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White Namibians in tourism and the politics of belonging through Bushmen

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Namibian Bushmen, such as the Hai//om and the Ju/'hoansi, are increasingly involved in the growing, white-dominated tourism industry. In this, white Namibians tend to position Bushmen and themselves as people of nature and conservationists. Elsewhere, whites from southern Africa have avoided contact with blacks by identifying more with nature than with people. This has been an important element in their "politics of belonging" to the land. From this perspective, Bushmen occupy a special position because they are considered "part of nature" while they are also members of contemporary society. Although this view is paradoxical at first sight, I argue that essentialising Bushmen as people of nature and modernising (developing) them "into society" are compatible ideas that can strengthen white Namibians' belonging to nature *and* society. Against the background of the global indigenous movement and local history, crucial elements in this process of belonging are the tourists' quest for authenticity and southern African paternalism.

Keywords: authenticity; belonging; Bushmen; Namibia; paternalism; tourism; whites

Introduction

Under the pressure of limited government subsidies and liberalised trade markets, many white farmers in Namibia start guest farms to diversify their income. In these touristic environments, (the image of) Bushmen[1] hunter-gatherers is an important attraction. For example, at San World, a guest lodge, tourists are invited to "meet the last survivors of an ancient society … living in close harmony with nature" (Sylvain 2005, 364). Such portrayals and narratives of Bushmen are often conflated with rhetoric about their "primitive state," emphasising the need to protect Bushmen from the evils of contemporary society, their endless need for "development," and the "preservation" of this "endangered culture," almost "as though they were endangered species" (Sylvain 2014, 255). In this narrative, a paradox exists that has also been found among many NGOs that take initiatives to support the Bushmen in southern Africa: "developing" Bushmen into modernity as opposed to "preserving" their culture (Robins 2001). On the one hand, Bushmen are portrayed as essentialised, "prepolitical" and "pristine," the indigenous people of nature living in isolation. On the other hand, this image of Bushmen is seen as invented, created and continually subject to change due to their relationships with various outsiders who shape the Bushmen into an underclass. While NGOs tend to struggle with this paradox, the tourism industry of Namibia has no problem with it: in tourism, the traditionalist position (preservation) turns out to be compatible with that of development (modernisation). Indigenous people themselves, in turn, use the essentialism at both ends of the paradox strategically to increase their chances for foreign donorship (Sylvain 2014; Spivak 2009; Robins 2001), or to appeal to tourists.

At the global level, the image of Bushmen as people of nature cannot be seen apart from the movement for the recognition of indigenous rights. This movement takes place within complex and shifting fields of power that include NGOs and international advocacy networks (Hodgson 2011, 4–6). The movement has taken up the strong essentialism of indigenous peoples. With the support of popular media and NGOs, the criteria for recognition of indigenous rights increasingly

focus on cultural aspects and exclude political and socio-economic ones. Strong ties to the land are often linked to cultural identity, implying that land rights are able to restore a "traditional" (primordial) identity. In this global context, Bushmen have been faced with the decision of either joining the movement, thereby embracing essentialist narratives and behaviour, or staying excluded. So while "culture" has an increased strategic advantage, "class" has become depoliticised. In fact, this emphasis on "culture" seems to conceal the class of landless (farm) Bushmen. Therefore, as a Bushman, a way to become "visible" is to adjust to this popular imagery based on culture. Such popular stereotypes, however, play an important role in the reproduction of poverty and class inequalities (Sylvain 2002, 2005). Today, one way to "be seen" is in tourism, one of the few sectors in which marginalised Bushmen can find a job (Koot 2013). Therefore, the global indigenous movement provides a justification for essentialism, in tourism and elsewhere.

