect our babies... You can really see the significance of women in history. (Interlocutor Q)

This is an abstract of the interview with a male interlocutor currently engaged in the organization of men in rural and urban contexts.

During my interviews in Namibia I encountered a perception that work division responds to *cosmological dispositions* in which a group identifies and structures its necessities, world-organizing narratives which are the theoretical basis for quotidian narratives: oral tradition, laws, religious, spiritual, and cultural regulations, in other words, systems. People would later reflect and evaluate on the work performed by referring to these systems. This forms fundamental acceptance of ideological corpuses that can be interchangeable with the group's common sense and the basis for a feeling of belonging to a community. In other words, sets of ideas, justifications and validations, symbolically spelled out⁹ to which everybody can refer for complementary political dialectics, namely 1.) to enforce, call for order or 2.) to question its sense, reform. Wrapping up, complementarity offers the possibility for modifications in one's system of values as long as one understands and acknowledges its sense (Ani 1994).

Complementarity is therefore one of several Afrikan systems that underpins the sense of body-type and situates it in relation to other (complementary) body-types in a dynamic circulation of duties and rights which fundamentally involves every person at various levels of material and emotional reciprocity. Finally and to summarize, complementarity was a central concept while finding approaches to guiding inspiration for a better understanding of Afrikan sexual politics.

Corporal and sexual identity as an Afrikan organizational paradigm

To several interlocutors, there was a clear distinction between *before colonialism* and *after colonialism* by the virtue of the fact that crucial changes

⁹ This compendium of cultural laws are often based in ancient accounts of how humans from a specific group and in a specific place(s) were given or comprehended essential information to limit their desires and inclinations but to optimize their happiness as well. Spiritual entities and their realms are commonly in close relationship with them.

were enforced upon the Afrikan nations and that people share collective awareness of these modifications. Afrikan views assigned the male body-type certain roles, duties and rights based on a range of economic activities; these activities are complementary to those of the female body-type. This complementary system determined who amongst mainly body-type and age criteria will be in charge of managing which economic activity. In this essay patriarchy is understood as a cultural system that serves the legitimation and explanation of why and how are work, and other institutions of culture, divided and categorized. An important number of these nations have been practicing economy within subsistence structures' parameters. African nations, especially those from which have occupied the territory of the present Namibian nation-state are known to have based their economy (in large part) on the possession of livestock and count specifically on dairy, fur, eggs, and the like together with agriculture in order to subsist. Cattle is an ecological source traditionally and emphatically regarded by the majority of the interlocutors as an element commonly associated in present-day Namibia with high economic estimation – both for the livestock-based subsistential economic activities and for agreements and settlements of monetary nature. Men are traditionally associated with the possession, care, administration, graze, accountability, security and prevalence of cattle (Likuwa 2005: 14). In this sense, dowry implying cattle-exchange as a cultural phenomenon is seen of extreme relevance by my interlocutors in Namibia. Furthermore, violence, trauma and transgressions were essentially discarded as a system's defining feature.

Yes cows are very important in Namibia. They have always been. The meat, the leather, the milk. We marry thanks to cows. If you as a man have no cows, you have a problem, my friend. [...] How are you going to start your own family, your life independently from your parents? (Laughter). (Interlocutor D)

Elemental cultural practices and their accompanying theories were restructured by colonial patriarchy through the means of *modernity*: Christian missions, capitalist production requirements, racism and apartheid, etc. Colonial patriarchy has much influenced the way in which economic tasks are carried out (Likuwa and Shiweda 2017: 36, Seroto 2018: 2).

Coloniality of power: The functionality of colonial patriarchy

Revising and studying masculinity and masculine behaviors is a crucial step in this essay as it assesses how masculinity might have been shaped under the light of power discourses. This led to shedding light upon the relevance of colonial realities and its structures.

My interlocutors firmly agreed upon the fact that when it comes to patriarchy one should conceive it drawing on structures of oppression set up on material and abstract realms of quotidian life reaching the foremost institutions of political spheres. Patriarchy is therefore conceived as a system that comprises every level of human interaction based on its systematic condition.

Colonial patriarchy, however, shows two specific particular power dynamics which are relevant for this contribution.

Firstly, coloniality in the form of patriarchy restructures traditional organization and seeks the elimination of the links to former practical or ideological sources. In this stage, the imposition of the intersection patriarchy/coloniality declares all racial subalterns as pre-modern, uncivilized, bodies-to-conquer (Seroto 2018: 10, Quijano 2013: 171). Namibian-Afrikan nations were progressively claimed as property of the German Empire, whereas none of the black bodies were considered to have comparable characteristics to the new paradigm of genre: the white subject (Wynter 2003: 269). Coloniality is synonymous to the concept of race per se and racial hierarchical definitions at a global scale. As a modern world domination project it pursues the suppression or alteration of the already existing cultural institutions, therefore European invaders in Namibia and South Africa had already been introducing separate and alienated understandings of body type and sexual identity through missionary interventions in order to ensure the basis of ideological and corporal discipline from subalterns. (Mignolo 2007: 451, Seroto 2018: 9)

The exercise of institutional power generated from military and cultural-ideological dominance formally settled the grounds for patriarchal-economic domination in terms of accumulation of production, capture of production means such as productive fertile land, as well as the exploitation of ecological energies and social energies (workers and work).

Secondly, another type of complementarity was produced based on societal models from European cultures based on Abrahamic cosmologies¹⁰ and replaced the holistic understanding and embodiment of the Afrikan body-type. The former communal production, consumption and disposal chain is broken and the economic capacity of Afrikan-Namibians was redirected in order to be able to supply the material needs of the invaders' colonial domination project. Following this unsettling line, economic activities became less subsistence-like and mutated into rather market and individual patterns. Economic behaviors were radically shifted and colonial complementarity set up the imaginaries and physical discipline for contemporary genders (Oyewumi 2000: 1093, Curry 2018: 243).

10 Those religious conceptions stemming from the religious prophecies of Judaic figure Abraham. For instance: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Considerations: Further thoughts on Afrikan masculine organization

I have previously examined the coloniality of gender and a brief genealogy of its colonial formation. Then I contrasted Afrikan complementarity as an alternative system for the original conceiving of ancestral Afrikan comprehension of corporality and spirituality as the body-type (Oyewumi 2002: 4, Oyewumi 2000: 1096). Subsistence economy represents the material fundament for the Afrocentric distribution of political and socio-economic (cosmic) sense. At last, patriarchal structures were introduced as a phenomenon belonging to the dynamics imbued in the coloniality of power. Now I intend to assemble the different stages in this contribution so that we can trace what is the current state of community-based organizational dialectics of theory and practice.

Communities are firmly based on diverse types of solidarity and reciprocity networks in which people regard themselves as members of a group and therefore look after each other and assist each other mutually. Members of a community support each other and take care of values, property, and objectives based on the shared notion of the common. This means ultimately that people do not conceive themselves as sufficient individuals but as part of a group maintained by personal actions coordinated and carried out in groups. Therefore, when capitalist production, consumption and disposal is progressively imposed, communal values decay (Likuwa and Shiweda 2017: 34). Afrikan and other continents' communal values regarding care and mutual check-ups are based on rules of conduct that underline the relevance of every person's integrity for the achievements and community's material and spiritual wellbeing.

If I think something is not right with my cousin, I would simply go and talk to my sister, to iina, or kuku. I love her but [...] I can't be always be there as an older cousin for her [...] because I am a man. She'd do the same and call my brother or my dad. Here in Africa, if you do something wrong or something that offends someone, the first thing that people will ask is "Aye!, what is wrong with this person's family?!" (Interlocutor E)

In this sense, people remain vigilant¹¹ about every possible transgression, felony or wrongdoing. If the community has barely not watched after itself, the collective can be individually fissured and community structures dismantled. People would alert the community and prevent the harm from being done. In this way, both the potential victim and the potential offender would

11 Vigilance is in this case a key concept. In surveillance-societies, "vigilance" is a negative value rooted in mistrust and oppression. In communal and rather horizontal communities, vigilance appoints care and everybody's inclusion in shared goals and is rooted in confidence.

be protected. This concept lies upon the fundament of preventive care, which states that the offender's misbehavior can be traced to another unbalanced source, which must also be collectively healed.

People in the village think more like... with a sense of community. The communities in the village are more helpful and mindful [...] even men are more romantic. Is like they are opposite to the people in town. They would know everything about me like who am I with and will establish boundaries [...] Respect, love and all those things. Because people don't have much to show off. They don't look for you to impress you, but because they are in it for the real feelings they have for each other and not because: "this man has a beautiful car, I respect him". They know each other for a long time. They are good people... They sacrifice a lot for the people. (Interlocutor B)

Shared cultural and accompanying material conditions contribute to a feeling of "belonging-together". Proximity generated in geo-collective identity units (such as villages, small towns, hamlets, etc.) results in caring relationships and socio-emotional cohesion between members of the same unit(s). In addition, economic and identity distance provokes different or opposite values such as apathy, detachment, and disengagement. This consciousness- and emotional-capital makes it unlikelier for a person within the community to do wrong to women and likelier for people to be "whistle-blowers" even before any maltreatment takes place.

Capitalist fracturing of the communal body-type

For our tradition if my husband comes home and I have cooked for him... like if he has come with the meat I would praise his totem, his clan, his what; and after I have cooked the food and I give it to him, he praises my totem, he praises my ancestors, we are done. Here if I go to work, I have to come and cook for you and I have to say "thank you daddy for bringing this money" but what I cooked... you did not say thank you. So it was more respectful people appreciated more every little you were doing. (Interlocutor J)

Through the development of modernity and capitalism men are physically and ideologically molded to fit into the prototype of waged workers who receive monthly or weekly salaries for working a constant amount of hours a day. Wage labor market-economy is installed in this way and women become responsible for upholding the production chain. This represents momentous profit for men and the most basic scale of oppression that will later fund a capitalist system. Men become worthy of the highest social acknowl-

edgement by the fact of being those systematically appointed to become the earners and owners of money: the new standardization of worth. Henceforth money becomes a decisive symbolic element in this scheme in three different moments 1). Apart from a remuneration, men's wage labor does not represent long-term benefits for neither their familiar units nor their communities; the wageworker's labor fruit counts as surplus for the global liberal-market economy and as extracted raw materials for the development of private enterprises. This given, men are granted money not only as a budgetary remuneration, but also as a repetitive incentive or reward to keep progressively mutating inhuman working-rates, demands and circumstances. 2). Money grants payed men prestige, acknowledgement and purchasing power. This later becomes of extreme relevance considering a major geo-sociological shift that accompanied this new economic standard, common to a vast majority of colonially occupied countries: people gradually move their residence from (now declared) rural areas to cities and urban centers in order to access working places and other entities that capitalism and colonialism made "necessary" (schools, churches, markets). So-called modernity is brought into being and male-generated money is its language (Likuwa 2014: 51). Namibian masculinities are then led by systematical pressure to practice and identify with different social and cultural values that I believe are compactly explanatory in a dialectic figure. Pursuing an autocritical perspective, black masculinities shaped and conditioned by imperialist and colonially-based modernity might prioritize material over spiritual, roughness over vulnerability, self-sufficiency instead of support, the excess over modulation and the individual over the collective.

Organizing beyond masculinity and patriarchy

A lack of assessment of a transversal male experience within capitalist, racist and misogynist system represents a common structural difficulty when analyzing men's organization. An analysis of the current global systematic and the role that racialized males for domination are expected to accomplish or are led to believe that they need to fulfill (Curry 2017b: 326) is usually missing for them to feel motivated to organize.

In order to speak about an empowering Afrikan masculine organization men ought to organize and design own safe-spaces where man-to-man talks can freely take place. Afrikan masculinities as any other political agency implies a multidimensionality of the being. The current male experience is forced by the circumstances to recognize itself as a multidimensional experience built upon the masculine category, within capitalist caprices and requirements, as a racially defined subject as black and at the same time all these intersections surrounded by coloniality. The fruits of the modern male identity are hence planted and harvested by a colonial system, Afrikan masculinities are trying to re-align with ancestral values of subsistence and community.

This readjustment of the black communities represents an enormous advantage for the articulation of anti-patriarchal hegemony, namely, the possibility to organize with all other groupings in the community without disregarding the importance of periodical safe-space continuous organization. Following the understanding of colonial patriarchy as a system supported by global institutional power requires such procedural shift in terms of political organization in the mentioned institutions so that different and rather radically own constructs are able to manifest.

...she said it was important to educate men... Educate them on what's happening but we are investing little to no energy in creating spaces for the elaboration of common strategies for our common goals. Patriarchy is the problem. That should be the goal for men and women. (Interlocutor Q)

The reflections on the cornerstones of decolonizing black masculinities

The paradigm of violence as a category intrinsically ascribed to (heterosexual) males transcends the question of the violent male subject before or after colonialism. It rather serves as a legitimation for an essentialist portrayal of men as inevitably transgressive and emotionally numb (Ferguson 2001: 60). This rationale condemns Afrikan males to exist as inhabiting body-types unable to be declared victims and survivors of (systematic) violence and splits Afrikan community further over the concept of gender (Seroto 2018: 9).

All male experiences are not “the same” and immutable categories but very varied and essentially related to class and race. Basing a theory on the static understanding of the male experience leads to the realization that patriarchy is according (as it is in primary gender theory) identified as a structural oppression over non-male gender identities and bodies. Patriarchy is ultimately a system based on gender pursuing economic logistics such as the organization possession and distribution of property and means of production. Patriarchal systematic stresses the ownership of nature and family as elemental means of production (Oyewumi 1997: 170).

Gender view: The coloniality of gender stresses that the gendered understanding lies on division of the body-type experience in three different moments in order for it to be conceived as the sexual organic paradigm: 1). the ontological breakup of a socio-cultural groups by dividing them into genders and later 2). dividing these genders again by the means of corporal and political difference, in other words: men and women and then e.g. men are natural rulers to women or women are the “weak sex”. 3). Gender then separates the Afrikan-Namibian body-type from its original collective logic and the accompanying economic, spiritual, and ancestral qualities (Curry 2017a: 247).

As the focus of a gender discourse or “gender equality” appeared to be rooted in a corpus of violent experiences with black men, it is not a matter of surprise that a sub-focus takes shape; namely the ruined/ruining black male Black masculinities are directly ascribed the intrinsic tendency to transgression, domination and (structural) power. This is set up as the ground for narratives of what Ferguson categorizes as naturally naughty after analyzing narratives about black boys in schools (Ferguson 2001: 80). Connell and Lemelle problematize pathological explanations for global male and black male violence as erroneous, destructive, and racist (Connell 2000: 217, Lemelle 2010: 95).

It has been pointed out that Afrikan males face several difficulties regarding organization processes, I will now touch on crucial aspects on the organization process. Safe-spaces are a necessity for all body-types. It is by no means the responsibility of other body-type experiences e.g. women to evaluate and stimulate male-centered organization. It is a radical reflection of the African male experience, that can direct Afrikan males to the articulation of this political agency (Curry 2019: 5). In spite of being fundamentally difficult, it is the Afrikan man’s constitutive sense to find a reason to transform the possible sense of privilege and supposable superiority into solid political statements for political engagement (Curry 2017a: 226).

Gender and sex in other words are the European sexual, identifying organizing principle which could only materialize in a colonial eurocentric societal structure. Gender, before responding to a political categorization, as a critical term used against the insufficiency of the term “sex” and oppressive patriarchal gender roles, is an organizing model. Society and culture had to be modified in order to correspond to the project of a European world.

Having said that, I would like to pause the flow of thoughts to consider the *intercontextual* universal validity of these thoughts. If the causes for an unbalanced social body-type scheme which produce the call for active Afrikan masculinities studies and practices are rooted in capitalism, coloniality of power and, as a result in, gender, I would dare to assert that based on my literature (Connell 2000, Curry 2018, Oyěwùmí 1997, Grosfoguel 2011). I have encountered a phenomenon applicable on many other national-states in colonially occupied territories and forcefully incorporated into the economic capitalist system.

Conclusion

Coloniality is a model for understanding the incidence of power dynamics in a global scale. Challenging power through gender-centered discourses has stood out around the world as a manner of creating “equality” or “equity”. Gender-understanding is a concept that firmly rooted in the individual view of the material self: the own body, the own identity, the own way. I have analyzed gender as a narrative that deals nevertheless with violence and domi-

nation by using these crucial concepts in order to shape a narrative that interweaves different and large groups of individuals. As we have already seen, those bodies declared savage, not-human, bodies-to-conquer, bodies that did not apply to the category of full human subjects by not fitting in the paradigm of the colonial understanding and practice of power. The coloniality of power creates the structural conditions for these not-subjects to accept and practice the civilizing paradigms imposed by the colonizers. As Mignolo (2007) states, always advocating that exploitation is good for all. The obsolescence of community structures in today Namibia are underpinned by the advance of the project of colonial capitalist modernity. A project that requires the organic feeling of people as individuals in every aspect of life. Colonial institution's power played an enormous role in the process of setting up a mindset and a number of European rooted practices which disciplined the bodies of people to a Christian, patriarchal and racist expectations of this individuals-to-be. The concept/embodyment of body-type is replaced by external notions of sexuality and then by the contemporary and current definitions of gender.

Within the context of imperialism and globalized capitalist production Afrikan and Namibian masculinities have been drastically redirected to believe in money as a legitimate organizing and categorizing agent. Modern masculinities tend to find a means for potentiation in money at the same time that they make themselves dependent of it. An entire societal structure was set up in order for Afrikan men to consider themselves not a complement but the counterpart, the opposite of women. In fact, individual conception excludes the collective comprehension of oneself and voids organizational potential. Hence men structurally adopt a series of feelings of detachment and disengagement as a consequence of the rupture with the original substance of work and the social dynamics and ancestral mentors.

Trends indicate that the male experience's overt exclusion from political gender-spaces in this framework has been leading (cis)masculine heterosexual experiences to invalidation and dismissal from gender platforms of articulated discourse analysis, deconstruction and politicizing of the own psycho-sexual and bodily experience alongside with the corresponding intersections. The critique of power from a gender perspective implies that certain subjects are privileged by and others oppressed by the systematic of patriarchy, whereas often the "privileged" embody power as well. Several implications can stem from this point on. A key implication is that unified and integral political movements from different body-types are initially discarded. A result from this conclusion is the fact that every-body has a gender without everybody being able to elaborate theory and praxis about gender equal terms. The male experience is, despite of the fact of being requested or simply expected to deconstruct itself, denied to put forward any proposal from the spaces of "gender-deconstruction" such as reorienting sexual poli-

tics towards ancestral communality or articulating violence prevention for Afrikan men and boys.

Nevertheless, (organized) men's practices which already exist and construct upon the basis of being a black male cannot be a negative experience per se, but like others, one full of contradictions and nuances. While observing the work of male activists on the male experience I realized that male organization is the key for a larger theoretical production about the different male experiences, now from the perspective of the variety of Namibian masculinities.

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Visual artistic interventions into contemporary post-colonial realities and potential futures in Namibia. A multivocal art-anthropology encounter

Michael Pröpper, Reginaldo Antunes, Masiyaleti Mbewe,
Vitjitua Ndjiharine, Urte Remmert, Erik Schnack

Intro

In several places, talks and publications on contemporary Africa the terms *afrofuturism*, *afrotopia*, *afrofuturism* or *afromodernity* have emerged (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Heidenreich-Seleme and O'Toole 2016; Mbewe 2017; Sarr 2019). Especially salient seems their use within a young, self-conscious, urban generation that experiences art as means of expressing new positions on society's struggles. Local black narratives seem to use a rhetoric of venturing into new terrain that works as counterpart to stereotypical narratives about the African continent and a as a move towards decolonization and potentially even the healing of colonial wounds. Against this background some contemporary Namibian art may be expression and platform for the imaginary constitution of a society that is open for change, a society that thrives to being more than a post-colonial emulation of former colonists. Talking about her own work as interventions into social conditions the Namibian artist Vitjitua Ndjiharine (VN) expressed this circumstance with the words 'It seems that we are just beginning to wake up'.

We would like to take this observation of a historical momentum of opening or waking up to new possibilities and narratives within the Namibian visual arts scene to thematize exemplary perspectives on and interventions into post-colonial realities in contemporary Namibia in this article (see as well the Editorial). That means that visual arts, which can be described as a certain sector of/or a distinct scene within the contemporary Namibian society will be the main focus. Several artists/ authors have been occupied with the subject of art, colonialism, the challenge of decolonization and the healing of past wounds in Namibia lately. Nashilogweshipwe Mushaandja has provided a critical reflection of over 40 art positions towards the subject of German colonialism, a discourse that is taking place in Namibia and Germany (Mushaandja 2019). Other reflections also especially thematize the German colonial period as part of an emerging discourse in Germany about the highly problematic colonial history (Lehmann 2019, forthcoming; Wienand 2019) but as well other periods of time as pre- and post independence (Hofmeyr 2015; Mtota 2015; Palumbo 2006; Sarantou 2014).

The methodological approach chosen here will involve an anthropological encounter with contemporary artistic positions towards post-colonial realities since Michael Pröpper (MP), a German academic anthropologist and artist initiated the process as part of the research excursion that shaped this special issue (see Editorial). The outcome is an attempt at a *dialogue* – in researching as well as in writing. This endeavour does not explicitly focus on any colonial period and touches upon ethical, decolonial and methodological questions. What is the encounter, what is an encounter? How do the artist and the anthropologist meet and how do they talk to each other while there is a third self-speaking actor – the artwork, which is a main part of the encounter? Some salient methodological challenges of this situation include a.) involving an experiential embodied dimension as ideally both are physically, bodily experiencing the material presence and the phenomenological expansion/ complexity dimensions of the artwork (as the third agent); b.) experiencing the materiality of the artwork as substance for deep understanding – for artistic producing and thinking, e.g. by visiting the artists studios; and c.) entering into a dialogue with the artist. Is anthropology suggesting concepts and art delivering realisations? Artists are entering into that sort of dialogue by expressing their own views, describing backgrounds. A consequence of the peculiarity of the artistic work (work as a third self-speaking actor in a triangular relationship) is the fact that an exchange with artists who speak through their works takes place.

Central to us, therefore, is a *dialogical field research* work with and on the work that addresses and elaborates on equal perspectives and thus iteratively approaches the topics of intervention and complexity. During this sort of ‘research’ encounters in exhibitions, art-schools, workshops and in ateliers took place. Also interviews and conversations took place on the side, on the phone, in the street and on parties and vernissages. Standing in front of artworks, explaining, getting to know each other was always a starting point. The encounter outcome is ‘only’ a written dialogue between MP and five artists. However, the core tenet of a first approach towards a decolonized way of writing about post-colonial art was not talking about but talking *with* artists, not writing about but writing *with* artists.

The positions/ artworks that will be the basis for the dialogues outlined here will be presented in a thematical order that will become clear in the text and does not mean to privilege any artwork. They were pieces from salient exhibitions in 2019, namely Vitjitua Ndjiharines work ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’ for ‘Ovizire Somgu – From where do we speak?’ at NAGN and Masiyaleti Mbewes work ‘Gender on the Moon’ for ‘We me – Womxn’ at the National Art Gallery of Namibia (NAGN). Two additional positions will also play a key role: Erik Schnacks ‘Scramble’, a kinetic installation that was shown in 2012 at the College of the Arts Boilerhouse (Katutura Community Arts Centre) and

can be seen as a video on the internet¹ and Urte Remmerts work ‘Talk to me: Finding a new Namibian Language’ that was published by the Würth foundation in 2016 (Weber 2016). Lastly Reginaldo Antunes work ‘Celebration’ for the 2019 exhibition ‘What if’ organized by the Namibian Arts Association will be presented.

The idea to this article and the choice of artistic positions was exclusively MPs responsibility. That means that it must be seen as an opportunistic sample, guided by the time of MPs being in Namibia in 2019 and represents an attempt to get an overview through exhibition visits and multiple expert interviews with key players in the Namibian Arts Scene. Consequently, it can only be seen as a first entry for deeper investigations into the interventive contributions of Namibian artists. It is though not meant in any exclusive manner and not meant to discriminate any other artist/ project/ position that the current authors might have not chosen, omitted or not been aware of.

Next to the afrofuturity a central role will be played by the terms ‘complexity exposure’ and ‘intervention’ which will be explained below. As outlined above the term intervention proved to be fruitful and intuitively understandable in the discussion that MP had with Namibian artists and art practitioners during personal discussions in Namibia in 2019 and during subsequent dialogues via e-mail, phone and social media. The term was initially encountered in the exhibition ‘Ovizire somgu – From where do we speak?’ that was conceptualized and shown in Hamburg, Germany and later travelled to Windhoek, Namibia.²

In the remainder of the article we will display a theorizing of key concepts followed by some words on methods and the Namibian visual arts scene. The main part will present the exemplary art projects in a dialogic fashion which will be comparatively discussed in the end.

Theorizing key concepts and background

By now the mutual interests, coincidences and overlaps – as well as the differences – between anthropology³ and art in coming to more sensually holistic ways of understanding and representing different realities in a globally transforming world have been thoroughly described, however remain a matter of discussion (Foster 1995; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2015; Ingold 2019; Pink et al. 2010; Pröpper 2015; Schneider and Wright 2010). Compared to other disciplines anthropology is close to art in using a holistic ethnographic approach to understanding peoples complex realities, a fact that has caused a lot of interest in the arts about the so called ‘ethnographic turn’ and in sensual

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lb4pRTgHHU> 18.02.2020

2 <https://www.kolonialismus.uni-hamburg.de/2019/07/04/unsere-ausstellung-ovizire-somgu-from-where-do-we-speak-geht-nach-namibia/>

3 The problematic colonial history of anthropology has been thoroughly discussed in the introductory chapter of this volume.

imaginative anthropology (Elliott and Culhane 2016; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2015; Rutten et al. 2013). On the other hand increasingly art can be understood as a sort of *research* into life's complex secrets (Borgdorff 2009, 2011; Finley and Knowles 1995; Ingold 2019; Noë 2015). By now there exists an increasing number of people with hybrid identities and roots in both fields. So what can be emphasized here is a mutual interest in *exposing/ revealing the complexity⁴ of reality*. Elsewhere this approach of combining anthropology and art was described by MP as to “attune our sensorial and emotional and perceptive capabilities to ultimately better understand multiple dimensions of a ‘*qualitas occulta*’⁵ of that thing reality that unites anthropologists and artists. The endeavor is about ‘laying bare’ of hidden gaps of perception and knowledge, as well as structures of powerful narratives and the discursive penetration of all spheres of our social life” (Pröpper 2015: 18).⁶

Due to the encounter-nature of this article the focus will be twofold: Firstly, the focus will be on mutual interests in the *post-colonial condition⁷* and artistic positions towards what could be called interventive (self-)decolonization and maybe even healing. By dialoguing about exemplary artworks and positions and comparing their ‘narrative properties’ we intend to create a preliminary overview of exemplary artistic commentaries and interventions into post-colonial realities.

Secondly, a first understanding of the hypothesis of *exposing/ revealing complexity* is attempted for Namibia (Kössler 2015). It is only a first step to state that artistic research somehow deals with complexity, but it is a further (analytic) step to attempt to ‘map’ the contributions, to attempt to achieve a certain ‘typology’ of types of complexity revelations or a certain grammar-like overview. This is a complex issue in itself asking the question “Which and what aspect of the complex post-colonial discourse did artists choose for what reason?” that cannot be fully answered here. However, looking at aspects of visualization, exposure and discovery (making visible formerly invisible or not yet seen connections and dimensions, exposing the absence

4 Complexity (*cum* ‘with’, or ‘together with’ and *plectere* ‘braid’ or ‘merge’) is a behavior and property of systems/ situations/ nexus/ facts meaning that many components/ details/ dimensions/ goals/ motivations/ emotions/ behaviors can interact/ braid/ merge/ contradict in often nonlinear ways and processes that aggravate simplifying perceptions, descriptions and abstractions. Complexity grows with the number of interacting dimensions and is an essential feature of social, societal and cultural systems. Complexity thus has a lot to do with demands on human perception through variety and multiplicity as well as questions of order, disorder and hierarchy.

5 A hidden, invisible quality or dimension

6 While here we lay a focus on the qualitative understanding of the exposure of complexity as a strength of anthropology it can also be argued that anthropology also has a *scientific* interest and approach and thus is also on the side of science in general *reducing* complexity wherever possible.

7 See the introductory chapter

of understanding, showing crooked metaphors, wrong examples, imprecise models, misunderstandings and discovering a new positionality) may give us first insights into arts role in exposing the complexities of the decolonization discourse.

Finally, a few words should be said on the terminus of intervention. What are 'artistic interventions' into post-colonial society? One could ask the question differently "What art is not an intervention in this sense?" This whole issue touches the very matter of choice of artworks. Is a personal blog entry, a posted selfie at Heroes Acre, a painting of the Namib desert, or a smartphone video of a ritual not also a potential intervention, maybe less political but in an aesthetic sense also exposing complexity? That means that it is a difficult question how to narrow a choice of artworks. Here, however, we have suggested to focus on intended, research-based, professional and publicly exhibited art contributions that somehow were directed towards societal/ political/ post-colonial issues – as the choice of exhibitions has already been outlined above.

One can further ask what the nature of an intervention is in comparison to a commentary/ an exhibition or a contribution and what makes that intervention a successful exposure of e.g. post-colonial deficits? That is at least partly an empirical question that will have to be answered by the artists in comparison in a similar manner as above asking "(Why/how) do you intervene?"

Lastly, visual artists intervene through the artwork. Artists thus seem to intervene less directly as a person but rather as some sort of distant, hidden, depersonalized type of intervention. A special feature of the visual artistic search for knowledge is that artists do not primarily speak themselves, but rather create works that speak about complexity. So there is a self-speaking third 'agent' parallel to the verbal communication about the world, consequently a triangular relationship arises. A conversation takes place originally *with* the artwork and sometimes only exceptionally with the artist in a (then) triangular relationship. As a result, research with and about artists must take this challenge into account. This aspect will be, among others, further touched upon below.

Main part: Exemplary artistic positions

In this part, we will present several artistic positions with images headed by an introductory part describing the peculiarity of the encounter, the exhibition background and the questions that arise. The dialogues are followed by a short closing summary.

Vitjitua Ndjiharine: 'We Shall Not Be Moved'. Painted photographs

Introduction on Ovizire · Somgu MP: I first experienced the work of Vitjitua Ndjiharine in Hamburg visiting the exhibition 'Ovizire · Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?'. When in Namibia we met and started a conversation about her work, and the subject of intervention.

'Ovizire. Somgu' is a collaboratively curated exhibition that is centered on a photographic inventory housed at the Museum at Rothenbaum (MARKK) in Hamburg, which was produced and collected by German scientists, settlers, merchants and military personnel during the period of German colonialism in Namibia (1884-1915). The exhibition was initially opened in December 2018 in two locations in Hamburg: the Museum at Rothenbaum (MARKK), the former Museum of Ethnology, and the neighboring non-profit art space M.Bassy. It travelled to Namibia in 2019.

The words *ovizire* and *somgu* in Otjherero and Khoekhoegowab cannot be reduced to any single meaning, but can be translated to mean 'shadow' or 'aura'. This cross-disciplinary exhibition proposes a critical reading of the legacies of the colonial gaze and its photographic archive through exploring gaps and shadows in the archive.

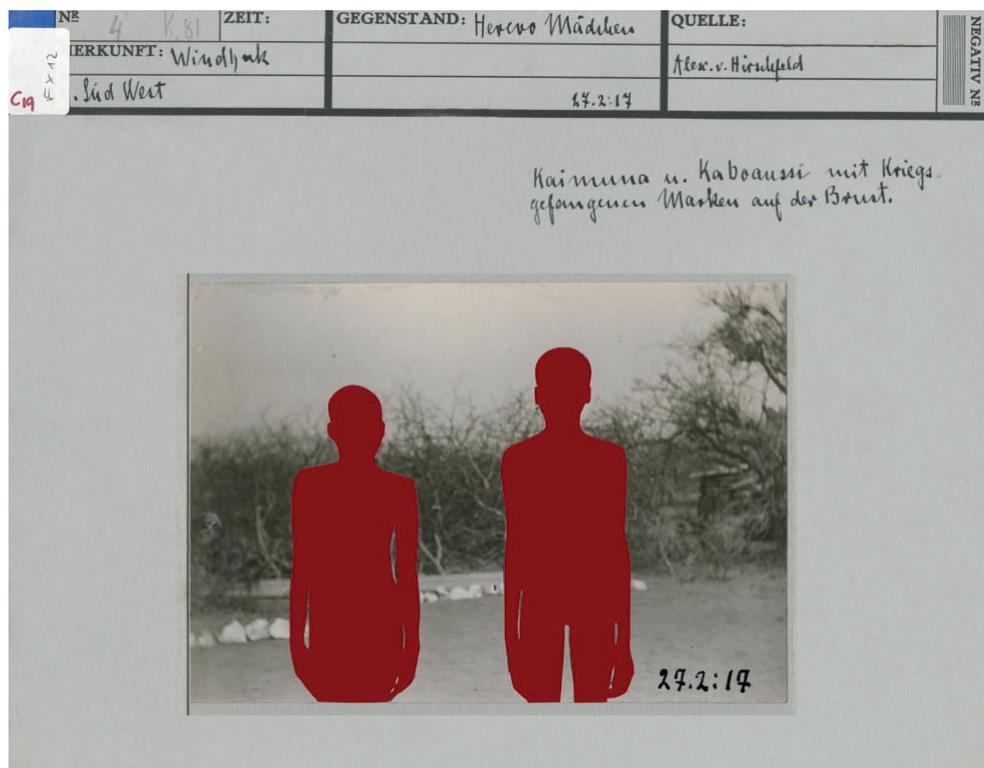


Image 1: (Untitled) The Shadows Kaimuna and Kaboaussi on *Ikono*-card (2018). Photo by Vitjitua Ndjiharine

At its centre, 'Ovizire · Somgu' interrogates colonial representations and psycho-social spaces associated with legacies of power that previously dominated or silenced counter-histories and diverse voices. In particular it brings to the surface the uneven remembrance of the colonial genocide (1904-1908). Consisting of video, photography, mixed media collages, soundscape, sculpture and performance interventions, the works exhibited have emerged out of an ongoing conversation and creative collaboration between artists, curators and scholars in Namibia and Germany over a period of several months in 2018 and 2019. In turn 'Ovizire · Somgu' celebrates the possibilities of new voices of solidarity, resistance and healing (Text partly compiled from exhibition description).

MP: I would perceive your great work 'We Shall Not Be Moved' for Ovizire · Somgu as a perfect example of a intervention into colonial memory culture and thus an attempt to create awareness for and protest against the ongoing persistence of colonial imagery in everyday post-colonial life. It creates a very strong feeling for the ongoing exposure and vulnerability of the photographed people by protecting them from further gazes by stencilling them out, repainting them and thus rewriting a historical narrative. How do you see that?

VN: My approach to the colonial archive is to rebel against established forms of historical knowledge about the colonized world and its people. This stance attempts to question the limits of contemporary knowledge. Paramount to this is the idea that historical information is never neutral and that the intersection of identity plays a role in how information is received, perceived and archived. The archive at the center of the project 'Ovizire. Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?' was produced and collected as a result of abject historical entanglements between the German colonial empire and its former colony German South-West Africa (today Namibia) and the Namibian-German War of 1904-1908. Engaging with these troubling colonial photographic collections, and the institutions in which they are preserved, requires a critical reflection in order to include a broad range of entangled themes related to power, positionality, the colonial gaze, gender and queer intersectionality. However, and most importantly, a critical reflection is only a starting point, and on its own is not enough. A direct disruption or intervention is further required. Together with a critical reflection, the method of disruption can be a productive way to engage with problematic colonial photographic collections.

Historian Patricia Hayes argues that constitutive quality of photography allowed for the construction of ideas concerning the colonized world and its people (Hartmann, Silvester and Hayes 1999). The setting and the circumstances leading to the production and distribution of colonial photographs, was predominantly controlled by white European men. In the Namibian colonial setting the photographs therefore represent a projection of German

white male dominance over the colonized Namibia and its peoples, and thus, they will always require a critical intervention.

The white male colonial fantasy, that painted the black subject as sub-human, uncivilized and easily dominatable, and that made a “new world” visually available to German audiences played an important role in legitimating colonial governance. How can we diverge from this point of view? The goal of my artistic approach is to completely undermine any representations of the colonized by the colonizer. I do this by utilizing the manipulation of colonial photography in order to provide a complete and holistic re-thinking of hierarchies of knowledge. One way I manipulate these photographs is by literally cutting them into pieces to do away their original meaning. This method offers a post-colonial interpretation that assumes the position of disruption and subversion as a precondition for change, and renders the colonial archive as a site of encounter and cultural exchange that might have transformative capacities. I will illustrate my points by using two bodies of work as examples: ‘Mirrored Reality’ and ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’.



Image 2: ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’ (2018). Installation at M.Bassy in Hamburg.
Photo by Vitjitua Ndjiharine

MP: Is your artistic intervention by disruption being noticed? What makes an intervention successful?

VN: Engagement, conversation and critical thinking is what makes an intervention successful in my opinion. ‘Mirrored Reality’ directly returns the viewer’s gaze by using a reflective film in place of the photographic subjects. More specifically, the black photographic subjects who make up the bulk of the content found within the colonial archive. In this conceptual art installation, the black bodies are cut out of the frame and replaced with a mirror film which in turn allows the viewer to see themselves or their immediate surroundings. Enlarged *Ikono*-cards⁸ provide the basis for this installation. These so-called *Ikono*-cards are the material make up of the *Ikono-catalogue*⁹, and each card contains referential information about the photographic subject which is handwritten by the museum’s archivists as the photographs entered their inventory.



Image 3: ‘Mirrored Reality’ (2018). Installation at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart.
Photo by Vitjitua Ndjiharine

- 8 *Ikono*-cards are inventory cards used at the Museum am Rothenbaum. These cards contain descriptions of place, origin and a title of the images that make up the *Ikono-catalogue*. The knowledge and language transmitted through these labelling and categorization processes is highly racist and still forms part of the potent colonial knowledge system.
- 9 The so-called *Ikono-catalogue* consists of photographs taken by settlers, merchants, soldiers, scientists, most of all private citizens during the time of German colonialism in Namibia (1894-1917). These include photographs of landscapes, people and cultural objects, as well as the activities of the military in the colony. In the early 1920s the Museum am Rothenbaum used the catalogue as a teaching tool for students of Ethnology. This catalogue consists of photographs that are pasted on so called *Ikono*-cards.

In most cases, the information on these cards is derogatory and is designated for the purpose of categorizing the photographed black subjects. I reflect on these cards as an example of a colonial order of knowledge, and therefore obscure the sexist or racist designations that are used to describe the subject to prevent further dissemination of this knowledge. This work is a reflexive art exercise that allows us to reflect on our postures of gazing, and provides a refraction of the colonial gaze that can help recalibrate historical knowledge. This work was conceived as a conceptual art installation which covered the entrance of the exhibition hall in the MARKK where our first iteration of the 'Ovizire. Somgu' project was exhibited.

MP: What does your art have to do with your personal biography/ position in Namibian history and society?

VN: My personal biography very much informs my positionality as an artist and researcher. My work 'We Shall Not Be Moved' is created out of my personal connection to the colonial archive as Namibian and more urgently as a Herero woman whose ancestors are "victims" of this history.