Essentialism claimed by an indigenous group can, however, also be strategically used by others, such as by Namibian whites involved in tourism who use it to make claims to their own "strategic belonging" to nature and/or society. In fact, it could well be that the perpetual search for "the last wild Bushmen" relates to the search for a new white identity in an uncertain southern African post-apartheid situation (Gordon 2014, 111). In this paper, I explore the role of the image of Bushmen as "people of nature" in the politics of belonging for white Namibians who work in tourism. The "other" has received extensive attention in academia, especially in anthropology, with investigations of how it is imagined and constructed (Gordon 1997, 9). In addition, the analysis of "belonging" and "identity" are back on the anthropological agenda, in particular in southern Africa where a new uptake of ethnic identifications and affiliations has been an unexpected development after the earlier anti-apartheid rejection of "ethnoracial labels." These new developments have increased the importance of studying the politics of difference and belonging that come to life in social processes and through power relations (Becker 2010, 75–76).

Gressier (2014b, 2) explained how "[t]he inherent insecurity of being a white minority in post-colonial southern Africa has … led white citizens to make emphatic assertions of belonging, while developing certain cultural values and practices, which serve to strengthen connections to their home." Such notions of belonging often create clear ethnic boundaries between various groups in relation to the defence of land or home, arousing strong emotions and political manipulation (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000, 424). In these processes, "belonging" refers broadly to claims and politics over foreignness, autochthony and citizenship (Rutherford 2014, 220; cf. Geschiere 2009). Through different "modes of belonging" (e.g. institutional arrangements, routinised discourses and social practices) people claim rights and resources to become "incorporated" in a particular social and/or geographical environment. Such processes lead to cultural styles of interaction within particular spaces of power and authority (Rutherford 2008).

In this paper, I argue that some Namibian whites in tourism strengthen their own sense of belonging to nature and society through the Bushmen. They show a strong attachment to the Bushmen and, because Bushmen are positioned in nature, strengthen their own sense of belonging to nature. I suggest that this narrative of preservation is compatible with a narrative of modernisation, protection and "development," for example by creating jobs or training in hospitality. This practical engagement with Bushmen increases the political character of the interaction and strengthens the claims by these whites of belonging to society. Against the background of the global indigenous movement and strong historical ties between white Namibians and Bushmen, important elements in this process are the perpetuation of southern African paternalism and the quest by tourists for the authentic Bushman.

The paper opens with an historical contextualisation of the relation between Bushmen and white Namibians and shortly describes the methodological approach of the research. It examines case material about the relations between white Namibians and the Hai//om and Ju/'hoansi respectively, two groups of Namibian Bushmen, and analyses them in relation to belonging and the

problem of representation. The discussion takes into account the issue of paternalism and the quest by tourists for authenticity.

Historical background

In the early twentieth century, Bushmen in Namibia were generally portrayed as heavily impoverished (for example on postcards). Their image was later systematically romanticised to depict human exceptionalities, first by members of the Denver African Expedition of 1925. The impact of such popular stereotypes should not be underestimated, as they are still dominant today. Thus, ranging from Afrikaans literature to museums, Bushmen became very popular. In fact, their images had "important [yet] unintended consequences, illustrated [by] the role of bushmen in creating a national settler-identity in Namibia" (Gordon 1997, 1–11). In settler farmer narratives, Bushmen were often equated with the bush and wildness. They were seen as those who had a natural relation with the land and were positioned somewhere between animals and humans (Suzman 2000, 49). Namibia's colonial administration, wanting to attract settlers to the area, advertised it as a "wilderness" with good hunting possibilities. In early tourism, Bushmen proved to be a key attraction for scientists and affluent adventurers (Gordon 1997, 102–103). Still today, the tourist sector in southern Africa uses branding strategies based on the image of a wild Africa, in which the continent is presented as a spectacular place sparsely populated by some Western explorers and exotic people (Ellis 1994, 54; Massyn 2008, 228).