Image 4: 'We Shall Not Be Moved', close up (2018). Photo by Vitjitua Ndjiharine

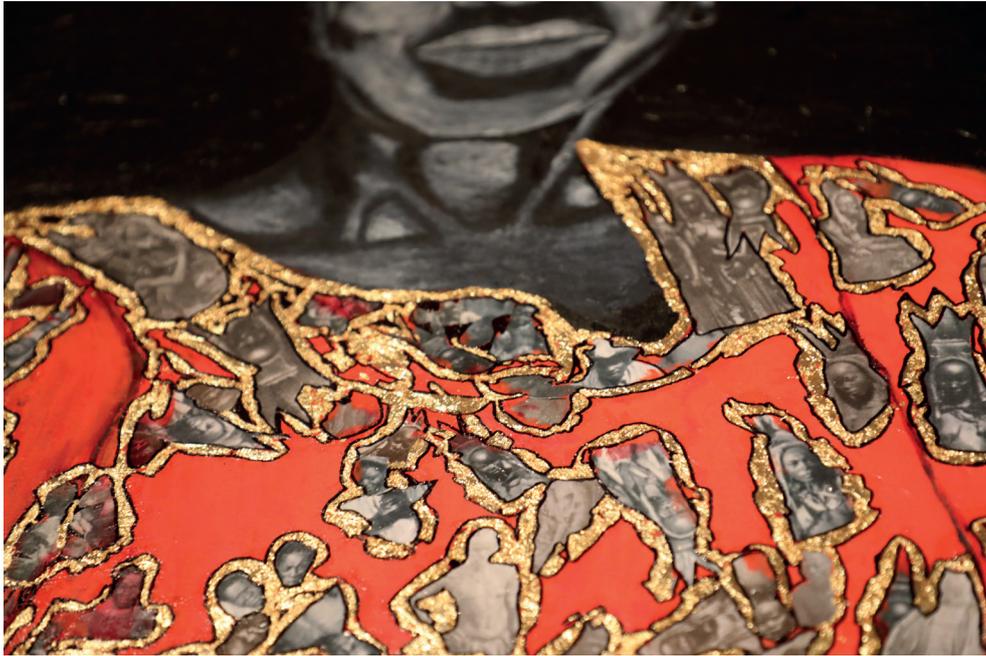


Image 5: 'We Shall Not Be Moved', close up (2018). Photo by Vitjitua Ndjiharine

MP: Do you perceive an increasing involvement of Namibian artists in the subjects of decolonization/ resolution/ healing? Whom?

VN: Yes I do. And in disparate ways, using a variety of mediums from poetry and literature to new media. I also anticipate more Namibian youth take on these subjects as it pertains to their own identities.

MP: What problems and challenges still exist?

VN: There are challenges from the political side of things, as far as coming to terms with colonial history and moving through our decolonial turn. There are challenges for Black artists living and working in an economy controlled not only by foreign interest, but a minority White population.

MP: You are dealing in these works with a disruption and recalibration of established historical knowledge. I would perceive this as an attempt at some sort of decolonization? How do you see that? Is healing a term that would go together with decolonization for you? Or what needs to be done (in the current post-colonial situation)?

VN: I see decolonization as a multi-step process that will require not only time but effort from various facets of society. In the same way that the process of colonization happened over a number of years, using not only military but political, religious and economic means to ensure a complete takeover of a territory, the process of decolonization will require us to re-think these aspects and more. And at the end of this very long, multi-level process, when restorative justice is implemented could there be something like collective healing.

MP: Several writers and artists develop new visions of a decolonized/ post-colonial future. What is your position/ opinion towards this/ the terms afro-future, afrotopia etc...?

VN: These terms exist for me because black artists and writers crave a post-racial world where the color of one's skin does not determine one's success or access. For me these are very important terms in conceptualizing such a world, and since this world does not exist today, nor has it existed in the past, we have to look to the future. We have to write, or visualize ourselves in a post-racial world.

With her work Vitjitua Ndjiharine rebels against established forms of historical knowledge. She argues for a critical intervention by means of disruption that manipulates (e.g. by using collage, painting, mirrors to reflect the viewer, or cutting apart colonial photographs) and undermines any representations of the colonized by the colonizer, and provides a refraction of the colonial gaze that can help recalibrate knowledge. She perceives decolonization as a long multi-step process that will require not only time but effort from various facets of society as well as restorative justice before collective healing can be achieved. For the future black artists crave and visualize a post-racial world.

Masiyaleti Mbewe¹⁰: 'Gender on the moon'. Photo

The NAGN in 2019 launched an exhibition called 'We me – Womxn'. Using the spelling womxn which explicitly includes 'womxn' of transgender women and non-binary persons the exhibition aimed at beginning "a conversation about the inclusion of women within the discourse of Namibian art" and an attempt at "changing that narrative" (Hambunda 2019). The artwork by Masiyaleti Mbewe was part of this exhibition.

MP: I think that your work fit in really well as you have proposed and strongly advocated a new vision of an African Future – with a focus on gender diversity. Could you talk about how this image was created and shot, the genesis of the artpiece?

MM: I was working closely with Simeone Johannes a Namibian designer on this project. We sat down and conceptualised what each character in the Afrofuturist Village would look like and what that meant for the overarching themes the photographs wanted to communicate. The photograph was taken in the Moon Valley on the way to Swakopmund and everything just came together. Jay Aeron and Rumano Fabrishh were my models. They don't conform to any gender roles/ identities and that's why they were ideal for this aspect of the work; exploring what gender looks like in the future. They (Jay and Rumano) constantly alter our ideas on gender. This photograph is also loosely based on

10 Masiyaleti Mbewe <https://www.letsbebrief.co.uk/the-masiyaleti-mbewe-skyscraper-is-ready-to-create-art-on-every-floor/>; accessed 09.06.2020.



Image 6: 'Gender on the moon'. Photo by Masiyaleti Mbewe

SunRa's 'Space is the Place'¹¹, I had some ideas around whether Black people would have ventured into space to form communities in the future but I still wanted to maintain the grounding concept of there being a space on Earth for Black people.

MP: I would see the work as an attempt to break with old (colonial?) stereotypes and habits and to come to new liberated models, metaphors and ways of thinking 'being African'. As such I would call it a strong artistic intervention into current post-colonial gender debates (and others). Also, following my theorizing of the term 'complexity exposure', I would read it in a way that your work 'Gender on the moon' exposes very strongly the long way to go towards gender-futurism beyond toxic heteronormativity, discrimination and the like, by putting the question into the very real Namibian desert looking like the far away moon.

MM: I think what I aim to do with the photography is make visual suggestions of possible African futures. The art has definitely sparked dialogue around the concept of afrofuturism and what a photograph like 'Gender on the Moon' does is interrogate what visually triggers someone to label something "afrofuturist". My main point of deviation was always to expand the visual cues to more than just Black people in space. Space has been a huge theme; how Black people now and in the past negotiated their space and what is really

11 An afrofuturist science fiction film from 1972 written by the US-American artist SunRa https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Is_the_Place; accessed 09.06.2020.

important now is owning space. What I wanted to radicalize was the concept of Black people actually staying on earth and living because we belong here. I think I'm seeing more people choose to engage with future spaces differently and a lot of afrofuturist work tended to be very cisheteronormative and ableist. This work wants to undermine that.

MP: Could you further explain your interest in space ... is that a geographical, political, social, cultural meaning of space? A contested, colonized space? Identity space ...

MM: It is informed by all of those things. My work aims to unpack our ideas about space around Blackness. There is a basic understanding of space that I am trying to confront; space for Black people has very different contextual meaning. Whether geographical, political, social or cultural; all of these theses are interlinked.

MP: Does the undermining intention of the work mainly target afrofuturist work or does it also aim at current very heteronormative society (politics, gender practices and convictions etc.) at large? I ask this question because I would consider you a prominent advocate of afrofuturism and am a bit astonished that you aim to undermine other afrofuturists positions ...

MM: I'm undermining the heteronormative concepts of Afrofuturism AND society at large. It's very easy within concepts to replicate normative ideologies by continuing to centre them (the male gaze, ableist ideas, etc). I advocate for an inclusive Afrofuturism and I believe it is my place within the movement to critique problematic aspects of it.

MP: What does your art have to do with your personal biography/ position in African/ Namibian history and society?

MM: I am Zambian, I grew up in Botswana and when I was 19 moved to Namibia. I've been in Namibia for 10 years now. My art is a personal extension of myself, my experiences with negotiating spaces as a Black queer womxn and my politics. My approach to art is not a clinical dissection of history, I work from an instinctive place. There is a constant conversation around the concept of space and time and I think my work speaks to that and takes all of these histories and possible futures into account.

MP: Do you perceive an increasing involvement of Namibian artists in the subjects of decolonization/ resolution/ healing? Whom?

MM: Absolutely. The recent Odalate Naiteke Project curated and directed by Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja¹² that took place at the Katutura Community Arts Centre. Work like Julia Hango's which was featured in the project

12 "Odalate Naiteke means 'the fence/wire must break' – a slogan used by the contract workers' protest in 1971. The idea is to crush all kinds of borders, the economic, the gender, the cultural, the spatial, the political" says Mushaandja <https://www.namibian.com.na/197278/archive-read/Operation-Odalate-Naiteke>Returns-to-Katutura>; accessed 21.05.2020.

is incredibly important because of its very purposeful shift i.e. the work is created for the people and not for the white gaze. This work is reaffirming in the consciousness of Black artists lately; we aim to create work that is representative of our experiences and is not exploitative.

MP: You said that we are in constant need to decolonize at the moment. How? Is the term *healing* that points into a direction of forgiving appealing to you at all?

MM: I maintain that there needs to be a recalibration of who we make the art for. We have to create with intention. African/ Black artists; our work is almost always viewed from the white gaze; it is explained and aimed to be understood from those perspectives. By controlling the gaze, we control the narrative and get the art to who needs it.

Healing? Well, Afrofuturism is healing for me. It was through this movement that I was able to find purpose and able to create meaningful work. Forgiveness? Has there been an apology? From whom? This is what I mean when I speak about the gaze, an assumption that I am making the work to meet and reconcile with people that have harmed and hurt Black people, that would be centering *them* and that would defeat the purpose of my work. My work is unapologetic, it is for Black people.

MP: What problems and challenges do still exist?

MM: Funding has been a very real issue for many artists myself included but what I really find more jarring is the creation of art for the white gaze, there needs to be a decentering (of the white gaze).

Masiyaleti Mbewes photo art is offering visual suggestions of African futures for African people. She is radicalizing a concept of future geographical, political, social or cultural space on Earth for Black people because they belong here. Likewise she aims to undermine cisheteronormative and ableist concepts in afrofuturism and society. Her Afrofuturist work is unapologetic and not made to reconcile with people that have harmed and hurt Black people and represent the white gaze – something that needs to be decentered.

Erik Schnack: 'Scramble'. A kinetic installation

MP introductory comment: I was introduced to Erik Schnacks 2012 multimedia kinetic installation SCRAMBLE¹³ through the artist upon a visit at his studio. That means that I saw and felt the enormity of the installations pieces by seeing and touching them being stacked in a garage. Then I watched the video on a computer screen together with Erik and later watched it a few times again alone. During our subsequent conversations we used an unpublished manuscript of a booklet about 'Scramble' that was supposed to be published by the artists and was written by Margo Timm-Forster, and was

13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lb4pRTgHHU>; accessed 18.02.2020

unfortunately never finally realized (unpublished Manuscript). The following description of the experience of ‘Scramble’ is inspired from Timm-Forster.

Artwork description: In a vast industrial building¹⁴ a screen on the ceiling bears the sepia projection of a constant cascade of cloud. Metal cables from the ceiling suspend three sets of horizontal undulating metal tracks. They hold speakers emitting a composition of mechanical sound combined with sounds of water and unsettling guitar improvisation. This sound accompanies the movement of castor wheels along the tracks, the continuation of which is ensured by the slow rise and fall of three buckets holding sand. The wheels, which proceed at a slow hesitant pace, suspend and therefore move eight parachute-like assemblages beneath them. In turn each of these has metal cables bound to a ring inserted through the tail of an elongated-root like form resembling a sperm’s flagella, which is connected by a hinge to a cast of a human hand. The presence of the hands and flagella like arms as well as the buckets is enhanced by light emanating from them. Spotlights illuminate the stitched metal segments which cover the parachutes and reflect corrugated silver glints subdued by hues of rust. The light also reveals the mechanical components in some of the hands and arms. Whilst there is slight movement of the articulated fingers, three arms glow with fluorescence. The procession is reflected below on the surface of a pool of water held by a six meter diameter circle of sand. Mesmerized, the observers remain transfixed while the grim cycle continues. (compare Timm-Forster, unpublished Manuscript)

MP: My first impression of SCRAMBLE was that of a baroque medieval venetian cabinet play. It reminded me as well of E.T.A. Hoffmans piece “Der Sandmann” which is also playing with the idea of hybrid machine-like beings and is a bit scary. So my emotional approach was ambivalent – very fascinated by the aesthetics and solemnity and beauty and craftsmanship but also a bit disturbed by the scariness of the hanging human parts and the dark atmosphere. Unfortunately in comparison to Timm-Forster I did not experience the installation physically but only saw the parts at your place and saw the video.

Finally noticing the title of course I immediately thought of ‘The scramble for Africa’ and thus an association with hands grabbing for the unchartered territory came up. I think that this impression is supported by the fact that the hands come ‘flying’ from above hanging on parachutes. However this movement is being interrupted as the hands/ arms cannot reach the ground but rather move in a horizontal way. So there might be this moment of interruption and stop, and the hands also do not claw but rather hang/ touch/ point – hence the gesture is less aggressive.

14 The *Boilerhouse* at Windhoek Katuturas College of the Arts – a former kitchen building of Apartheids migrant labourers.



Image 7: 'Scramble' (1). Photo by Eric Schnack



Image 8: 'Scramble' (2) Photo by Erik Schnack

ES: Yes, I agree. There is the association between the uncanny and the machine (Freud, *The Uncanny* 1919). My intention was to imbue these 'vessels' with a grandiose presence, to appear somewhat like amusement park hot air balloons of various sizes and impressive shapes. They are represented as weathered, over-used and perhaps abandoned objects. I wanted to achieve this aesthetic, while also being inspired by Leonardo Da Vinci's aviation drawings, Jean Tinguely's automated sculptures and the Dadaists. You are right about the title that also plays with the colonial disregard of Africans and their environment, something that still continues unabated. 'Scramble' is an uncanny depiction of neo-colonialism in a post-colonial socio-political milieu. The universal scope of the work aims to trigger debates on sustainable resource extraction rather than to acquire them by means of greed and exploitation. Questions should also arise on how Africa's resources can have economic benefits for Africans rather than corporates and individuals.

My imagery of parachute and hand originally represents greedy exploitation. The hands made from real life casts despite their non-aggressive gestures for me actually invade, inspect prospect and pillage. The joints of finger's have been connected together and to the hands so that they are able to move clumsily and in their own way together with the movement of the whole installation on the tracks. Movement is thereby achieved by inertia. The hands rather than grabbing appear to be limp. Somewhat useless. They go along with the flow of things, inspecting, prospecting and removing. Here human hands are engineered for a specific purpose, as suggested by the hybridity of machine and human organism. They are not linked to a brain of an

individual, but are rather linked to the parachute (institution/ power/ greed). The limbs prey like vultures over the water, waiting for an opportunity to grab whatever they can when no danger is in sight. Water, which is very rare in Namibia needs to be taken special care of. Like our resources, water is increasingly becoming scarcer. The artificial waterhole lures wildlife to be prayed on. The reflection of the hands on the water surface suggest that the hands 'Scramble' from within.

An earlier installation I did in 2008 of parachutes and hands, ironically titled 'Helping Hands' is an interpretation of greedy exploitation under the guise of pretending to aid African countries and so is my animation movie 'Machines of Progress and Destruction' which was made in 2000.

The parachute assemblages could be associated with alien/ foreign shapes. They may represent different institutions of power, but that are difficult to associate or identify. This could even portray beautified lies/ sordid schemes, so as to camouflage/ hide them or make them unrecognisable, even acceptable. Additionally, in reference to an era where indigenous identity and values became nameless, the human limbs of the installation dramatically replay a dehumanizing process and the human body is regarded as a piece of machinery. 'Scramble' may therefore also speak of the colonized victims who become complicit in the exploitative scheme.

The heavy duty wire rather had a practical function for 'Scramble'. To suspend its heavy components. My intention therewith was to give the whole installation and its different components a floating appearance. Something that is alien and has emerged from an unknown space. Something that is difficult to grasp or reach.

The meandering metal racks performed a practical function: So that parachutes and hands move up and down as they glide across the tracks from left to right and from right to left. This up and down movement hints towards inspecting/ prospecting and removal. However, whatever is being removed remains invisible (behind everyone's backs). The sand buckets had the function to move up and down. The sand being our land/ earth. Mining and removing. Bucket's are representative of the land and the removal of resources. The corrugated iron has become synonymous with poverty. Inequality is recognised on the ground with growing informal settlements. This aesthetic quality is present in miniature form in tin cans. The cloud projection hints that the alien parachutes (invisible forces/ institutions) are linked to Earth (they are human made) and are universal. The sound is sinister, dramatic and unsettling.

MP: The way you describe it 'Scramble' can also be read as a comment on the current post-colonial condition. That means the fact that a touching/ grabbing/ longing for resources, people, power etc goes on and is not at all over. Post-coloniality in the sense that the past is still very present, undiscussed, unhealed. That a system that involves everyone and everything cannot trans-

form without the traces of the past. That a subject is still in the air, like a record that is stuck and plays the same melody over and over again. ...

ES: I agree

MP: We talked about the term intervention while I was in Namibia. In what way was 'Scramble' meant to be a (critical) intervention into a public discourse on (...) or anything else? Is it a comment? This is especially interesting to understand a bit more about how Namibian artists purposely (or subconsciously) intervene at all..

ES: What I wanted to create with 'Scramble' was an art installation whose function and meaning could not be restricted or censored in any way by an art gallery. My intention therewith was to make an enigmatic commentary about our country's resources, and the manner in which they were being exploited during the apartheid era. Under the new constitution for an independent Namibia, as by the Act 33 of 1992, the extraction of our resources must be beneficial for all Namibians. With a certain uneasiness in that regard I began to question if that was really the case. Such questioning I wanted to probe with the creation of a sculpture that has a monumental impact.

At the beginning I tried to create an artwork that I had complete control and authority of. I wanted something massive in scale and something that also could move automatically together with sound and movie projections. This vision compelled me to work with a team of artists as well as experts outside the field of art. As a result 'Scramble' became a collaboration piece where sculpture fused with non-art practises. The space 'Scramble' was set up in itself very overpowering. I wanted to create something equally overpowering, something that did not get lost within the space. I also wanted to work with ordinary materials and objects, materials and objects that are unconventional to the tradition of sculpture. Also the technique I applied to create 'Scramble' was multidisciplinary as in fusing handcraft techniques with high technology.

All this was something new to the Namibian art scene. Art was taken out of the art gallery and placed into an alternative architectural space. Instead of working in isolation I searched for expertise outside artistic conventions.

Interestingly, although I tried to dictate my artistic vision to my fellow collaborators, often some results created by them took their own course. This resulted in a narrative which was no longer only my own. As such it became something I would like to describe as an organically evolving and multifaceted narrative about exploitation. All these unconventional decisions made in art making definitely shaped new meanings in public discourse.

A review about 'Scramble' in a newspaper stated that I confused the public with my work, but there was no mention about how confusion can also become meaningful. I am convinced that all the alternative approaches of artmaking I mentioned above in the making of 'Scramble' helped shape a multiplicity of new ways of thinking in regard to contemporary Namibian life.

I hoped therewith to reveal a paradoxical re-engagement with the tradition of sculpture and therewith unpack unusual visual metaphors that challenge the current status quo. By combining a range of practises from handcraft and composing music and light and welding to filmmaking and anthropology to mechanical engineering, it was my intention to use sculpture as a means to change the way we perceive our relationship with the world.

MP: What can be visual art's contribution to a sustainability discourse? My answer would be that art is able to *reveal the true complexity* of phenomena while science is always trapped with a reduction for analysis... Your installation 'Scramble' offers a perfect example of "provocative polyvalence and complexity" that is also called fragility later on ...I think that it is quite important that for certain phenomena (like the sustainability challenge) we gain an understanding of the true complexity before we start playing around with solutions... What do you think? Was that intended?

ES: I think that ideas about sustainability discourse are necessary to improve our lives. That is if such ideas are not regarded as an ends in themselves, but rather inspire a multiplicity of more ideas that trigger furthermore more new ideas ad infinitum. Although solutions eventually need to be taken during the growth of ideas, old solutions that are no longer sustainable need to be continuously replaced by new ones. This processing of ideas and solutions is in itself a fragile affair.