Because of the interest of global scientists in what were seen as "relics" from the Stone Age, the settlers' original aim of exterminating the Bushmen diminished. Rather, they gained respectability and built up a settler identity by supporting scientific institutions and (mostly German) expeditions, in which Bushman life was considered as providing a glimpse into humanity's past (Gordon 2003). The Western culture-nature dichotomy has historically resulted in a discourse of "those who live on nature and those who live in it," in which Bushmen were always considered as a "testing laboratory" for Euro-American scholars' own past (Wilmsen 1989, 3–4). Until today, images and narratives of the Bushman as a "noble savage" persist as hegemony in the media, development discourse, anthropology and tourism. Maintaining these "fairy tales" serves the interests of academics (anthropologists in particular), environmentalists (Gordon 1997, 117–121) and the tourism sector. Early white settlers also understood well the special status of Bushmen in Europe and learned how to capitalise on this, positioning themselves as their spokesmen and portraying the Bushmen as "authentic" (Gordon 2003). In this way, Bushmen became engaged in manifold paternalistic relations, mostly, but not only, on white-owned settler farms.

Although paternalism is hard to define and there are numerous variants to be found worldwide, it is mainly a labour management method that was dominant throughout colonial history, based on the narrative of the family. It contains important elements, such as edification, protection, care, welfare and sometimes practices of coercion between the "father" and his "children." Paternalism is based on the assumption that the person in authority needs to govern on behalf of the governed, who are considered as immature and incapable of recognising their own long-term interests (Gibbon, Daviron, and Barral 2014, 165–173). During colonialism, relationships developed globally in which whites were seen as naturally superior to indigenous people. In southern African rural history, this view resulted in white farmers becoming patrons to client farmworkers (Plotkin 2002, 5–7). Such relations moved far beyond a relation of employment, based on labour and wages; these relations dominated social life as well, in which the white farmer had the ultimate power of judgement and decision-making (Du Toit 1993, 315–323). Although farmworkers would always negotiate and exercise agency in the relationships they had with their employers, relationships that were marked by power, farmers controlled most of the resources for workers, such as money, electricity, land, water and transport. As a result, farmers became the main service providers for their workers, acting as a local state without a constitution, or what Rutherford aptly termed "domestic government" (Du Toit 1994, 379–380; Rutherford 2001).

Many examples of this system are depicted as harsh and brutal. Yet, although there is no reason to doubt such accounts, we should be careful to generalise them too easily. Various examples have shown that such black worker–white farmer dynamics were not always, and definitely not only, harsh (van Onselen 1990). In the end, paternalism cannot exist solely because of domination "from above"; a certain level of accommodation is required from subaltern groups (Sylvain 2001, 728–731). Nevertheless, among many Namibian farmers Bushmen were regarded as a "child race" that had to be disciplined because it was seen as unreliable, for example with money, drinking or leaving a job unannounced. Bringing up these "children" of nature was conceived of in the same way as controlling nature (Suzman 2000, 51–52). In contrast, Bushmen themselves looked at their relationship with farmers as a class struggle: in their view they had to cope with job insecurity and were getting paid too little for work under bad circumstances (Sylvain 2005; cf. Sylvain 2001).

Methodological note

The findings here are based on my numerous visits to Namibia since 1999, starting with half a year of ethnographic fieldwork at the resettlement farm Tsintsabis for my MA degree in anthropology. Between 2002 and 2007, I returned to support the establishment of the community-based tourism project, Treesleeper Camp. Although I was not a researcher then, this long stay played an essential role in the development of my ideas about the dynamics between Bushmen and white farmers, NGOs, the government and other ethnically- or racially-defined groups of citizens, especially in relation to tourism. For my PhD I conducted half a year of research in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa in 2010, including various return visits to Tsintsabis and a two-month stay in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy. The research took the form of participant observation in relation to conservation and tourism dynamics, including 3 interviews from Tsintsabis and 45 from Nyae Nyae.

Based on my long involvement with many (mostly Hai//om) residents of Tsintsabis, I was able to build up strong personal and professional relationships with them. Because I worked on a cultural tourism project with them, the image of Bushmen as "people of nature" was important for my own relations there. I held many discussions about this image at a local level and in Namibian tourism in general. This resulted in an activity at Treesleeper in which we tried to concentrate on contemporary "reality" by creating a village tour for tourists. From a commercial point of view, this activity never matched the more "traditional" bushwalk in its popularity (cf. Hüncke and Koot 2012). In sum, the views developed in this paper are based both on detailed and systematic fieldwork, and on a longer personal engagement with Hai//om Bushmen in various developmental projects.