It was not my intention to dictate a solution with 'Scramble', but to open up invisible nuances surrounding acts of contemporary exploitation. Such acts, I find, are hidden behind greed and power that are simultaneously presented as something majestic and beautiful. Such combination triggered me to create something overpowering that is both beautiful and uncanny.

MP: Is there a perception of a link between an afrofuturist subject and decolonization?

ES: Yes, I do recognise a link between the two concepts, despite their differences in meaning. African or/and black sci-fi is often associated with Afrofuturism as a means to celebrate the uniqueness and innovation of black or/and African culture. It is a term applied by creatives who intersect African culture with technology and therewith may also make metaphorical references to decolonization. The undoing of colonialism is an intervention towards a progressive African presence. A presence which is not disempowered, devalued and discriminated against. Creatives increasingly confront and challenge colonial representations of African identity by subverting them with creations that reflect a positive afrofuturist.

MP: Is healing a core motif?

ES: If you mean economic healing rather than psychological healing, then yes. My intervention intends to trigger an uncomfortable realisation or denial

of something not being right, the manner in which the economic benefits of Namibia's resources are shared with its people.

MP: What problems and challenges do still exist?

ES: The National Art Gallery of Namibia is an inherited colonial architectural space, which remains unaltered. Innovative additional fixtures and a reorganization of space which caters for unconventional artforms may boost creative post-colonial discourses. Occasional sensoring of art and subject matter by art galleries is still a norm. Such suppression of freedom of speech denies art the emergence of pressing themes that need urgent confrontation. National art education, remains under-developed. Art education is not offered in national schools. This may contribute to a society that does not value art intervention. Lastly a Euro-centric art discourse needs to be replaced by an Afro-centric one and be convincing enough to make an impact on the global art discourse.

Erik Schnacks kinetic installation composed of hybrid machine and human organisms is an uncanny and spatially overpowering depiction of greedy exploitation and resource extraction and thus powerful neo-colonialism in a post-colonial socio-political milieu. It speaks of the dehumanizing loss of indigenous identity and values of the colonized victims who become complicit in the exploitative scheme. Schnack makes an independent commentary about resources, and the manner in which they were being exploited during the apartheid era. He aims to open up invisible nuances surrounding acts of contemporary exploitation.

For him the undoing of colonialism is an intervention towards a progressive African presence which is not disempowered, devalued and discriminated against. Afrofuturism is a means to celebrate the uniqueness and innovation of black or/and African culture. In art a Euro-centric art discourse needs to be replaced by an Afro-centric one.

Urte Remmert: 'Talk to me: Finding a new Namibian Language' and complex fabrics of 'Patchwork People'

MP introductory comment: I first discovered the works 'Talk to me: finding a new Namibian language' and 'The ABC of Namibian Affairs' in the Würth Catalog (Weber 2016). Next to the images the catalogue provides an author bio-text that contains the following words: "Remmerts current mixed media collages bring together material from various sources that on further inspection cut right to the core of Namibia's contemporary realities. Her eclectic style is born of a process that involves extensive sketching and research whereby much of this material resurfaces in her final artworks" (ibid.: 172). These words strongly matched my own perception that here was an artist who by explicitly commenting on public discourse was focusing on some-

thing like fragmentedness, layeredness, processuality and multivocality by using a sort of research approach.



Image 9: 'Talk to me: finding a new Namibian language'. Photo by Urte Remmert

Upon my next visit to Swakopmund I met Urte and we started a conversation. In the course of our encounter and further communication via email, and social media Urte also introduced me to her newest project 'patchwork people' which will be part of the 2020 Triennale in Windhoek.

MP: I find your work exciting because it deals with language and a somehow layered and unprocessed situation. While the general discourse suggests "What should we do and what should we deal with during the post-colonial period?" you can also see that a lot has not been processed, touched and 'healed'. Based on this I would like to find out more about how and with what intention they were created and to what extent they represent a comment or an intervention in contemporary society/ discourses for you?

UR: My thoughts behind the work were not so much based on the Biblical connotation of Babel, but more on the inability to use language to convey thoughts, feelings, frustrations and demands in order to create a common ground for debate and understanding.

This inability might be the result of the colonial and Apartheid systems which oppressed certain people by declaring them less valuable and capable citizens than others! To my mind this oppression led to resulting feelings of hurt, revenge and compensation which are still ongoing in parts and have far-reaching implications in Namibian society. Our problems with genderbased violence, un-equality in education, neglect of old people or children, the unwillingness to understand other people and reaching certain goals might be solved in the long run with a better and honest communication in all sectors of the Namibian society. Listening is part of communicating!

My artworks these days seem to be more an evocation or affirmation, a very strong wish/ belief/ prayer/ adjuration....a kind of making whole, healing and mending what was hurt, torn, neglected and broken in the past. The colonial footprint is ever-present in everyday life: Dominance and patronisation are often still the way to treat less privileged members of the community.

Rather than command and implementation there should be discussions/ dialogues on how to best reach a solution. The success of interaction depends on how we approach the other person, the way we use language and how we see a fellow human being as a valuable member of society and not as a lower person which is unfortunately still the case in some better-off Namibians, be it whites or the new rich black elite.

MP: What I find interesting is the thought of healing. Ultimately I agree that this is the only solution for a torn and hurt society. But I also perceive that for some artists this is too early yet as they have been vulnerable and victimized and need to demand that these wounds have to be seen and acknowledged, that excuses have to be spoken etc. Is it easier for a member of the privileged white community to call for healing?

UR: I find myself as a white, elderly female artist in an African country that experienced horrific human rights abuses and exploitation of its peoples. This fact alone is already an extremely difficult starting-point for making relevant art, aiming towards the concepts of Afrotopia. However, I strongly believe in the creative and innovative power that is the result of a culturally diverse community. This interaction has cross-pollinated all over Africa, so-called 'black' people do not live in a bubble.

If ethical progress in any sphere of life is aimed at, ALL the inhabitants of the African continent need to engage in dialogue and use their collective experiences as a vehicle to achieve greater understanding and disentanglement of subliminal misconceptions.

Mandela's moral standing was that he believed in the redemptive power of forgiveness and talking together. 'Reconciliation does not mean forgetting or trying to bury the pain of conflict, but that reconciliation means working to correct the legacy of past injustice.' Griswold sheds light on public apology, such as the essential component of truth-telling or the use of narrative.

I personally believe that we can only realize small acts to pave the way for understanding and healing in our communities by learning about each other, by opening up to sincere dialogue and acting responsibly towards others in our communities. Especially in Namibia's case, where the perpetrations were committed a long time ago, the descendents of the perpetrators and the victims need to start finding a common ground by discourse and understanding. That is why in 'Talk to me: Finding a new Namibian Language' there are single persons talking and not political parties, congregations or tribes. I put myself into the right- hand side (red face), because I am part of this ongoing process.

MP: I also find the new works that you call 'Patchwork People' very interesting. What are they? Signs? Ironic comments on advertisers? Complex hybrid paper people? Images of an unequal society? Are they all 'folkloristic' or vulnerably torn? So here too the question is to what extent are they a comment or an intervention? And what should happen to them?

UR: The 'patches' on the three canvases are made of simple materials - paper in all variations (old yellowed book pages and sheet music, cover sheets, invoices, pieces from my torn old drawings and linocuts, old maps and printed structures with lace doilies, jute , Feathers, flowers and leaves). (I also drew some figures from magazine photos). All of these 'patches' describe the many layers that form and overlap during our lifetime. The figures are drawn with charcoal, charcoal as a sign of fire, pain and the ephemeral - but the black and white spontaneous lines also underline the strong character traits of the people depicted. They should look vulnerable, torn, cut and put back together – a kind of healing summon and also a symbol of the layers of life.

Many of the people are friends or relatives, colleagues, often also chance acquaintances. They are people from all parts of society, hard-working caring mothers, people who spread happiness but also people who experienced suffering, disease, disillusion and desperation.

Bishop Tutu uses the term UBUNTU, which points out that those who seek to destroy and dehumanize are also victims. 'Victims, usually, of a pervading ethos, be it a political ideology, an economic system, or a distorted religious conviction. Consequently, they are as much dehumanized as those on whom they trample. Griswold in his book on forgiveness states: 'But forgetting is the path to ignorant repetition, and remembering is a necessary condition of living both wisely and in light of the truth...Without honest assessment of the past, no memory worth having, without honest memory, no present worth living; without apologies for injuries done, no future worth hoping for.'



Image 10: 'Patchwork people' (1). Photo by Simone Kauert



Image 11: 'Patchwork people' (2). Photo by Simone Kauert

On the one hand, my artwork is primarily a critical commentary on Namibian society. People of all backgrounds live and interact in this country, which is also historically torn and scarred (colonization/ wars/ patronizing of the inhabitants under the apartheid regime). It is a complex fabric made of many different layers, strands and patches that has left its imprint on the country and its inhabitants. At the same time, it is an argument with the Namibian Society that is one of the most unequal in the world (rich and poor).

I created this work (drawings/ collages with installation) for the Windhoek Triennale in order to give the viewer the opportunity to have a 'dialogue' with the people portrayed, as well as with other visitors to the exhibition. Of course, just the 3D effect of the standing figures in front of the canvases will make it an intervention. I want and hope that visitors stop, pause and maybe reflect on their own lives in Namibia and society. The work should promote understanding and hopefully initiate discussions.

The whole thing can of course also be seen as an allegory of life: As in Gauguin's great work 'Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?' my collage and installation questions meaning and purpose of life from cradle to death.

I think of the struggles of indigenous people to receive recognition and reparations from colonial masters. We, the next generations, can and should enter into serious dialogue to find a mutual understanding of the past crimes. We need to find a common denominator to build our country, we need to open up for the sake of our country's and our descendents' future, to shape the new beginning for all of us!

At the core of Urte Remmert's collages and drawings is the 'patchiness' and 'layeredness' of persons, personal histories, aspirations, dreams and of society as something that has gone to pieces during the events of a troublesome life/ a history of Apartheid and colonialism. Hence the work is a critical commentary and an evocative attempt at making whole, healing and understanding based on finding a new language and common ground in a situation of dissent, healing wounds and vulnerabilities.

Reginaldo Antunes: 'Celebration'. Photo of a performance

MP Introduction: In 2019 the NAA called for Namibian artists think about 'what if' questions regarding all sorts of (future) aspects of life. "What if the sky was green or you were a woman and a man or you had wings or you could speak through your eyes or children could make rules or the desert could cry or Windhoek was the gateway to Mars. What if ... you could envision or dream another reality for our world, for yourself? What would it look and feel like? What if English was a forbidden language?" I was really fascinated by the work 'celebration' when I encountered it in the Exhibition 'What if' at the Namibian Arts Association in Windhoek.



Image 12: 'Celebration' (1). Photo by Reginaldo Antunes

Reginaldo and I started a conversation in front of the piece. He asked me for my spontaneous interpretation which, since I had seen the piece for the first time, was rather premature but had something to do with cultural change, consumption, ritual, social post-colonial critique, sexuality and some other issues that are very prominent in current day's anthropology and other disciplines. Then Reginaldo gave me a breakdown of his own ideas and intentions which caused us to dive into a dialogue that later on we repeated via email.



Image 13: 'Celebration' (2). Photo by Reginaldo Antunes

RA: Looking at the picture from the viewer's side on the righthand side is a termite hill commonly found in the northern part of Namibia. I created a water fountain inside this termite hill. The hill is shaped like different animals representing the creation of the world and evolution of animals. That's why I put a globe and plants next to it. If you look closely at the top there is a figure that looks like a primate; our "distant cousins" and he is holding his hand out towards the humans, especially me (the person in the center) who has been crowned. That in a way symbolizes envy or something being given to humans that they in the animal kingdom don't have. The human now is more aware of his environment, has creativity/ intelligence/ intuition/ the gut feeling/ God inside him/ his inner guide or spirit/ his true self, the true voice that speaks inside him beyond instinct. The animals may envy the most evolved conscious being in the world or at least that we are aware of.

The indigenous people you see are the Ovahimba tribe, a part of the Bantu people to which my ancestors come from. This serves as a point of reference to what Africans looked like before others (the white man) came and made us repress and suppress our identity. The lady dressed in white is of mixed race, and her attire is a mixture of the Ovahimba traditional attire and modern material. Again showing us that even though we come into contact with others from a different identity we will not remain stagnant, but will interact with them, take what we think is good from what they brought to us, and adapt to our new environment. Not forgetting where we come from.

So do the shoes I'm wearing, and the cloth wrapped around my waist (which is evident in the previous picture); embracing that of others but not forgetting ours. The unidentified figure behind the lady dressed in white represents a divine entity, whom in the previous picture crowned me with the headpiece giving me the gift that makes me different from the other animals. The gift that enables us to make fire, mold soil to pottery, make glass, mirrors, music and television; cars and planes to explore the skies. So now we gather here and celebrate; the young child (our future) holding the cellphone and globe has a chance to be aware of this knowledge that he has dominion over the world and a gift, to make a difference. So, we celebrate. The playground represents this perfect world to which we are born into complete, so we come play and enjoy with others like us. As long as we play fair. The church behind the playground which is evident in the previous picture symbolizes the institution that even with its good teaching was misguided and used to mislead in so many ways.

MP: What I was seeing before I got your breakdown is first of all something very new that I have not seen before in (African) Art. To me this art piece offers a lot of loose *additional* ends of complexity dimensions. To me it speaks like a diorama of the complex 'modern' and post-colonial society, a disrupted society in transition. It looks like a very physical *comment* on the ambivalences of forced cultural change (e.g. through new consumer items, play-

ground) and the forces of tradition to brace themselves against this losing the roots. The whole thing looks like a family photo of a somehow religious but also somehow threatening (the person with the hidden face in the back) transition-ritual. The connection to the amorphous being is hard to grasp as it looks like made from desert sand and pointing in an accusing way. Is such a reading as a *critical comment* or *intervention* envisaged by you at all and is as well acceptable to you? Another term that I am grappling with is the 'afrofutur'. Is that something that matters to you and that could be related to your work/this special piece?

RA: As we are born into society we come finding belief systems and indoctrinations that set out "what is right!" "And "what is wrong!" "And simply "what is!" "Ultimately creating how we perceive the world, those around us, and ourselves. The exhibition 'What if' created a safe haven to which a question mark is placed on these, some "immutable" belief systems, I had to interrogate. Creating questions, something every human being is entitled to for these belief systems dictate your worldly experience and journey. As living things, we have senses that collect impulses thus creating the world we see, feel and hear. So we should question all belief systems and indoctrination's with the use of those senses. Awarded the opportunity with the exhibition I did just that and I disregarded almost everything my mom pastor and friends told me. I came up with a photo series that touches on some very important belief systems and religious events that in a contemporary society shape how we exist.

The last photo in the picture series and is titled CELEBRATION because it is expected that we have become aware of knowledge that is life changing, so let's celebrate. We celebrate for now, we know that we are the most conscious, most creative, smartest creatures that we are aware of or can see, and that makes us like God, the Gods of the world, superior to all other living creatures. We celebrate because we rule the world, the earth, a beautiful heaven a playground complete at nature. The Monkey may now envy that even though it is physically stronger than the human being, yet because the human being is more aware of its surroundings it gives him dominion over the monkey, dominion over the world. We celebrate for now that we are conscious of our surrounding world, we can now manipulate this self-sustaining environment.

We celebrate because this magic power of knowledge was given to man for no other animal can make this magic, for example, fire to cook and/or to keep warm. We celebrate for now we do not have to pray to God when winters are cold so he can send shelter and blankets from heaven to keep us from suffering and dying from the cold cause he answered all our prayers with a self-sustaining world to which we have control and our intelligence and creativity to keep us warm. Surely no human being should suffer so that's why we celebrate.

We also celebrate because we know that we shall not be ashamed of our identity our stories of the impulses, the environment that we have and our ancestors have been exposed too and survived. We celebrate cause now we know that no other with a different story from a different environment shall come make us disregarded our past stories our language, our names and ways that kept us alive, for if we let others control our identity they control our senses they control us and how we perceive the world and can take advantage of us, However now we know so we celebrate that we will take pride in where we come from, yet we shall be open to interact with others from other environments and other ways that kept them alive. Taking from their ways with what our senses feels resonates with our identity evolving and securing our knew stories our knew identity in the present and future.

MP: I find your explanations highly interesting but would ask some critical questions. I am trying to challenge you – not to offend you. Is the very religious thought of dominion over the earth not also very problematic? Did humans not also massively spoil the “beautiful heaven a playground complete at nature” (exploitation of nature, climate change, waste)? Is the celebration of scientific knowledge not omitting all the massive problems that science has brought to humanity (over-rationalization, loss of sensuality, individualization...)? Are all the ‘positive’ things that you celebrate and have been brought to Namibia e.g. saltwater-purifying, medicine, airplanes, videocalls, etc. not a *baggage of colonialism* that also brought a lot of suffering (Apartheid, exploitation, suppression of cultural identity, exploitation, of land and nature...)? Is that whole knowledge/ modernity project not also to be perceived a bit critical? And is that not also ongoing in today's neo-colonial system? The key point for me is that I think that your artwork could also be read in a critical/ ironic way but that you seem to resist/ argue against this reading for some reasons... ;)

RA: The very fact that you can point out that our dominion over the earth is problematic is also another reason to celebrate. It shows that we as humans can see where our problems lie. Unlike the other animals who just act by instinct and cannot recognize the harm they would commit towards this beautiful heaven, which they don't, because their highest level of ingenuity is building homes or using basic tools like sticks to catch insects so they can eat, just to mention a few. But the irony is that even though we are aware of the fact that we have this gift, this magic that makes us like God we still harm the world and people are suffering. Why? What is it that we are doing with this magic that instead of directing it in ways to fix problems we doing the opposite.

Again magic can either be used for good or it can be used for bad, yet we are aware that humans behave cause they are programmed or like I mentioned indoctrinated to behave a specific way on how to perceive themselves and the world. So if we are aware that we are behaving in a destructive way

maybe we need to question the belief systems around us before just accepting them. Maybe we need to question the systems that govern this magic, before just accepting them. In a world where technology is directed for profit and where people are being programmed to want more than what they need. Clearly pharmaceutical companies would not create medicine to heal but rather focus on profit and exploit the world and those like them to gain more profit and more of that, that they don't really need. Clearly if our African leaders lose their identity and are told to be "modern black man" to which they are told to disregard the ways of their fathers, of being Ubuntu so for now they speak foreign, eat foreign, dress foreign and name their kids foreign names, clearly they will not create policies that protect their identity which includes those like them, but rather be controlled by those who gave them a new identity, and a way of doing things, driving around in cars not comprehending their main function and purpose but for the impression they were told it befitting their new identity "a modern black man". Wearing clothes not that of their fathers but wearing "modern clothes" priced on perception of that, that would identify a modern black man. Perceiving the world not through their own senses any more, but view themselves through the eyes of others who inherently would protect their interests and own identity first and fundamentally. For as I mentioned in the narrative above, with time and interaction with others does it not mean you should forget your ways and merely take the ways of others giving them control over you.

But now we are aware of this. Don't get me wrong I did not intentionally mention the bad and criticism brought by the fact that we as human beings while having this gift, knowledge awareness and magic, as one goes through the previous pictures in the photo series they are supposed to realize those elements are part and parcel of the duality in the narrative. Meaning at this point when you reach the picture 'celebration' you are supposed to become aware of our inherent problem created and experienced by human beings, and have a changed attitude. One would "expect" a person would want to change the world knowing the misfortune so we can secure our survival as individuals, different races and the Gods that rule this world. For even religion has shown it to us, that it is up to us through its fundamental teachings that only through loving each other and working our technologies/ magic and awareness together, not for fundamentally profit, but for the better and love of mankind, as a guide to sustain the survival of our species and the world at large. For now we are aware of this so we CELEBRATE.

Reginaldo Antunes work is a final piece in a photo-performance series that is celebrating the possibilities of current human life-changing knowledge and skill while aiming at critically questioning established belief systems and indoctrinations. While simultaneously celebrating human dominion over the world, the earth, as a beautiful heaven a playground it does not attempt to neglect the problematic side of that. It is rather celebrating the resilience of

culture, identity and knowledge against destructive modern historical-colonial advances towards a future of knowledge based change of belief systems and attitudes.