The Hai//om, the Ju/'hoansi and white belonging
Are the Hai//om "real" Bushmen?

The majority of the Hai//om Bushmen became farm workers after white colonists settled in their area at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like other "farm Bushmen," their culture came to be characterised by landlessness and marginalisation. As a result, these Bushmen are often seen as failing to meet "the Bushman standard," thus not being "real" Bushmen, as defined by farmers, Western media and other Africans (Sylvain 2002).

It turns out, however, that if these farm Bushmen become engaged in tourism, they *can* again be positioned in nature. This was shown in the commercial farming area adjacent to the famous Etosha National Park, where white farmers perceive Bushmen to have a close connection with nature and to live their lives as Stone Age people in need of "development." For example, farmers would consider the Hai//om better managers for Etosha than its current parastatal administrative body, the Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR), thereby positioning the Bushmen well in Namibian society (Hüncke 2010, 84–85). This line of thinking is based on unjustly positioning the Hai//om as the "indigenous stewards" of nature (Fennell 2008) and can be seen as a critique of the current management of nature conservation and tourism by the Namibian government. It shows how

a politics of belonging to nature conjoins with belonging to society. In fact, negative comments about the NWR and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) have been regular topics in my conversations with tour operators and white farmers. Criticising the current government takes place on the basis of Bushman romanticism. In addition, white farmers portrayed various Bantu groups, especially the Owambo who form the majority in Namibia and dominate the political landscape, as invading Bushman territories and exploiting them. Such narratives show a strong empathy by white farmers for the Bushmen, based on the threat of a "common enemy," namely the new black elite (Hüncke 2010, 86). In this rhetoric, however, there is a tendency to ignore the role of the former white colonial regime in the economic marginalisation of Bushmen.

Paradoxically, "white farmers perceived them [Bushmen] as people of a low cultural and moral standard" (Hüncke 2010, 84–86), which allowed for their exclusion from ownership and management positions, leaving local whites in charge. For example, the white manager of the Ombili Foundation at Hedwigslust farm (which is regularly visited by tourists) explained in an article in *The Namibian* on July 13, 2013, that Ombili can help Bushmen adapt to modernity, such as growing their own food and attending school. These developments happen on the basis of the conviction "that Bushmen do not have a thinking of the future and that they lack the responsibility for their own lives" (Hüncke 2010, 85–86). This is based on ideas of white superiority and the inferior and un(der)developed status of the Bushmen. It also plays a crucial role when local farmers claim the right to determine who is or is not a Bushman. For example, when some commented on the tour guides working at Treesleeper Camp in Tsintsabis, they believed that these tour guides were not capable of presenting Bushmen culture. They argued that someone with "a deeper knowledge" should engage in cultural tourism of Bushmen, such as local commercial white farmers who grew up with "real" Bushmen, instead of these "hybrids," meaning people of mixed descent (Hüncke 2010, 113). Although the white farmers themselves originate from Europe, they consider themselves as having better knowledge of local nature than some Bushmen do, which in some cases could be true of course. Their identification evidently happens only with the "real" Bushmen, meaning those who are still (seen as) connected to, or a part of, nature.