Closing discussion

The comparative display and dialogue has highlighted five contemporary artworks from Namibia relating to broader questions of post-coloniality. It can be seen as a first entry for deeper investigations into interventive contributions by Namibian artists. It has There is an increasing involvement of artists in the subject of decolonization recognizable as all the chosen artworks take a colonial past as some point of reference.

While the approaches and types and pointing-directions of interventions have some similarities they also differ. Interventions aim at a break-away from *past* events and practices in the sense of rewriting and refractions of certain types of historical knowledge (Ndjiharine) decentering a historic white cisheteronormative gaze towards a recentering around African people (Mbewe), visualizing the patchiness and vulnerabilities of people and society (Remmert) as well as the colonized's victimization and complicity in past as well as ongoing/ continued processes of neocolonial exploitation (Schnack), and lastly celebrate the resilience of culture, identity and knowledge against destructive modern and historical-colonial belief systems that should be overcome (Antunes).

Differences are visible towards a potential core motif of healing. Remmert in her art most clearly advocates dialogue and reconciliation as a necessary future path towards some sort of personal and social healing. This dialogue could be a step in the right direction, but will not result in instant cures/ forgiveness/ understanding. Antunes argues in a somewhat optimistic way for a new form of enlightenment with human life-changing knowledge and skill being the foundations of a change of indoctrinating belief systems and destructive attitudes that have dominated the past. The other artists are more sceptical or even opposed to a simplified metaphor of healing. Schnack reminds us that the project of decolonization is far from over and thus there is no end point by some sort of reconciliation but rather ongoing dominant discourses and new forms of paternalisation and exploitation which make healing also an economic challenge. Ndjiharine perceives decolonization as an effortful multi-step process that will require first and foremost restorative justice before healing can be achieved. Mbewe most clearly rejects any need by the hurt to reconcile with the perpetrators and representatives of a white cisheteronormative gaze and rather advocates the claiming of a formerly non-existing future geographical, political, social or cultural space on Earth for Black peoples belonging.

In the dialogues about breaking away from past alternative visions of an Afro-centric future were layed out. Ndjiharine described the craving to overcome a racist past towards a post-racial world. Schnack also voiced the desire to reach a positive progressive Afro-centric presence which is not subverted, devalued and discriminated against and described Afrofuturism as a celebration of the uniqueness and innovation of black or/and African culture. There is an interesting link here to the artpiece of Antunes which actually does exactly that. Mbewe most prominently uses the term Afrofuturism as a means of personal healing as well as offering visual suggestions about new spaces of being to empower Africans.

It can be argued that parallel to and beyond the above attempted comparisons the chosen artpieces expose different dimensions of formerly invisible complexities. Erik Schnack called this genuine capability of art in relations to 'Scramble' the attempt "to open up invisible nuances surrounding acts of contemporary exploitation". In regards to a visualization of the invisible elephant in the room also 'Gender on the moon', 'Scramble' or 'CELEBRATION' bring forward formerly unseen connections like a very strong feeling for the remoteness of gender equality or the enormous bridges to gap past exploitation and present. Likewise one can argue that artpieces are able to expose things that are not visible because they are absent, be it from discourse or from our understanding. That would be the absence and marginalization of an Afro-centric (art) space or the absence of non-heteronormative discourse which artpieces turn our attention to. In the end all this is about discovery exposing the absence of understanding, showing crooked metaphors, wrong examples, imprecise models, misunderstandings and discovering a new positionality. It is an important visual discovery that history and life-histories are about layers and patches, that many overlaying patches work simultaneously, and that thus linear explanations of events do not do justice to the layeredness and entanglement of life. In this sense the presented artpieces are all forcing something open. They are associating ruptures, making artistic thinking and knowledge production fruitful, challenging the viewer, and offer some sort of reorientation. That means an opening up of unforeseen perspectives on some emotion/ thought that is truthful about a post-colonial moment in time.

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Reginaldo Marcelino Antunes was born and raised in Namibia. Next to his art he is currently about to complete his undergraduate degree in logistics and supply chain management and works for the national carrier airline Air Namibia as a flight attendant and is a model. He believes that it is every human's duty to be an activist to that which they think is right and express it through the way they live and their artistic talents to help others in the hopes of bettering the community and world at large.

Masiyaleti Mbewe is a writer and photographer who in 2015 gave a TEDx talk at the University of Namibia on the topic Afrofuturism. She defines the world as “a cultural philosophy of science, and philosophy of history that combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction and fantasy, encompassing a range of media and artists, with non-Western traditions in order to evaluate not only the present-day dilemmas of black people, but also to revise the historical events of the past” (Mbewe 2017: 12).

Vitjitua Ndjiharine is a multidisciplinary visual artist. Her work is a culmination of her skills as a painter, illustrator, visual designer, art director and front end web developer. Her approach draws inspiration from different academic disciplines – such as history, cultural anthropology, ethnography, mass media and communication as well as visual culture – to create work that is layered with historical and socio-political contexts. This approach attempts to link the present and the past, through empathetic storytelling that is both tangible and approachable for people in and outside academia. She thus produces creative and rigorous work about the reclamation and transcendence of history. In 2017, Ndjiharine received her Bachelor's Degree in Studio Art from The City College of New York. In 2018, she was awarded a research fellowship by the Gerda Henkel Foundation in collaboration with the research centre for “Hamburg's (Post-)Colonial Legacy.” This fellowship has allowed her to work in the archives of the Ethnological Museum in Hamburg and the National Archives of Namibia in order to develop strategies of deconstructing and re-contextualizing the pedagogical function of images and texts found within colonial archives. Ndjiharine has previously exhibited her work in New York City, Hamburg, Stuttgart and Windhoek.

Michael Pröpper is a cultural anthropologist and visual artist. He is a permanent lecturer at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg with a focus on environmental and sustainability anthropology and art anthropology and has many years of experience in international research projects, especially in southern Africa. He is also internationally visibly active artistically, e.g. with contributions in the National Gallery of Namibia, at the Biennale in Venice or at Art Karlsruhe.

Urte R. Remmert was born in Germany but has lived her whole life in Namibia. She studied BA (ART) and a Teaching Diploma at the University of Cape Town (1970-1973). She has been teaching at all levels in Namibia at State Schools from 1974- 2017. Remmert was Chief Moderator for Art and Design Gr.12. Over the years Remmert has made a name experimenting with various media. Remmert's current mixed media collages bring together material from various sources that on further inspection cut right to the core of Namibia's contemporary realities. Her eclectic style is born of a process that involves extensive sketching and research whereby much of this material resurfaces in her final artworks.

Erik Schnack was born 1969 in Windhoek, Namibia. Studied for BA Hons (FA) at the University of Cape Town until 1993. Coordinator of the Oshana Art and Environment Project in Ongwediva, 1995. Completed Post-(HED) at UNISA in 1999. From 1996 until 2000 lectured in African Visual Art Studies at various schools, colleges and regions, employed by the College of the Arts (COTA). Freelanced from 2001 until 2003. Lectured in Product Development Diploma, COTA from 2004. Acting Head of Department, Visual Arts and Crafts, COTA from 2008 - 2009. Currently employed at COTA, Visual Arts Diploma.

Walking, Memory, Storytelling, Decolonisation

Werkstattbericht: Zwei kollaborative Workshops zur Erprobung von Methoden der Dekolonisierung, Windhoek 2019

Martin Gruber und Cordula Weißköppel

Walking als explizite Methode für Prozesse zur Dekolonisierung?

Die koloniale Verflechtungsgeschichte zwischen Deutschland und Namibia ist endlich Gegenstand öffentlicher Debatten. Durch den Bremer Kaufmann Lüderitz und seinen Meilenschwindel, der im damaligen Südwestafrika die günstige Landnahme für deutsche Siedler Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts ermöglichte, steht die Stadt Bremen, und somit auch die Universität Bremen in besonderer Verantwortung, das spezifische koloniale Erbe aufzuarbeiten. Eine wichtige Möglichkeit stellt die Pflege von internationalen Kontakten zur University of Namibia (UNAM) dar, einer der langjährigen strategischen Partner der Universität Bremen. Bei ersten Sondierungsgesprächen zwischen unserem Institut für Ethnologie und Kulturwissenschaft und der Faculty of Humanities der UNAM im Frühjahr 2018 wurde vereinbart, dass das zu entwickelnde Feld von innovativen Didaktiken zur Dekolonisierung als mögliche Schnittstelle für kooperative Projekte dienen könne. Zielsetzung war, zunächst auf Staff-Ebene mehr Kontakt und fachlichen Austausch herzustellen. Dafür wurden kleinere Formate im Rahmen von internationalen Workshops anvisiert. Wie kam es dabei zum Fokus auf Walking?

Walking, also Spazierengehen oder Flanieren hat sich in den letzten Jahren als explizites Instrument im Repertoire der Ethnografie etabliert. Federführend sind die Ansätze der Sensorischen Ethnologie (u.a. Pink 2009), die die Körperlichkeit von Forschenden ins Zentrum stellen und dafür sensibilisiert haben, alle menschlichen Sinne bewusst einzusetzen, um menschliches Dasein im Verhältnis zu ihren Um- und Mitwelten zu erforschen. Aber auch in der Stadtforschung gehören Go-Alongs (Kusenbach 2018) inzwischen zu den Standards, um Sozialräume in ihrer Einbettung in Infrastruktur, Architektur und Landschaft stärker aus Akteurs- bzw. Nutzerperspektive zu erfassen und auf diesem Wege auch Partizipation, z.B. in Stadtplanungsprojekten oder Community-Studien zu ermöglichen.

Unser Projekt von zwei „Walkshops“ in Bremen und in Windhoek¹ bezog sich zunächst weniger auf diese Ansätze, sondern mehr auf Praxen, die sich in der postkolonialen Erinnerungsarbeit etabliert haben: Vor allem NGOs haben Stadtrundgänge entwickelt, die postkoloniales Erbe, d.h. explizite Erinnerungsorte, aber auch weniger bekannte Spuren oder Relikte der je lokalen Kolonialgeschichte-n aufsuchen und in eine Public History integrieren, um das Bewusstsein über die nationalen Kolonialgeschichten und ihre Verflechtungen mit den Ex-Kolonien zu verbreitern und auf die bisherigen Lücken der Geschichtsschreibung in einer interessierten Öffentlichkeit hinzuweisen. Als Teilnehmerin² an solchen postkolonialen Stadtführungen fragte ich mich oft, was eigentlich das Gehen bei diesen Touren ausmacht? Ist es das Outdoor-feeling gemeinsam mit anderen, meist unbekanntem Teilnehmenden, oder vielmehr das unmittelbare Aufsuchen von Denkmälern oder vermeintlichen Spuren der verdrängten oder überlagerten Kolonialgeschichte? Ist es vielleicht auch das bequeme Geführtwerden von einem Guide, dem man sich anvertraut, um bislang Unbekanntes, wohl auch Unbequemes zu erfahren?

In der Zielsetzung, mit Kolleg*innen aus Namibia über die verschiedenen Ansätze postkolonialer Erinnerungsarbeit und dekolonialer Bildung in Deutschland und in Namibia in den Dialog zu treten, hielt ich es daher für einen sinnvollen Einstieg, über diese verbreitete Methode des Walking expliziter nachzudenken. Da lag es nahe, gleich über das praktische Tun, also gemeinsam zu relevanten Orten zu gehen, den Prozess der Reflexion einzuleiten. Schließlich gelang es, im Jahr 2019 zwei internationale Workshops in Bremen und in Windhoek durchzuführen, in denen kleine Gruppen von Kolleg*innen verschiedener disziplinärer Herkunft versammelt werden konnten, um je 2-tägige Walking-Touren zu postkolonialen Fragestellungen zu unternehmen. Durch das gemeinsame Erproben dieses neuen „Walkshop“-Formats wurden methodische Charakteristika deutlich, die im Folgenden kurz skizziert werden sollen.

Walking in hybriden Gruppen

Durch die Kontaktaufnahme zu Kolleg*innen in Südafrika und Namibia gelang es, sehr unterschiedliche Expert*innen zu didaktischen Fragen und Herausforderungen im Feld der Dekolonisierung zu versammeln. Es stell-

1 Auch wenn wir hier vor allem vom Workshop in Windhoek, September 2019 berichten, ging ein erster Workshop in Bremen im Juni 2019 voran. Das Projekt hatte somit mehrere Teile, die in unterschiedlichem Maße von PD Dr. Cordula Weißköppel und / oder Dr. Martin Gruber geleitet wurden. Entsprechend deklarieren wir im Text durch Fußnoten, welche*r Autor*in gerade spricht. Besonders danken wir dem International Fonds und dem Fachbereich 9 Kulturwissenschaften der Universität Bremen, die das gesamte Projekt finanziell förderten.

2 Die folgenden Absätze stammen von Cordula Weißköppel.

te sich als eine Qualität heraus, dass wir jeweils eine Mischung aus lokalen und internationalen Experten waren, zudem akademische und nicht-akademische Teilnehmende, und es gelang bei beiden Events auch Studierende und Doktorand*innen zu involvieren. Diese heterogene Zusammensetzung war produktiv, weil unterschiedliche Kompetenzen, Erfahrungshorizonte und Wissensressourcen in Berührung und in Austausch kamen. Das wurde schnell beim Gehen spürbar, das von intensiven Unterhaltungen begleitet war. Die sich teils unbekanntem Teilnehmenden konnten sehr dynamisch aufeinandertreffen, aber auch Gesprächspartner wechseln. Wenn auch zunächst nicht thematisch zentriert, wurde dadurch wechselseitig ein *stream of consciousness* angeheizt, der sukzessive durch die spezifische Route und ihre Stationen thematisch strukturiert wurde, und weniger durch einen zentralen Tourguide.

Das lokale Unbewusste: Intuitives Tour-Design und latente Thesen

In beiden Walkshops waren die lokalen Organisator*innen (in Bremen: Dr. Cordula Weißköppel und Dr. Martina Grimmig; in Windhoek: Dr. Rosa Perseid und Frauke Stegmann) auch diejenigen, die die Tour inhaltlich planten, also über die Stationen entschieden, die von der Gruppe angesteuert werden sollten. Entsprechend bereiteten sie eine machbare Route inklusive Zeit- und Mobilitätsplanung vor.³ Bei diesen Vorbereitungen wurde es zur zentralen Erkenntnis, wie stark das eigene Unbewusste⁴ auf die jeweilige Routenplanung einwirkte. Die lokalen Instruktor*innen bringen oftmals intuitiv ihr Vorwissen und latente Deutungen ein, also potenzielle Thesen oder Ahnungen, wie die bisher bekannten Fragmente der Kolonialgeschichte und die eher verborgenen oder verdrängten Elemente miteinander in Zusammenhang zu bringen sind. „Every walk has its narrative“, formulierte Nick Shepherd als Teilnehmer, aber auch als erfahrener Walkshop-Initiator (2018), um zu betonen, dass in solch einem Setting von hybriden Gruppen es schließlich alle Teilnehmenden sind, die durch die kollaborative Deutungsarbeit vor Ort die-

3 In noch stärker experimentellen Formaten kann die Gruppe selbst das Tour-design aushandeln und somit bereits auf dieser Ebene in einen kollaborativen Prozess eintreten. Notwendig ist dann eine umfassende infrastrukturelle Vorbereitung durch die Organisator*innen (s. Shepherd 2018).

4 Hier ist unsere Arbeit von klassischen Ansätzen der Ethnopschoanalyse inspiriert (u.a. Erdheim 1990), die davon ausgehen, dass gesellschaftsspezifisch verdrängt wird, somit auch verschiedenste Bedeutungssysteme, je nach Kontext zum Beispiel durch Schuld- und Scham-Komplexe, unbewusst oder bewusst gemacht werden. Wie das gesellschaftliche Verhältnis von Bewusstheit zu Unbewusstem gestaltet wird, ist daher sehr relational zu analysieren; auch dafür sind kulturell heterogene Hintergründe der Teilnehmer*innen produktiv, weil das, was die einen in ihrer Sozialisation gelernt haben zu verdrängen, von anderen wahrgenommen und ausgesprochen werden kann.

se latentem Thesen explizieren können.⁵ Das vollzieht sich weniger kognitiv, sondern eher indem durch das Begehen, durch das gemeinsame Innehalten vor spezifischen Artefakten, durch geteilte Emotionen oder Diskussionen über kontroverse Deutungen performativ Zusammenhänge herausgearbeitet werden. Unni Wikam (2012: 61) spricht auch von „resonance“, die sich „beyond words“ mitteilt oder erschließt, vermittelt durch die Objekte, ihre Einbindung in die je kulturhistorische Landschaft und das Aufsuchen durch die interessierten Menschen. Es geht dabei weniger darum, die historisch wechselnde Bedeutungsaufladung eines Ortes zu „erspüren“, sondern spezifische Konstellationen oder auch Schichten von (Be-)Deutungen überhaupt zu erfassen und anzuerkennen. In Folge kann dann auch ein potenziell verschüttetes oder überlagertes Wissen revitalisiert oder annähernd rekonstruiert werden.

Explizite Pausen zur Reflexion in der Gruppe

Die hohe Qualität von Walking in Gruppen zu postkolonialen Erinnerungsorten (oder auch zu anderen Themen, die starker gesellschaftlicher Tabuisierung oder Verdrängung unterliegen) liegt also vor allem darin, dass man die Teilnehmenden zur gemeinsamen Deutungsarbeit vor Ort ermuntert. Das lockere Assoziieren in je wechselnden Konstellationen der Mitmachenden kann allerdings Grade des Chaotischen bedeuten, das zwar kreativen Output befördern, aber auch zur physischen oder mentalen Erschöpfung beitragen kann, weil zahlreiche Informationen ungeordnet fließen oder auch unerwartete Gefühlslagen ausgelöst werden können. Deshalb ist es bei diesem Format von Walkshops elementar, explizite Pausenzeiten vorzusehen.⁶ Diese dienen zunächst der physischen und mentalen Erholung, sollten dann aber auch für die distanziertere Reflexion genutzt werden: Was hat die Einzelnen während des Spaziergangs besonders beschäftigt? Wo gab es ein emotionales Hoch oder Tief, das man mit andern teilte? Welche Themen sind dominant oder welche subjektiven Deutungsspuren werden durch andere bestätigt? Wo kristallisieren sich neue Zusammenhänge, die wir zuvor nicht sahen oder nur ahnten? Um diese distanzierte Reflexion zu stützen, können verschiedene Techniken der Dokumentation genutzt werden.⁷ Durch das Feedback in

5 Durch die Tour in Bremen wurden auf diese Weise die eher impliziten Verbindungen zwischen Bremer Kaufmanns- und Handelseliten, ihrem bildungsbürgerlichen Mäzenatentum und ihrer Ausbeutungs- und Profitstrategien im kolonialen Zeitalter inklusive der gewaltvollen Schattenseiten weiter offengelegt.

6 Man kann dazu einen universitären Raum aufsuchen, es kann aber genauso gut ein Picnic-Platz oder eine ruhige Imbißstation (o.ä.) sein.

7 In Bremen führten wir z.B. klassisch Protokoll oder skizzierten eine Mental Map zum Walk an der Tafel; in Windhoek teilten wir die gemachten Fotos mit unseren Smartphones oder die spontanen Aufzeichnungen im Notizheft.

der Gruppe verflüchtigen sich manche Deutungsansätze; andere werden verstärkt, was dann für die weitere Bearbeitung motiviert. Man wird inspiriert, weiter zu recherchieren, also das Erfahrene und Erkannte mit bereits dokumentierten Quellen zu vernetzen und an etabliertes Wissen anzuschließen – oder gerade dieses zu hinterfragen. Denn auch das kann ein Resultat solcher Walkshops sein, dem Impuls zu weiterer Intervention zu folgen, sei es im politischen Feld oder auf der Ebene von Repräsentationen, zum Beispiel eine öffentliche Darstellungsform für die erarbeiteten Erkenntnisse zu entwickeln (s.u. zum Blog des Visual Storytelling).