Muramba Bushman Trails

A neighbouring farmer of Tsintsabis runs a commercial tourism enterprise, called the Muramba Bushman Trails. These trails are fully based on essentialised Bushman culture. Additionally, this farmer has written an informative book about the natural environment, Hai//om traditions and their connection with Etosha National Park, identifying with nature directly and through Hai//om traditions (Friederich and Lempp 2009, 17). At Muramba, the farmer himself is the tour guide, assisted by a Hai//om employee (for showing traps and making fire). He is very knowledgeable about Bushmen in their natural environment and speaks Hai//om fluently. Moreover, the man has strong and negative opinions about the current Namibian government, Owambo people (and how they run down Etosha), academics and NGOs. He includes these opinions in his encounters with tourists. Furthermore, he believes that it is better to stay away from the Bushmen if you have not grown up with them or speak their language, this way showing his authority. Van Onselen called this the "tired old theme of having 'grown up with the natives' or 'knowing them'," which was often used to underwrite apartheid (1992, 140; cf. Suzman 2000, 48–49; cf. Sylvain 2001, 731–733). In his rhetoric, connecting with nature and politics go hand-in-hand. Naming himself an environmentalist, he explained to me once how Bushmen are and should stay part of nature, whereas society with all its evils should be kept at a distance from them because they could not cope. "The first thing that needs to be done," he explained, "is to drop a bomb on that bottle store [in Tsintsabis]."

In its early days, he supported Treesleeper on various occasions, especially with "bush knowledge" (for example, with finding a good spot for the water pump, recommendations for the bushwalk or for building next to the riverbed). His knowledge of nature and Bushmen was celebrated

widely in Namibia and some young tour guides in Windhoek respected him for this. A white Namibian tour guide, for example, aspired to become the best "Bushman-expert" of Namibia next to the Muramba owner. This indicates that knowledge about "nature" and essentialised "Bushmen" is highly-valued in tourism, often to the point of serious bragging.[2]

The Ju/'hoansi, the trophy hunter and the Herero

Scattered across the Nyae Nyae Conservancy in northern Namibia, the relatively homogeneous Ju/'hoansi Bushmen live in approximately 36 small settlements. Activities in Nyae Nyae are dominated by a Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme that includes various tourism initiatives with a strong focus on conservation. Although the Ju/'hoansi in this area hardly worked on white farms, they have historically been engaged in relationships with white South Africans through the South African administration, its army and its conservation officials (Gordon and Douglas 2000; Koot 2013, 60–71). Today, the Ju/'hoansi engage in relationships with white Namibians mostly in the tourism and conservation industries.

An important financial engine of the CBNRM programme is trophy hunting, which is all about "mastering nature" in a romantic and adventurous Africa. In the Namibian trophy hunting discourse, issues of poverty and development are dismissed in favour of a portrayal of Bushmen who have never changed (Gordon 1997, 129). In Nyae Nyae, Ju/'hoansi act as assistants, although it is often said that the activity of assisting trophy hunters suits them very well because of their hunting and gathering origins (cf. Fennell 2008). In reality, trophy hunting does not have a lot to do with subsistence hunting: it is based on postcolonial dynamics of the white hunter[3] with his black assistants in subordinate positions. Nevertheless, proponents (such as conservationists and trophy hunters) justify hunting because it supposedly benefits local communities, favours nature conservation and creates a real experience of nature and a connection to the wilderness for the hunters and their clients (Gressier 2014a). In an interview with Ju/'hoansi trackers who worked for the main contractor of Nyae Nyae, an elephant hunter, they seriously complained about his disrespectful behaviour towards them. And yet, when the hunter ended his contract, he explained in *Huntinamibia* in 2012 that he "will miss Bushmanland [Nyae Nyae] with its huge, ancient Baobabs, but above all, its humble, kind-hearted people, whose outstanding tracking skills played such a crucially important role." Clearly, he shows a strong identification with the natural environment (trees) and praises the Ju/'hoansi and their (natural) tracking skills.

Conservation and tourism can become very political. For long, the Ju/'hoansi in Nyae Nyae have experienced problems with Herero pastoralists moving in with their cattle in search of grazing land and water (Harring and Odendaal 2002, 83). A development worker defended the Herero explaining that the Ju/'hoansi

> are quite defensive ... There is a little [Herero] location [in Tsumkwe, the administrative settlement of Nyae Nyae] … [with] houses made out of plastic ... and I keep asking myself: 'Why would they want to … stay in plastic houses like that?'