Ein exemplarischer Einblick in den Walkshop in Windhoek

Die Organisatorinnen, Dr. Rosa Persendt und Frauke Stegmann, beide lehrend an der UNAM in Windhoek, hatten einen Minibus für unsere Tour im September 2019 gemietet. Walking kann also auch sehr gesellschaftsspezifisch angepasst werden, hier wurde aus klimatischen Gründen und zur Überwindung der großen Distanzen ein Automobil gewählt, was außerdem den Vorteil hatte, dass Handgepäck sowie Speisen und Getränke mittransportiert werden konnten. Die besuchten Orte erschlossen wir uns dann laufend. Die gewählten Stationen folgten einer chronologischen Logik, die vor-koloniale, koloniale und postkoloniale Geschichte und Artefakte vor Augen führen sollte. Das Programm kann hier nicht in allen Details nachvollzogen werden, sondern wichtig ist, dass diese Zeitachse von mehr als 140 Jahren von den Organisatorinnen als relevant erachtet wurde, um postkoloniales Erinnern zu initiieren. Somit will ich nur exemplarisch skizzieren, welcher neue Deutungspfad durch die Tour sichtbar wurde, um die Überlagerungen des doppelten Kolonialismus in Namibia in ihrer Wirkung der Verdrängung und Marginalisierung der lokalen Geschichte-n zu begreifen.

Die Tour startete auf einem sandigen Platz, der citynah als Halte- und Parkraum für Taxis und Minibusse dient. Paradoxe Weise fand sich mitten auf diesem Platz eine kleine Insel aus Schilf, die auf unterirdische Wasserressourcen hindeutete, die wir kurz später an einer modernen Kanalarchitektur erkannten.

Frauke Stegmann berichtete von dem Gedächtnis ihrer Elterngeneration, durch das dieser Platz als Feuchtbiotop in Erinnerung sei, an dem Kröten gequakt und andere Pflanzen- und Tierarten gelebt hatten. Inzwischen war dieses Biotop einer modernen Verkehrs- und Sanitärinfrastruktur gewichen – außer diesem „island of reed“, das wie ein Relikt aus einer anderen Zeit überlebt hatte. Durch die nächsten zwei Stationen lernten wir weitere solche Zeichen kennen, die ebenfalls darauf verwiesen, dass der Landstrich, den wir heute als Windhoek bezeichnen, vermutlich präkolonial als Region reicher (vermutlich unterirdischer) Wasserquellen bekannt war. In enger Nachbarschaft zur Independence Road im Zentrum Windhoeks findet sich

der Zoopark, der ein Elefanten-Denkmal beherbergt: Dieses repräsentiert archäologische Funde von Elefantenknochen⁸, die vermutlich an einem Wasserloch von Menschen erlegt worden sind.



Abb. 1: Island of Reed, Windhoek, September 2019. Foto: Cordula Weißköppel

Während wir durch den Park flanierten, der bedingt durch die damals herrschende extreme Wasserknappheit in der Region, von temporär trocken gelegten Wasserspielen charakterisiert war, begann ich zu realisieren bzw. eher zu imaginieren, dass gerade dieser Ort zu anderen Zeiten über diese überlebensnotwendige Ressource reichlich verfügt hatte. Das bestätigte sich durch die folgende Station, die so genannte Pahl-Quelle, die nicht weit vom Parla-

8 Dieser Fund, der auf 5200 Jahre vor christlicher Zeitrechnung datiert wird, verweist somit bereits auf die Präsenz von Menschen in der Region, die die Tiere erjagten (vgl. von Dewitz 2009: 74).

ment und dem neuen Independence Museum hinter Büschen und trockenem Gras am Hang zu finden war. Vor uns zeigte sich ein großes Wasserreservoir, wie sie auf mehreren Hügeln rund um Windhoek zu sehen sind, hier mit Sicherheitsdraht umzäunt inklusive Hinweisschildern, dass diese Quelle heute ausschließlich für Trinkwasser genutzt werde. In unmittelbarer Umgebung entdeckten wir ein trocken gefallenes Bachbett, dem man bergan folgen konnte und sich unter den vertrockneten Bäumen eine Art Ruine mit verfallenen Treppen und Mauern auftat – rätselhaft. Hier nun wurde das digitale Archiv des lokalen Gedächtnisses aktiviert, indem uns eine Teilnehmerin auf ihrem Smartphone eine Schwarz-Weiß-Fotografie aus den 1960ern zeigte: eine europäisch anmutende Badeanstalt inmitten eines schattigen Waldes, in deren Schwimmbecken sich „weiße“⁹ Männer und Frauen des Lebens freuten.

Die Verkettung dieser aktuellen Eindrücke, Relikte materieller Kultur sowie dieser Fotografie aus den 1960er Jahren ließ mich nicht mehr los. Noch nachts blätterte ich in einem „kleinen Stadtführer“ Windhoeks (von Dewitz 2009). Kurz und knapp wird hier zur Geschichte der Stadt ausgeführt, dass der Name Windhoek erst durch die europäischen Händler, Siedler und Missionare, später durch die deutschen Kolonialisten, insbesondere durch die Stadtgründung Curt van Francois 1890, amtlich wurde. In indigenen Sprachen sei die Ortsbezeichnung („/Ai-//gams“ in Nama und „Otjimuse“ in Herero) hingegen als „Ort des heißen /feurigen Dampfes“ zu übersetzen (von Dewitz 2009: 8). Dies war also ein zaghafter Hinweis, dass es präkolonial ein lokales Wissen, eine sprachliche Repräsentation für diesen Reichtum an unterirdischen Wasser-Quellen in der Region gab. Für mich eine erste Erklärung auf die mich umtreibende Frage, warum für die deutschen Siedler*innen und Militärs zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts gerade die Region um Windhoek attraktiv war, um ihren kolonialen Regierungssitz zu bauen. Warum hatten sie diesen beschwerlichen Weg, von der Atlantik-Küste kommend, durch die Namib-Wüste unternommen? Bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt hatte ich in zahlreichen Reiseführern dazu nicht wirklich Aufschlussreiches gefunden. Ein paar Seiten weiter in diesem kleinen Stadtführer las ich nun noch vom „Felsenkeller“ (von Dewitz 2009:50), eine Bierbrauerei, die 1902 im Zuge der deutschen Kolonialisierung eröffnet und 1912-14 wegen der großen Nachfrage durch die Fa. Koch & Schultheiss erweitert wurde: „Die Brauerei besaß eine eigene Quelle auf dem Gelände, welche jedoch mit der Zeit versiegte.“ Dennoch wurde das Biergeschäft auch postkolonial durch die Namibian Breweries an geeigneteren Standorten fortgesetzt und hat der Marke *Windhoek Draft* zu weltweiter Bekanntheit verholfen.

9 Wenn auch als Alltagssprachliche Referenz auf Hautfarbe, geht es um die soziopolitischen Einordnungen und Identitäten, die im südlichen Afrika spätestens seit Ende des 19./ Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts Einzug gehalten haben.

Dieses kurze Eintauchen in unsere kollaborative Deutungsarbeit während des Walkshops in Windhoek muss an dieser Stelle reichen,¹⁰ um zu illustrieren, wie sich durch das Aufsuchen einzelner Orte und ihrer Verkettung, durch den Austausch an Wissensfragmenten und die weitere Recherche Pfade der Interpretation von neuen oder verschütteten Zusammenhängen erarbeiten lassen. In den folgenden Abschnitten wird es darum gehen, wie wir diese Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen vor Ort nachbereitet und einer interessierten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht haben.

Kollaboratives Audio-Visuelles Storytelling

Während unseres Austauschs mit der University of Namibia war ich¹¹ insbesondere für kollaborative Visualisierungen verantwortlich. Bereits bei der Planung hatten wir uns für eine gemeinschaftlich gestaltete Webseite als Medium der Visualisierung und Dokumentation des Walking Workshops entschieden, der unter folgender URL abrufbar ist <https://blogs.uni-bremen.de/walkingwindhoek/>. Einerseits spielt die visuelle Wahrnehmung eine entscheidene Rolle während des Walkens selbst – andererseits lassen sich durch visuelle Medien Eindrücke der besuchten Orte vermitteln. Während jede*r Teilnehmende eine persönliche *Story* beitragen sollte, die seine oder ihre Erfahrungen während des Walkshops reflektierte, sollte die Gestaltung und Programmierung der Gesamtseite an der Universität Bremen erfolgen. Grundlage dieser audiovisuellen Geschichten sollten Fotos sein, die die Teilnehmenden während des Walks mit ihren Smartphones aufnehmen. Die Beschränkung auf einfach zu bedienende und wenig intrusive Smartphones erfolgte ganz bewusst, um die Aufmerksamkeit der Teilnehmenden nicht zu sehr auf die Produktion der Aufnahmen zu lenken, sondern ihnen möglichst unvoreingenommene sinnliche Erfahrung im Feld zu ermöglichen.

Mediale und technische Umsetzung

Während der Einführung zu dem Workshop stellten wir den Teilnehmenden das Konzept der Webseite kurz vor und baten sie, ihre Eindrücke durch Fotos, sowie Video- und Audioaufnahmen mit dem Smartphone festzuhalten. Zudem regten wir an, Feldnotizen und Zeichnungen anzufertigen. Während des Walkshops wurden von den Teilnehmenden unzählige Fotos (und teilweise auch Videos) mit dem Handy gemacht. Zwei Teilnehmerinnen machten zusätzlich Fotos mit professionellen DSLR Kameras. Am Ende des Workshops beschlossen die Teilnehmenden, sich die Fotos die sie im Rahmen der Veranstaltung gemacht hatten, gegenseitig zur Verfügung zu stellen und luden diese zeitnah in einer gemeinsamen Cloud hoch. So entstand ein geteiltes

10 Zum Weiterlesen sei schon an dieser Stelle auf unseren Blog hingewiesen: <https://blogs.uni-bremen.de/walkingwindhoek/>

11 Die folgenden Ausführungen stammen von Martin Gruber.

Fotoarchiv des Walkshops. Wir einigten uns außerdem darauf, dass jede*r der sieben Teilnehmenden eine individuelle Geschichte kreieren sollte, die aus Fotografien und Texten bestehen würde. Die Themen sollten individuell gewählt werden und Bilder sollten im Vordergrund stehen. Mit diesen Vorgaben machte ich mich gemeinsam mit Lennert Wendt, einem studentischen Mitarbeiter der Universität Bremen, an die Gestaltung und Programmierung der Webseite. Die auf Wordpress basierende Seite ist im Blog-System der Uni Bremen gehostet, es waren jedoch diverse Änderungen notwendig, um unsere gestalterische Vorstellung zu realisieren. Wir entschieden uns in Absprache mit den Teilnehmenden für ein einheitliches Design der Seiten mit großformatigen Bildern und Text-Boxen. Von der siebenfach geteilten Hauptseite des Blogs, navigiert man zunächst zu einer der individuellen Geschichten, durch welche man sich linear von Bild zu Bild klickt. Zusätzlich erstellten wir eine Übersichtsseite mit diversen Informationen zum Ansatz des Walking sowie zu Ablauf und Organisation des Workshops. Innerhalb dieses Rahmens wurden die einzelnen Geschichten von den Teilnehmenden eigenständig konzipiert und umgesetzt.

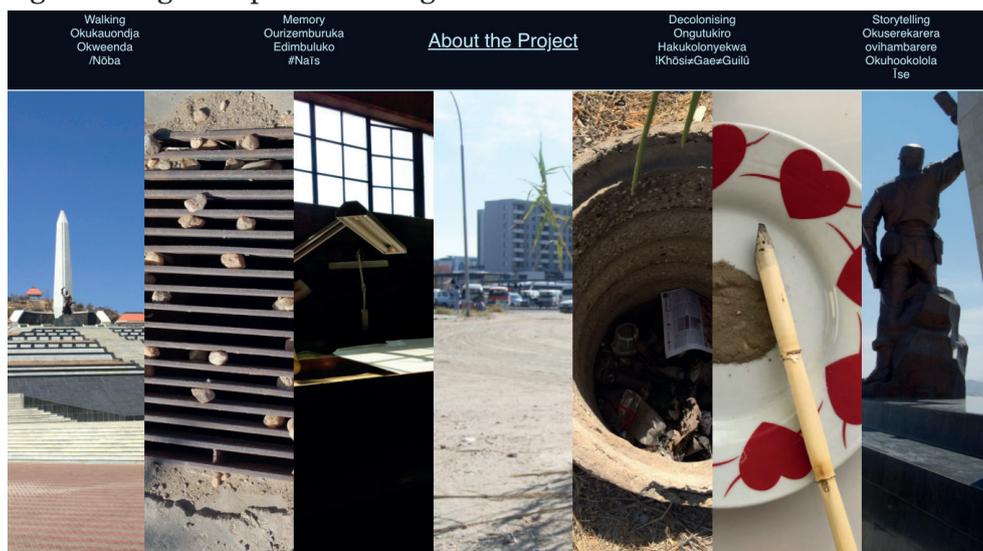


Abb. 2: Startseite des Blogs. Gestaltung von Martin Gruber und Lennert Wendt

Die individuellen Stories nehmen sinnliche und emotionale Eindrücke während des Walkens als Ausgangspunkt für politische, theoretische, historische oder künstlerische Auseinandersetzungen mit bestimmte Orten und Themen, wie zum Beispiel die geschichtlichen Verbindungen zwischen Namibia und Deutschland, Kolonialismus, Rassismus, Apartheid, Gewalterfahrungen, Diskriminierung und Dekolonisierung. Alle Stücke haben subjektiven, assoziativen und reflexiven Charakter und beziehen Vorerfahrungen und Gefühle der Teilnehmenden ein. Zwei studentische Teilnehmerinnen setzten ihre Erfahrungen während des Walks in Gedichten um. Zwei Autorinnen beschäftigen sich mit dem Bedeutungskomplex über verborgene/ unterir-

dische Wasser-Ressourcen in der Region um Windhoek. Frauke Stegmann vom Visual Arts Department der UNAM, wählte einen künstlerischen Ansatz und machte Zeichnungen imaginierter Biodiversität, die sie mit Fotos und anderen Abbildungen zu einer Collage verband. Mein eigener Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der Geschichte Namibias am Beispiel einer ehemaligen SWAPO Kämpferin, die wir bei unserem Besuch des Nationaldenkmals *Heroes' Acre* etwas außerhalb Windhoeks trafen. Während unseres Gesprächs mit der Leiterin der Gedenkstätte Helena Nengola ahnte ich, dass es sich um eine Zeitzeugin aus dem Befreiungskampf handelte. Gleichzeitig stellten wir beiläufig fest, dass wir im selben Jahr geboren waren und sie bezeichnete mich herzlich als ihren Altersgenossen. Diese Offenheit und die Unterschiedlichkeit unserer Lebensläufe bewegten mich und ich hatte das Gefühl, dass sie noch mehr spannende Geschichten zu erzählen hatte.



Abb. 3: Helena Nengola auf dem Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, September 2019.
Foto: Martin Gruber

Ich folgte diesem Impuls und verabredete mich für den folgenden Tag mit Helena, um ein ethnografisches Interview mit ihr zu führen, bei dem sie mir die beeindruckende Geschichte ihrer Jugend während des Befreiungskampfes offenbarte. Die Begegnung und die intensive Auseinandersetzung ermöglichten mir eine neue Perspektive auf Namibias Geschichte, das deutsch-namibische Verhältnis und meine persönliche Verwicklung darin.

Visual Storytelling als kollaborative Wissensproduktion

Der Akt des Fotografierens und der interaktive Austausch über diese Bilder wurde zu einem zentralen Bestandteil des Workshops. Dieser Umstand hängt sicherlich damit zusammen, dass Fotografieren und das Reden darüber generell zur Normalität (oder vielleicht sogar zur Norm) von Gruppen-Aktivitäten geworden ist – eine Tendenz, die mit der globalen Verbreitung von Smartphones verbunden ist. Wichtiger in unserem Arbeitszusammenhang war aber, dass mehrere Teilnehmenden die nachträgliche Arbeit an den Geschichten und die damit verbundene Auseinandersetzung mit Bildern, Feldnotizen und Erinnerungen als eine neue Ebene der intellektuellen Auseinandersetzung mit den besuchten Orten und den damit verbundenen Themen erlebten, die wiederum neue und unerwartete Erkenntnisse ermöglichte. Ich gehe davon aus, dass die Verkettung von ersten Assoziationen zu weiter reichenden Interpretationen, wie sie Cordula Weißköppel im vorigen Absatz exemplarisch beschreibt, durch die nachträgliche Arbeit am Blog sehr befördert wurden. Der Blog stellt also nicht nur eine Dokumentation des Workshops dar, sondern auch eine alternative Form des Erkenntnisgewinns. Darüber hinaus portraitiert er interessante und teilweise unbekannte Aspekte (nicht nur) der Geschichte von Windhoek.

Film-Workshop zu postkolonialen Erfahrungen Jugendlicher

Während der Workshop statusgruppen-übergreifend organisiert war, wurde ich bereits während der Projektplanung gebeten, zusätzlich einen Film-Workshop zu organisieren, der sich ausschließlich an Studierende der UNAM richten sollte. Basierend auf meinen Erfahrungen in der Hochschullehre im Bereich ethnografischer Film und in der partizipatorischen Medienproduktion (Gruber 2013; 2016), plante ich einen zweitägigen Film-Workshop, der es den Teilnehmenden ermöglichen sollte, ihre Erfahrungen in der postkolonialen Gesellschaft Namibias filmisch auszuhandeln, zu reflektieren und zu präsentieren. Der Film-Workshop an der University of Namibia fand am 17. und 18. September 2019 in Kooperation mit dem Department of Visual & Performing Arts statt. Die Workshop-Teilnehmenden setzten sich aus Studierenden der UNAM und aus Schüler*innen des College de Lingua zusammen, einer Bildungseinrichtung, die Jugendlichen ohne Abitur den Zugang zum höheren Bildungssystem ermöglicht. Außerdem nahm eine Studierende

der Universität Bremen teil. Es handelte sich daher um eine sehr heterogene Gruppe, was sich von Anfang an sehr positiv auf die Dynamik des Workshops und die Zusammenarbeit auswirkte. Am ersten Tag des Workshops erfolgte eine Einführung in verschiedene Ansätze des dokumentarischen Storytelling (Nichols 2001) anhand von Beispielfilmen sowie eine Einführung in die Bedienung von Camcordern durch kleine Übungsaufgaben. Am zweiten Tag konzipierten die Teilnehmenden in Kleingruppen ihre Filmprojekte und setzten dies anschließend um. Sie bedienten die Kamera, führten Regie und betätigten sich als Schauspieler*innen. Aufgrund der knappen Zeit entschieden wir uns für die Methode des „Schnitt in der Kamera“, bei der die einzelnen Einstellungen in ihrer chronologischen Reihenfolge gefilmt werden, und nachträgliche Änderungen nur bedingt möglich sind. Die Methode erfordert daher ein hohes Maß an konzeptioneller Vorarbeit. Am Ende des Workshops sichteten wir gemeinsam die Filme und diskutierten darüber. Die Filme sind hier abrufbar: <https://vimeo.com/ethnofilm/storytellingwindhoek>.



Abb. 4: Teilnehmende des Film-Workshops an der UNAM. Foto: Martin Gruber

Die Methodologie des Workshops beruhte auf drei sich überschneidenden Feldern: erstens Ethnografischer Film, dessen explorative und reflexive Herangehensweisen die Grundlage des Workshop bildeten, und aus dem wir unterschiedliche narrative Ansätze entliehen (Barbash und Taylor 1997); zweitens Digital Storytelling, ein Ansatz der partizipatorischen Medienproduktion, bei dem die Teilnehmenden persönliche *Stories* mit einfachen di-

gitalen Technologien umsetzen (Lambert 2013); drittens Ethnofiction, ein Untergenre des Ethnografischen Films, bei dem dokumentarische und fiktionale Elemente verwoben werden und bei dem die Protagonist*innen Situationen aus ihrem Alltag improvisieren (Sjöberg 2009). Der fiktionale Rahmen schützt die Schauspieler*innen und ermöglicht es ihnen, auch persönlich schwierige oder sogar traumatische Erfahrungen in einer spielerischen Art und Weise zu bearbeiten.