In Tsumkwe, most people live in brick houses and therefore the mentioning of these Herero living in plastic houses signifies poverty. The marginalised Herero consider the Ju/'hoansi as privileged and heavily-supported "pets" of Western development workers and anthropologists (Hays 2009, 32). This support has been extended to the government and the tourism industry: a respondent told me anonymously that people working in tourism for the Namibia Country Lodges (NCL, see below) and the MET secretly inform *The Namibian*, a daily newspaper, about local meetings in which Herero were described as being dominating to the point of intimidating, especially towards the Ju/'hoansi (Hays 2009, 26). In this situation, local whites in the tourism industry tend to join forces with Western and local nature conservationists, NGO representatives and donors (such as the World Wildlife Fund) who all tend to support the Ju/'hoansi. They put the blame on the Herero pastoralists, for being dominant and for their cattle intruding on the "natural surroundings" of the

Nyae Nyae Conservancy and the Ju/'hoansi. This shows the tendency to protect nature *and* the Bushmen. It is important to realise here that there are a number of restrictions on owning livestock or growing crops for everyone in Nyae Nyae, although many Ju/'hoansi wish to engage in these economic activities. Ju/'hoansi involvement in the tourism industry suits a lot of people engaged in Nyae Nyae better, because it maintains the view of Ju/'hoansi as authentically part of nature. This leads to a narrative in which nature conservation, the preservation of culture and the development of the poor is combined. Various white Namibians have now joined in on the (mostly Western-driven) conservation movement and work for environmental NGOs, the MET or in tourism (Koot 2013, 60–71). This should be seen in a global context, in which it has become common to link issues of biological diversity with the promotion of a particular image of indigenous people. Whereas they used to be considered the "destroyers" of nature, today indigenous people are embraced as "protectors" of environmental sustainability (Hodgson 2011; cf. Fennell 2008).

Tsumkwe Country Lodge and Nhoma Safari Camp

The Tsumkwe Country Lodge is a central point for tourism in Nyae Nyae. It is owned by the NCL and offers tourists a chance to visit Ju/'hoansi settlements in the Conservancy. The NCL-appointed white Namibian manager explained that one of the lodge's main duties was the development of the local Bushman community. This was marked by tension, however, as Ju/'hoansi employees had become very dissatisfied with the new manager after the NCL had acquired the lodge and had left their jobs. Still, he believes he should make "good people" of the Bushmen by limiting their drinking and teaching them the rules of a big company. Additionally, he explained:

> I call them my children, the Bushmen, and we [NCL] identified a big problem here ... We want to build a classroom, a community centre [where] we want to organise a course for the children of the community about the culture of the San people, which must be taught by the elders, those who stay in the villages, about their own tradition. Because it looks as if it is starting to die out.

Although the manager claimed to be a real nature lover, some local Ju/'hoansi blamed him for spending too much time inside his house watching television. Whether this is true or not I do not know, but he told me that he is crazy about the National Geographic and Animal Planet channels, thereby consuming nature and identifying with it from a distance. And although he had hunted when he was younger, he later turned against it and started favouring conservation initiatives (contrary to most trophy hunters he obviously does not consider hunting conservation). His love for nature was shown by a dislike of fences for animals and his strong support for the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), an initiative that would lead to the free movement of animals across the borders of five adjacent countries, including the Nyae Nyae area of Namibia. He explained that he stayed away from the famous, fenced and very touristic Etosha National Park, which he called the spoiled "zoo of Namibia," and presented himself as belonging to the pure nature of Nyae Nyae together with the Ju/'hoansi. When a white Namibian woman was installed as new manager in 2012,[4] she also described herself as a "bush person" who did not like living in "town" and who enjoyed the peace and quiet of Tsumkwe. She indicated that she would feel bad to leave her "family" behind, meaning the lodge and its workers (van der Burg 2013, 35).