Im Workshop entstanden schließlich drei Kurzfilme von drei bis vier Minuten zu unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlich relevanten Themen. Zwei Gruppen entschieden sich für eine ethnofiktionale Herangehensweise und inszenierten Situationen aus ihrem Alltag. Im Film „Brothers Divided by Segregation“ von Tangeni Allan, Dean Muhinda und Tare Mwakipesile geht es um ethnisch aufgeladene Konflikte in der namibischen Gesellschaft. Der Film „Us“ von Inacia Chikoti, Bertha Shifeta und Elizabeth Shinana thematisiert weibliche Identität und mangelnde Solidarität unter jungen Frauen. Die Schauspieler*innen improvisierten diese Filme weitgehend dokumentarisch. Der fiktionale Rahmen ermöglicht und fördert dramatische Überhöhungen und Ironie, welche Subthemen wie zugeschriebene Genderrollen oder Alltagsrassismus deutlich zu Tage treten lässt. Die dritte Gruppe, bestehend aus Eben-Dean Broekstein, Quinn-Leigh Kusch, Namupa Nghixulifwa, Franziska Redecker und Faith Ziunye, entschied sich für einen experimentellen Ansatz. Ihr Film „More than Colour“ stellt rassistische Vorurteile in einer Laborsituation auf die Probe und hinterfragt sie. Obwohl nur zwei der Filmemacher*innen Vorerfahrung mit dem Medium hatten, sind alle resultierenden Filme von einer hohen technischen Qualität und bedienen sich unterschiedlicher kinematischer und narrativer Strategien. Bei der Abschlussdiskussion hoben die Teilnehmenden hervor, dass die Aushandlungsprozesse und die praktische Zusammenarbeit während des Workshops eine wichtige persönliche Erfahrung für sie war. Trotz der extrem kurzen Dauer konnten meiner Einschätzung nach während des Workshops alternative Diskurse erprobt und neuartige Aktivitäten umgesetzt werden, die für die Jugendlichen als Form des Empowerment wirksam werden können (Kesby 2005). In einem begrenzten Rahmen stellte der Prozess des Filmemachens auch eine Dekolonisierung der Medien- und Wissensproduktion dar, weil durch die teilnehmenden Subjekte eigene Themen und Weltansichten artikuliert und umgesetzt werden konnten, die dazu beitragen, dominante, zum Beispiel national homogenisierende Diskurse zu relativieren.

Konklusion

Die hier vorgestellten Aktivitäten internationaler Hochschulkooperation zwischen der Universität in Windhoek und der in Bremen waren sicherlich für alle Beteiligten eine konstruktive Erfahrung, auf die es aufzubauen gilt.

Beide Workshops profitierten dabei von der Diversität der Teilnehmenden, die für die Diskussionen und die Dynamik der Zielsetzung, methodische Ansätze zur Dekolonisierung zu erproben, absolut förderlich waren. Der Fokus auf Methoden der Visualisierung war dabei besonders inspirierend: Der Film-Workshop zeichnete sich von vorherigen Erfahrungen mit diesem Ansatz dadurch aus, dass es auch in einem sehr kurzen Zeitraum möglich war, einen partizipatorischen Prozess der Medienproduktion zu initiieren und erfolgreich abzuschließen. Die konkreten Ergebnisse in Form der drei Kurzfilme waren für die Teilnehmenden sehr zufriedenstellend und bedeutsam. Die Methode des Walking in Kombination mit Visualisierungsstrategien zur Initiierung dekolonialer Perspektiven auf die jeweilige Geschichtsschreibung ist insgesamt noch weniger erprobt. Es war daher faszinierend, welche unterschiedliche Zugänge und Deutungsansätze hier innerhalb kürzester Zeit ermöglicht wurden. Die Arbeit an der multimedialen Webseite und das daraus resultierende Produkt stellt eine spannende, eben kollaborative Form der Erzeugung und Präsentation ethnologischen Wissens im Feld postkolonialer Erinnerungs- und Geschichtsarbeit dar. Wir sind daher sehr motiviert, weiterhin Formen der dialogischen Zusammenarbeit zu entwickeln, die das gemeinsame Erforschen von kolonialen und postkolonialen Verflechtungen in den Mittelpunkt stellen.

Links

Web-Seite: Walking Windhoek:

<https://blogs.uni-bremen.de/walkingwindhoek/>

Filme: Visual Storytelling Workshop:

<https://vimeo.com/ethnofilm/storytellingwindhoek>

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Cordula Weißköppel promovierte im Feld der ethnologischen Migrationsforschung (2001) und habilitierte sich mit einer Arbeit zu transnationalen religiösen Netzwerken von Sudanese*innen in Deutschland (2011). Seit 2018 ist sie wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin und Internationalisierungsbeauftragte am Institut für Ethnologie und Kulturwissenschaft an der Universität Bremen. Ihre jüngsten Interessen sind an der Schnittstelle von postkolonialen Debatten und Public Anthropology angesiedelt: Durch welche Zugänge können wir über das Verdrängte unserer Kolonialgeschichte-n lernen und dieses Wissen einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit vermitteln?

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Replik auf Hartmut Lang und Astrid Wonneberger

Georg Pfeffer

Prof. Dr. Georg Pfeffer reichte uns im vergangenen Winter eine Replik ein zur Rezension seines Buches „Verwandtschaft als Verfassung“ (2016), die Hartmut Lang und Astrid Wonneberger 2019 unter dem Titel „Pfeffers Bibelexegese“ in Ethnoscripts 21 (1) veröffentlicht hatten. Georg Pfeffer war damals schon schwer krank und rechnete damit, dass er die Veröffentlichung seines Debattenbeitrages nicht mehr erleben würde. Dies ist leider so eingetreten. Georg Pfeffer verstarb am 20. Mai 2020. Er war Professor am Berliner Institut für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie, wo er bis zu seinem Emeritierung 2008 forschte und lehrte. Mit der Publikation seiner Replik gedenken wir seiner Person.

Vorgezogener Nachtrag

Erstaunlicherweise rezensieren Lang und Wonneberger (L&W) „Pfeffers Bibelexegese“ (2019). Hier die Definition dieses theologischen Verfahrens:

„Exegese ist das analytische Bemühen, durch Anwendung philologischer und historischer Methoden die kanonischen Schriften des Alten und Neuen Testaments zu verstehen. Als Leitmethode...bemüht sich die historisch-kritische Exegese zu ermitteln, welchen Sinn ein biblischer Text zur Zeit seiner Abfassung hatte“. (Das wissenschaftliche Bibelportal der Deutschen Bibelgesellschaft¹).

Mein Abschnitt zur Bibel²

- analysiert *keinesfalls* „historisch-kritisch“ oder „durch Anwendung philologischer und historischer Methoden ..., welchen Sinn ein biblischer Text zur Zeit seiner Abfassung hatte“.
- untersucht *ausdrücklich* „(u)nter ganz anderen Aspekten“ als die „drei Buchreligionen...exemplarische Beziehungsmuster von Abstammung und Heirat“ (2016: 471). Theologisches fehlt. Das Pferd ist keine Kuh!

1 Bibelwissenschaft.de (abgerufen 10.10. 2019).

2 Eigennamen buchstabiere ich nach der interkonfessionellen Einheitsübersetzung.

- liefert eine *sozialanthropologische* Mythenanalyse³. Die Genesis, das 1. Buch Mose, wird wie jede andere Ätiologie⁴ untersucht. Ergebnis ist „das mosaische Modell“ für viele gegenwärtige Gesellschaften. Alle Einzelheiten der hebräischen Mythologie lassen sich beispielsweise bei Graves und Patai (1966) überprüfen.

Weil L&W ein Analyseverfahren ihres Fachs grobunrichtig als Bibelexegese ausgeben, lassen sie meinen Text von einem anonymen – anthropologisch unqualifizierten – Pfarrer begutachten. Die Folgerungen dieses – nach ihren Angaben – „klassischen Vertreter(s) der Theologie“⁵ sind „eine Hauptsache“ (2019: 220) ihrer Beurteilung meines dicken Buchs über soziale Klassifikation in jeweils verschiedenen Regionen von Asien, Amerika, Afrika und Ozeanien. Im Wissenschaftsbetrieb ist ein solches Vorgehen erstaunlich.

Ihr Verriss betrifft zunächst einen einzigen Satz (Pfeffer 2016: 471-472) im Kapitel zur Gesellschaftsformation ‚conical clan‘. Die Formation selbst kommentieren L&W nicht. Dieser Satz zur Spitze einer Schafherde könnte problemlos entfallen. L&W nutzen ihn für einen vielfach pointierten Großangriff, der sich auf die Verhaltensbiologie, den ‚Schweizer Tierschutz‘ und die ‚Prüfungsfragen des Schafzuchtverbands Niedersachsen von 2015‘ stützt. Angesichts der Relevanzfrage und – insbesondere – meiner Platzaufgaben entgegne ich ihm nicht.

Zur Primogenitur kommentieren L&W nicht etwa meine Berichte über gegenwärtige Gesellschaften (Berber und Pakhtunen) und ihren empirischen Aufbau, sondern scheinbar widersprechende Aussagen der Genesis. Angefangen mit Set gegenüber Kain *werden* die jeweils jüngeren Brüder Isaak, Jakob/Israel und Juda gegenüber Ismail, Esau und Ruben⁶, *als Folge* melodramatischer Geschehnisse⁷ Anführer ihres ‚conical clan‘. Der *Altersnächste* erhält die Vorrechte des Ältesten⁸. Diese Serie von spektakulären Umkehrungen der hierarchischen Beziehung wird bei den Söhnen Judas⁹ und Josefs¹⁰ fortgesetzt. Die *immer* maßgebliche Geburtenfolge bestimmt essenzielle *gesellschaftliche* Beziehungen. Der Mythos hebt Primogenitur durch seine charakteristischen Übermittlungsprinzipien hervor: Inversion und Redundanz.

3 Siehe Leach (2000a).

4 Über Differenzierungen *siehe* Pitt-Rivers (2017: 339-345).

5 L&W empfehlen noch etliche andere Fächer, nicht aber die auf Mythen bezogenen Theorien und Methoden der Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie.

6 „Der erste sollst du nicht bleiben“ (Gen. 49.4).

7 Brudermord; Aufsässigkeit gegen die Herrin; Verkauf des Erstgeburtsrechts; Beischlaf mit der väterlichen Nebenfrau.

8 Nach Missetaten werden auch Simeon und Levi zugunsten Judas degradiert (Gen. 49.7).

9 Im Geburtskanal verdrängt der jüngere den älteren Zwilling (Gen. 38.27-30).

10 Großvater Jakob/Israel segnet, Vater Josef protestiert gegen dessen Umkehrung (Gen. 48.13-18).

L&W verschweigen aber meine diesbezüglichen Erläuterungen, um ohne das geringste Verständnis zu folgern:

„In der Welt, auf die Pfeffer hier verweist, ist es offenbar nicht wirklich von Bedeutung, wer der empirische Erstgeborene ist. Wir meinen, dieser (für uns jedenfalls) neuen Interpretation könnte eine Diskussion unter Ethnologen guttun“ (2019: 224).

Demnach sind L&W die jahrzehntelang veröffentlichten Fachdiskussionen über Mythenanalysen unbekannt. Letztere zeigen klar, dass Mythen nicht historische Einzelheiten, sondern – durch Beziehungsmuster ihrer Aussagen – verschlüsselte Botschaften wiedergeben.

Weiterhin „überrascht Pfeffer den Leser“ damit, dass „Esau ... Urvater aller Edomiten wurde“ (2019: 223). Das theologisch aufgerüstete Rezensionsteam verdrängt einfach die biblische Festlegung, dass „Esau... auch Edom hieß“ (Gen. 36.1; 36.9; 25.30). Jede¹¹ weitere der von L&W kritisierten „Überraschungen“ dokumentiert eine Übersichtstafel des Systems in *The Legitimacy of Solomon* (Leach 2000b: 53), deshalb verzichte ich auf langwierige Detailnachweise. Überraschend ist lediglich die Überraschung des Rezensionstrios.

Die von Abrahams Vater Terach abgeleiteten Stammbäume der Urväter, Klassifikationsschema der gesellschaftlich¹² geordneten Siedlungsräume der Region, führen zur Polemik gegen den sozialanthropologischen Holismus (L&W 2017: 125). Dieser behandelt keinesfalls – wie abfällig behauptet – ein bezugsloses „alles“, sondern Beziehungen eines Ganzen zu seinen Teilen. Beispielsweise repräsentiert Jakob/Israel (wie zuvor jeweils Abraham und Isaak) multivalent das Ganze gegenüber seinen Söhnen (Teilen) von ungleichem Status (Gen. 49), insbesondere gegenüber Juda („Deines Vaters Söhne fallen vor dir nieder“), der als *sozialer* Ältester den ‚conical clan‘ der Juden anführt.

Ferner kritisieren L&W:

„Nun weiß Pfeffer in seiner Interpretation sehr viel darüber, wie sich die Hebräer¹³ gefühlt haben, wenn sie Frauen in die Ehe weggegeben haben.... Der Theologe weiß davon nichts. Er kennt keine Belege dafür in der Bibel, und er stellt...fest, dass bei Pfeff-

11 Mit Sarkasmus aber ohne Argumente kommentieren L&W (2019: 223) auch Kains Stammbaum der Geächteten (Gen. 4.19).

12 Die Menschheit klassifizieren Noachs Söhne.

13 Süffisant fragen L&W (2019: 226) nach dem Bedeutungsumfang von „die Hebräer“, also der *Kategorie* der Eber-Nachfahren in Sems Stammbaum (Pfeffer 2016: 472). Anscheinend erwarten L&W einen empirischen *Verband*. Stammbäume, heute oft Stolpersteine der Genesis-Lektüre, liefern das von L&W nur verspottete oder verdrängte *System* soziozentrischer Kategorien.

fer die Belege fehlen, die es ja möglicherweise bis sicherlich nicht gibt“ (2019: 225-226).

Zahlreiche Belege, beispielsweise: „Laban war ihm nicht mehr zugetan“ (Gen. 31.3) oder „Jakobs Söhne empfanden...das als Beleidigung und wurden...zornig“ (Gen. 34)¹⁴, verdrängt der Theologe. Mythen dokumentieren aber keinesfalls Äußerungen historischer Individuen. Labans Verweigerungshaltung und das Sichern-Drama verweisen vielmehr auf *gesellschaftliche* Wertmaßstäbe, ausführlich analysiert im Klassiker *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex* (Pitt-Rivers 1977/2017) und anderen renommierten sozialanthropologischen Werken. L&W wissen nichts von dieser Literatur ihres Fachs. Mich dagegen tadelt ihr fachfremder Pastor:

„Als Nicht-Theologe weiß Pfeffer davon nichts¹⁵, und falls doch, spart er sich eine Erklärung, aber nimmt in Kauf, für uninformiert gehalten zu werden“ (L&W 2019: 226).

Der anonyme Analytiker degradiert Abrahams Geschwisterehe zur „Variante“, die „eben nicht als Beispiel für die Umwertung von Werten zu Abrahams Zeiten“ dient (L&W 2019: 226). Doch schreibe ich *nichts* über eine „Umwertung von Werten“. Ihre durch Inversion erzielte *Verstärkung* ist dem Fachfremden – naheliegenderweise – unverständlich. Heutige Exegesen, so der Theologe, erklärten die Inzestpassagen, „weil ein Abraham, der lügt, ‚nicht mehr vorstellbar war‘“ (2019: 226). Exegesen von 2120 könnten deshalb entsprechend ‚begründen‘: „Ein Abraham, der seine Halbschwester heiratet, war 2020 nicht mehr vorstellbar“¹⁶.

Das durch – redundante – Pointen nachgewiesene Ergebnis meiner Mythenanalyse, für L&W nicht erwähnenswert, identifiziert das zentrale Statuskriterium dieser Gesellschaftsordnung: Wer durch Ehen mit nahen Angehörigen das inzestuös begründete¹⁷ Erbcharisma des abrahamitischen Stammbaums bewahrt, bleibt Elite.

14 Gefühlsbeschreibungen auf beiden ‚Heiratsseiten‘ erscheinen regelmäßig, beispielsweise Gen. 24; 26.35.

15 Als Nicht-Anthropologe weiß der Gutachter nichts von Hypergamie. L&W verdrängen grundsätzlich alle *affinalen* Wertmaßstäbe.

16 Eindrucksvolle Exegesen dürfte dieser Bericht anregt haben: Erzvater Juda besucht eine verhüllte Prostituierte, seine (nicht identifizierte) Schwiegertochter Tamar. Ihre Initiative generiert Judas Stammbaum (Gen. 38) mit Jesus als Höhepunkt (Matthäus 1.16).

17 Gemeint ist die folgende Verdoppelung: *Drei* Geschwister (Sara, Abraham, Nahor) und die Tochter *des vierten* (Haran) sind Jakobs/Israels Großeltern (väterlicherseits) beziehungsweise Urgroßeltern (mütterlicherseits).

Der Rezensionenartikel

Die heimische Bedeutung von ‚Verwandtschaft‘ ist für L&W die universale. Familienmitglieder eines Menschen und – soweit identifizierbar – seine ‚entfernteren Verwandten‘ sind gemeint. L&W erforschen sodann Verhaltensweisen von empirischen *Individuen*. Viele Fachleute verwenden dagegen wie ich (2016: 23) ‚Verwandtschaft‘ als *odd job word* ohne feste Bedeutungsbestimmung. Das Verstehen fremder *gesellschaftlicher* Konstrukte, zentrales Anliegen der Disziplin, soll nicht von vornherein durch kulturspezifische Definitionen eingeschränkt werden. Entsprechend erkunde ich Beziehungen und Kategorien von Gesellschaftsordnungen. Diese fundamentalen Unterschiede im Erkenntnisinteresse, vom Rezensionensduo lautstark verschwiegen, prägen seine Besprechung.

In vielen Gemeinwesen¹⁸ benennt eine Person¹⁹ bei direkten oder indirekten Kontakten *jedes* andere Mitglied wie ihre ‚Verwandten‘, während hierzulande eine ‚Verwandtschaftsterminologie‘ nur wenige Individuen erfasst. Ein solcher ‚Verwandtschaftsterminus‘ bezeichnet in Europa immer nur ein Individuum (*Mutter, Vater, Mann, Frau*) oder einige wenige (beispielsweise *Onkel, Schwester, Nichte*). L&W verdrängen diesen grundsätzlichen ethnografischen Unterschied. Dagegen untersuchen zahllose Fachleute, etwa Barnard und Good, nicht eine ‚kinship terminology‘, sondern eine ‚relationship terminology‘...

“...because it defines the field of relevance more broadly and does not assume that persons denoted by such terms are ‘kin’ as we understand them, nor indeed that they are ‘related’ in any genealogical sense whatever” (1984: 37).

Viveiros de Castro unterscheidet diesbezüglich drei verschiedene Kulturzonen mit

“...those societies in which consanguinity encompasses affinity, those in which the two principles stand in an equistatutory relation, and those in which affinity encompasses consanguinity” (2001: 22-23).

Mein Buch diskutiert (neben anderen) Forschungen der Universitäten Ann Arbor, Cambridge, Canberra, Chicago, Edinburgh, Harvard, Leiden, Oxford, Rochester, Stanford und Virginia. Die meisten seiner Berichte sollen einem deutschen Fachpublikum die ethnografisch-theoretischen Resultate von allgemein anerkannten aber hierzulande selten gelesenen Werken erschließen. Doch die Rezension will nichts von dieser anderen Welt wissen. Sie verhakt

18 Von L&W verspottet, impliziert der Begriff ‚Gemeinwesen‘ mehr als eine Ansammlung empirischer Individuen.

19 Beispielsweise eine von 13 Millionen Gond in Mittelindien.

sich in Einzelfragen. Beispielhaft sollen im Folgenden *nur einige* ihrer problematischen Passagen wörtlich – und deshalb vermutlich unstrittig – kursiv gedruckt vor meiner unmittelbar anschließenden Replik zitiert werden.

„... ‚bürokratisch‘. Mit diesem Wort charakterisiert er eine menscheitsgeschichtliche Epoche, in der er sich selbst befindet; auch ‚wir‘ gehören dazu“ (2017: 120).

Charakteristika von Max Webers Idealtypus ‚legal-bürokratische Herrschaft‘ sind L&W herzlich egal. Ob die Nuer Freizeitparks oder Freizeit kennen, interessiert nicht. Ironische Anführungsstriche ersetzen wissenschaftliche Würdigung.

Mein ‚wir‘ ist stilistisch begründet. Die allererste Fußnote erläutert seinen langwierigen Bedeutungsinhalt, was L&W bezeichnenderweise verschweigen.

„Lieber ist Pfeffer wohl der Begriff ‚Wildbeuter mit Eigentumsaversion‘“. (2017: 121).

Im Buch fehlt der Begriff „Wildbeuter mit Eigentumsaversion“.

„...Mutter-Sohn-Inzest bei den Paliyanern ... soll zeigen, wie [sie]... ihre soziale Welt ordnen...“

Nun gibt es aber noch viele weitere Daten in den ethnographischen Berichten, die Pfeffer in seinem Buch nicht erwähnt. So liest man über die Paliyaner, auf Inzest steht die Todesstrafe (Gardner 1966: 397), die von übernatürlichen Wesen vollzogen wird; und über die Chewong, ... die Pfeffer gleichfalls zu den bestätigenden Fällen rechnet, erfährt man Ähnliches.

Daraus darf man schließen, wenn diese ethnographischen Daten alle zugleich wahr sein sollten, müssen Menschen Inzestverbote kategorienfrei kommunizieren können. Das aber wird wohl kaum jemand für möglich halten. Die Paliyaner und Chewong sind demnach keine bestätigenden Fälle für die gesuchte Verfassungslosigkeit“ (2017: 122).

Tatsächlich soll der referierte Mutter-Sohn-Inzest zeigen, dass die Paliyan ihre Welt nicht *gesellschaftlich* ordnen. „(N)och viele weitere Daten“ zum Thema ‚Paliyan-Inzest‘ sind immer willkommen. Hier zunächst jene, die L&W ihrerseits auslassen:

„Paliyans like other people have a clear set of socio-structural principles, yet, as must already be appreciated, their social life is affected deeply by a master principle, that individuals make their own decisions. Rules and tradition per se have little authority. Only once have I heard a Paliyan say they do something“

because it is correct or customary. Behavior is shaped as much by personal considerations as by rules. In residence choices and marriage arrangements, especially, their exercise of individual judgement lends fluidity or looseness to social organization” (Gardner 2000: 101).

Ferner:

“Incest is given a minimal definition in many of the cultures as in that of the Paliyan (marriage with Mo, Si, and Da barred), yet, even so, violations are extremely common – and openly so” (Gardner 1965: 113).

Verständlicherweise erwähnt Gardner „rules“ im Sinne der Alltagssprache und nicht dem der soziologischen Fachsprache beim Thema ‚soziale Normen‘²⁰. Verhaltensnormen müssen auf *soziale* Sanktionen bezogen sein. Bei den Paliyan und Chewong *fehlen* aber die von Geiger (1964: 144f.) erstmals so genannten ‚Reaktionsnormen‘, weil *ausschließlich* „übernatürliche Wesen“ auf vermeintliches Fehlverhalten reagieren, und das äußerst wechselhaft und völlig unübersichtlich. Falls diese Wildbeuter also mit bestimmten Verhaltensweisen ‚böse Folgen‘ oder ‚Nachteile‘ assoziieren, heißt das noch lange nicht, dass diese Handlungen soziale Normen verletzen.

„In diesem Kapitel taucht außerdem zum ersten Mal die Matrix-Methode auf. Das ist eine Methode, mit der Pfeffer Charakteristika von Verwandtschaftsterminologien herausarbeitet“ (2017: 122).

Zu viel der Ehre! Was Allen „classificatory reading“ (1998: 315) einer „relationship terminology“ nennt, ist in Fachschriften des Commonwealth (den nordamerikanischen nur teilweise) seit etlichen Jahrzehnten maßgeblich. Die Begründung liefert das Buch.

„Die Rede vom Tausch der Heiratspartner ist in der Verwandtschaftsethnologie gang und gäbe. Die eine Partei gibt einen Sohn (in die Ehe), die andere gibt eine Tochter. Das ist jedes Mal eine Transaktion, wenn die Gabe angenommen wird. Allerdings können, wie Mitgift und Brautpreis zeigen, diese Transaktionen recht unterschiedlich kalkuliert werden.... Bei seiner Fallanalyse ist Pfeffer aber auf manchen „Widerspruch“ gestoßen. So gibt es die folgenden beiden Regeln. Einander heiraten sollten sich die Kreuzcousinen und -cousins; nicht heiraten sollten sich hingegen die Parallelvarianten der Cousins und Cousinen. Nun

20 Erläuterungen der intensiven soziologischen Debatten über soziale Normen bzw. Sanktionen (mit ihren alltagssprachlich nicht erfassten Kriterien) entfallen hier lediglich aus Platzgründen.

heißt es aber auch Parallel-Verwandte seien als Heiratspartner besonders gut geeignet. Pfeffer sieht darin einen „Widerspruch“, der geklärt werden müsse“ (2017: 123-124).

Die oben beschriebene Differenz im Erkenntnisinteresse (Verhalten empirischer Individuen *versus* Beziehungsmuster unterschiedlicher Gesellschaftsordnungen) kommt hier deutlich zum Ausdruck. Für L&W heißt „Tausch“, dass eine Heiratspartei einen Sohn (in die Ehe) gibt, die andere eine Tochter, insgesamt zwei Individuen. Entsprechend ist „Tausch“ *jede* nicht von den Brautleuten beschlossene Heirat.

Dagegen gehe ich – einer umfangreichen Fachliteratur folgend – bei Studien zu Heirat und Affinität von drei unterschiedlichen *analytischen Ebenen* aus, die das Buch ausführlich erläutert (2016: 335-6), die Rezension jedoch verschweigt:

- a. Die der *Verhaltenspraxis*: *Statistische* Präferenzen bei empirischen Eheschließungen werden erkundet. Beispielsweise heiraten die Individuen eines mittelindischen Gadaba-Dorfs besonders häufig Angehörige bestimmter anderer Dörfer aber niemals Individuen aus ‚verbrüdernten‘ Siedlungen. Zu den ‚heiratsfähigen‘ wie den ‚nicht-heiratsfähigen‘ unterhalten sie multivalente - inhaltlich gegensätzliche - Beziehungen. ‚Tausch‘ bedeutet deshalb, dass Menschen der vereinten ‚Brüder-Dörfer‘ besonders oft Individuen aus dem Kreis der ihnen dauerhaft affinal verbundenen Siedlungen heiraten, also *keinesfalls* nur, dass eine Partei ein Individuum (Sohn) in die Ehe mit dem Individuum (Tochter) einer anderen gibt.
- b. Die der *Verhaltensnormen*: Untersucht werden *gesellschaftliche* Forderungen, durch die Generationen nur in einen bestimmten Kreis von Individuen und nicht über ihn hinaus zu heiraten. Die Gadaba wissen sehr genau, in welche Dörfer sie heiraten sollen, auch wenn sie zuweilen von dieser sozialen Norm der Reziprozität abweichen.
- c. Die der *terminologischen Muster*: Anders als die deutsche ‚Verwandtschaftsterminologie‘ enthält etwa die Gadaba ‚relationship terminology‘ *sprachliche* Festlegungen, welche ohne Alternativen die Affinität des sprechenden Menschen gegenüber einem anderen dokumentieren (so als *wären* empirische Heiraten im Spiel), falls dieser andere Mensch von dem sprechenden Menschen zu einer bestimmten Kategorie der ‚relationship terminology‘ gerechnet wird. Alle Kategorien dieser Art bilden ein kohärentes semantisches Muster des terminologischen Ganzen. Wenn sie nicht in Oxford oder Edinburgh Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie studiert haben, wissen Gadaba nichts von diesem sprachlich dokumentierten Tauschmuster als affinaler Präskription²¹.

21 Die Fachliteratur hat dieses Thema jahrzehntelang diskutiert (siehe Needham 1973).

Im Buch bin ich *keinesfalls* auf einen Widerspruch gestoßen, der „die folgenden beiden Regeln“ (L&W 2017: 124) betrifft, sondern auf einen Widerspruch zwischen den auf verschiedenen analytischen Ebenen gefundenen Aussagen. Zum besseren Verständnis dieses Unterschieds hatte ich den Abschnitt „terminologische Klassifikation“ (2016: 125f.) von dem namens ‚Heiratspraktiken‘ (2016: 131f.) getrennt. Needhams Überlegungen (1967) zur historischen ‚Beharrlichkeit‘ ihrer jeweiligen Aussagen beziehen sich dementsprechend auf Praxis, Norm und terminologisches Muster. Doch L&W *wollen* das affinale Muster der Terminologie nicht zur Kenntnis nehmen. Vermutlich referieren sie deshalb die diesbezüglichen Folgerungen des Buchs falsch.

Mit „Mitgift und Brautpreis“ (2017: 123-124) bezeichnen L&W konkrete Transaktionen von Individuen, die „jedes Mal“ recht unterschiedlich kalkuliert werden, also das, was auch ich gern als Einzelfall zähle oder fotografriere. Dem Standardwerk von Goody und Tambiah (1973) folgend, sollen diese Beobachtungen aber die *gesamtgesellschaftlichen* Beziehungsmuster der Transaktionen identifizieren. Diese Autoren bewerten ‚dowry‘ in Südasien als ‚conjugal fund‘, während ‚bridewealth‘ in Afrika südlich der Sahara als ‚circulating fund‘ eingestuft wird. Zwei fundamental verschiedene Muster gesellschaftlicher Beziehungen – oder systemischer Verbundenheit – ergeben sich demnach unabhängig von den „jedes Mal“ anfallenden Kalkulationen der Individuen.

„Wir haben gerade die meiste Zeit die Heirats-Regeln so beschrieben, als hätten die Verwandtschafts-Kategorien eine handlungsleitende Funktion bei der Wahl der Heiratspartner. Die Piaroa gebrauchen ihr Terminologie-System aber offenbar anders. Was die Kategorien steuern, ist nicht die Wahl des Partners sondern die Benennung des Partners. Es ist zwar nicht völlig beliebig, wer mit wem verheiratet wird, aber um den politischen Zielen der jeweiligen Heirat gerecht zu werden, sind der Partnerwahl ziemlich weite Grenzen gesetzt“ (2017: 124).

Das Buch behauptet niemals, „Verwandtschafts-Kategorien“ hätten „eine handlungsleitende Funktion bei der Wahl der Heiratspartner“ und präsentiert die „ziemlich weiten Grenzen“ der Partnerwahl ausführlich.

„...der Autor wendet sich mal an Leser, die einfältig und etwas lernbehindert sind, mal müssen es alte Hasen mit wachem Verstand sein“ (2017: 125).

Kein Kommentar.

„Heiratssysteme Ihre Anziehungskraft besteht mit Sicherheit auch darin, dass sie die vertracktesten von ‚formalen‘ Regeln bestimmten Systeme der Ethnologie zu bieten haben“ (2017: 126).

Kein Kommentar.

„Angezogen wurden... einige wenige Mathematiker plus Mathematik-Aficionados“ (2017: 126).

Im Buch fehlen Hinweise auf Mathematiker oder Mathematik.

„Die einen wollen nach der ersten einigermaßen ernsthaften Begegnung, wenn möglich, gar nichts mehr mit dem Thema zu tun haben; und die anderen können sich nichts Schöneres vorstellen, als ihr Leben ausschließlich diesem Thema widmen zu dürfen“ (2017: 126).

Kein Kommentar.

„Pfeffer stützt sich für die Garo allerdings nicht auf unsere Ethnographen [G.P.: Burling und Nakane], sondern auf eine Monographie von de Maaker

Man fragt sich, wie es innerhalb von etwa einem halben Jahrhundert zu dieser stillschweigenden Verschiebung in der ethnographischen Berichterstattung kommen konnte. Pfeffer jedenfalls beschreibt nur Verhältnisse, wie man sie in de Maakers Bericht vorfindet, soweit er nicht Needhams Daten übernimmt“ (2017: 127).

Diese verletzende Unterstellung verdrängt die vom jüngeren Ethnografen de Maaker sehr genau dokumentierte vorbildlich enge Zusammenarbeit mit dem älteren Ethnografen Burling²². Die Verschwörungstheorie der Rezension („*stillschweigende Verschiebung in der ethnographischen Berichterstattung*“) ist lediglich bezeichnend für ihre Intentionen. Tatsächlich hat Pfeffer zwar Needhams Folgerungen übernommen, doch auch diese basieren *ausdrücklich nur* (1966) auf Burlings Arbeit. Fazit: *Alle* Aussagen zu den Garo stützen sich auf „unsere(n) Ethnographen“ Burling.

„Das heißt man findet, wie es sich bei einem Moiety-System gehört, bei den Garo Regionen, wo es in der Tat nur zwei exogame Teilgruppen gibt und nicht mehr. Aber es gibt auch Distrikte, wo mehr als zwei exogame Gruppen vorhanden sind (cf. Burling 1968: 22, 361...), was sich nun nicht mit einem Moiety-System verträgt“ (2017: 127).

22 Nakanes oberflächlichere Forschungen sind von den Südasien-Fachleuten kritisch rezipiert worden.

Für L&W entspricht ein Moiety-System „nur zwei exogamen Teilgruppen... und nicht mehr“, also zwei *Gruppen* mit einer Pluralität empirischer Individuen. Dagegen vermittelt eine allgemeine gesellschaftliche Hälften-Ordnung – wie sie auf allen außereuropäischen Kontinenten vorkommt – vielen Fachleuten und mir jene Wert-Idee, die das gesellschaftliche Ganze in zwei sozientrische *Kategorien* (nicht Gruppen) gliedert. Durch das Gebot gegenseitiger affinaler Gaben betonen sie die dauerhafte Verbundenheit ihres gesellschaftlichen Ganzen.

Kein Moiety-System enthält „nur zwei exogame Teilgruppen“. *Alle* müssen mit unterschiedlichen Mengen empirischer Frauen und Männer auskommen. Beim gegebenen universalen Heiratsgebot müssen deshalb *immer* demographische Schwankungen ‚verarbeitet‘ werden. Entsprechend findet eine quantitativ unbedeutende Menge von Garo Sonderlösungen. Von L&W verschwiegen, erläutert das Buch (2016: 336-337) diese Differenz zwischen formalem Muster und seiner empirischen Durchführbarkeit.

„Pfeffer kommt zu dem Ergebnis, bei den Garo sei das in der Verwandtschaftsterminologie vorliegende Heiratsmuster symmetrisch. Er weist allerdings darauf hin, dass Lévi-Strauss hier wohl ein anderes Muster gefunden haben würde, nämlich ein asymmetrisches“ (2017: 127-128).

Pfeffer weist *nicht* darauf hin, „dass Lévi-Strauss hier wohl ein anderes Muster gefunden haben würde“. Er schreibt vielmehr (2016: 334), dass Lévi-Strauss von einem asymmetrischen System der Garo sprechen würde, wenn er das Muster der Heirats*regeln* abstrahierte, also die auf der analytischen Ebene der Verhaltensforderungen (oben *b.*) gefundenen Beziehungen der Garo. Symmetrische Beziehungen dagegen ergibt die Klassifikation der ‚relationship terminology‘ bei Untersuchungen auf der analytischen Ebene des terminologischen Musters (oben *c.*), wie Pfeffer (2016: 335, 336) im Anschluss an Needham und mit einer ausführlichen Beschreibung dieser unterschiedlichen analytischen Ebenen festhält. Demnach verlangen die Heirats*regeln* asymmetrische Gerichtetheit der Gaben (Bräutigame). Symmetrische affinale Beziehungen sind aber *sprachlich* – und damit unausweichlich – im terminologischen Muster der Garo angelegt. Demnach können wir „*nicht* vom Muster der Heirats*regeln* folgern, wie die korrekte Terminologie gestaltet sein muss oder umgekehrt“ (2016: 337). Auch dieser letzte und folgerichtige Satz wird von L&W kritisiert.

„Den Deszendenzterminus hat Pfeffer reserviert für einen Spezialfall von Abstammung, der u.a. mit Exogamie also mit einer bestimmten Heiratsregel verbunden ist“ (2017: 128).

Zu viel der Ehre! Wie ausführlich (Pfeffer 2016: 604f.) erläutert, hat Rivers diese Kriterien vor fast 100 Jahren allgemein eingeführt und Leach (1962:

131) sie nachdrücklich hervorgehoben. Anders als deutsche bestehen Commonwealth Universitäten auf dieser – von der Alltagssprache abweichenden – Kombination der vertikal vorgegebenen unilinearen Abstammungsbeziehung mit der horizontal vorgegebenen Affinitätsbeziehung, der Exogamie im Deszendenzsystem. Vergleichende sozialmorphologische Untersuchungen ergeben entsprechend deutlich voneinander abweichende Gesellschaftsordnungen: Die ethnografischen Schwerpunkte der Deszendenzsysteme liegen in Afrika südlich der Sahara, die der grundsätzlich *anders* ausgerichteten Systeme mit nicht-exogamen soziozentrischen Abstammungskategorien „zwischen Atlas und Indus²³“.

Fazit

Bezogen auf das *odd job word* ‚Verwandtschaft‘ erläutert das besprochene Buch die verschiedenen klassifikatorischen Techniken von Gesellschaft, die jahrtausendlang die einzigen waren (Sahlins 1968: 15). Dieser emanzipatorische Schritt zum überindividuellen Ordnungsmuster ist eine der sensationellen Innovationen von *anthropos*. Spätestens mit der neolithischen Revolution, für die historischen Wissenschaften die fundamentalste der Menschheitsgeschichte, musste jenseits vom situationellen Miteinander der Individuen ein größeres Ganzes, ein normatives System, *gesellschaftliche* Ordnungs- und Orientierungssicherheit schaffen. Mithilfe der Kategorien der ‚Verwandtschaft‘ konnte diese Aufgabe bewältigt werden. Für das Besprechungsteam ist diese These zu unbedeutend, um erwähnt zu werden.

Mithilfe von international anerkannten ethnografischen Monographien präsentiert das Buch insbesondere die – hierzulande weitgehend unbekannt – affinalen Beziehungsmuster mit ihren wechselnden Einzelheiten und ihren theoretischen Erläuterungen. Doch die Rezension richtet sich nachdrücklich gegen dieses Anliegen. Die Zwänge andersartiger sozialer Tatbestände, oder fremde Klassifikationsweisen an sich, sollen nicht wahrgenommen werden. Die Genesis soll Sache der heimischen Pastoren bleiben, ‚Verwandtschaft‘ die der heimischen Vorstellungswelt.

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²³ Diese Formulierung will lediglich langwierige Einzelbeschreibungen vermeiden, wird aber selbstverständlich von L&W ironisiert.

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Dr. Georg Pfeffer (1943-2020) war bis zu seiner Emeritierung 2008 Professor am Institut für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie der Freien Universität Berlin. Bis zu seinem Ruhestand leitete er dort den Forschungsschwerpunkt Asien.

Anmerkung zu Pfeffers Replik

Astrid Wonneberger und Hartmut Lang

Mit Bestürzung haben wir erfahren, dass der Kollege Pfeffer verstorben ist, bevor seine Replik in EthnoScripts erscheinen konnte. Das bekümmert uns.

Auch mussten wir feststellen, dass sich Pfeffer von unserem Rezensieren verletzt gefühlt hat. Davon haben wir nichts gewusst, und das haben wir auch nicht beabsichtigt, ging es uns doch um eine inhaltliche und fachliche Diskussion. Mit Bedauern müssen wir nun hinnehmen, dass diese Debatte um Pfeffers großes und vielseitiges Werk abrupt zu Ende gegangen ist. Und so stehen wir am Schluss der Geschichten, die Pfeffer mit uns geteilt hat – und trauern.

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