The position of the two managers stands in contrast to that of the former lodge owner, also a white Namibian, who had sold the lodge because he was fed up with the many problems in Tsumkwe, such as the noise of the lodge's generator, the music, the politics and the barking dogs. To him, Tsumkwe today was nothing like the "real Africa," meaning a peaceful natural environment. His perception of "nature" obviously differed from that of the two later managers of the lodge who perceived the place as life in the bush. What "nature" is clearly depends on a person's perception. The former owner moved to Nhoma, a Ju/'hoansi settlement just outside the Nyae Nyae Conservancy that he had been visiting with tourists since the 1980s, where he built the Nhoma Safari Camp, a luxurious tented camp that is situated in typical African nature, with

activities based on the essentialised Bushman image. As of May 5, 2014, the camp's website portrays the Ju/'hoansi traditionally. In addition, it says about the owner that "[a]s a young boy he used to travel with his … father to all the remote areas in Namibia … learning the ways of the wild." Moreover, the website explains that tourism has helped Bushmen to receive an income, stay on their land and receive a village school and a borehole "because of our intervention." He has written letters to have a nearby Kavango cattle post removed, since "[i]t is most important that they [Ju/'hoansi] don't lose this land to cattle owners of other tribes." This shows political activity both through and for the Bushmen. Again, the conservation of nature, the preservation of Bushman culture and development are easily compatible.

When an anthropology student with whom I worked went to Nhoma for some interviews, the owner showed his authority over Nhoma and "his" Bushmen by restricting access and controlling the amount of time she was permitted to stay there. After two days he instructed her to leave because a BBC film crew was about to visit. Apparently, he had a contract with the village that he was the only one to work with them (van der Burg 2013, 41). This not only shows a strong sense of authority and ownership over the Nhoma Ju/'hoansi, but also over their essentialised image and its representation.

Discussion
Belonging and representation
We have seen how local white Namibians who are involved in tourism tend to connect strongly with nature, land and the environment: they identify as people from the bush, show strong conservation values, feel emotionally and sometimes spiritually attached to their surroundings, have lots of detailed knowledge about the environment and tend to gain from it economically, just as in some places in Botswana and Zimbabwe (Gressier 2008, 163–164; Hughes 2010). Therefore, it is valuable to compare the Namibian situation with dynamics of belonging in other southern African settings. The comparison here is focused on the discovery of a cultural logic "that underlies, articulates or generates the observable diversity of cultural forms and patterns" (Holy 1987, 16). "Belonging," "paternalism" and "tourism" form the main criteria for comparison.

White Zimbabweans, for example, escaped society — and thereby as much close contact with the black population as possible — by focusing on and identifying with nature, the land and the environment, often becoming conservationists. However, "they [whites] turned away from native, African people and focused instead on African landscapes [in which] they had to *imagine* the natives away" (Hughes 2010, xi–xiii). This idea reveals the most interesting difference between white Zimbabweans and white Namibians in tourism as, for the latter, the politics of belonging can also happen "through" a particular group of indigenous people, namely Bushmen. So when white Namibians turn to nature to "escape society," this nature is not imagined as void of people. They have long engaged with the people living in nature, often even constructing them as a part of nature. Hughes' work has been criticised for showing historical and social "amnesia," which has led to unfair and essentialised depictions of white Zimbabweans (Hartnack 2014). Wylie (2012) and Hammar (2012) explain how Hughes' analysis omits white Zimbabweans who do not fit the picture, and that a wider, more complicated history and social diversity were erased as, for example, the urban ones. This criticism is well-founded and shows once more the dangers of essentialisation and representation.

Hartnack (2014, 10–12) has argued for the important role that differences in generation, social class and income, urban/rural backgrounds and the influence of globalisation play in inter-racial engagement. It is thus important to give some contextualisation of the white informants in this paper: they share certain characteristics that are likely to have influenced their politics of belonging. They are male (except for one) and forty-five years or older, which means that they grew up under the South African apartheid regime. In addition, they either did so in rural areas (mostly on farms) or went on bush trips from a young age. They work in tourism, where nature

and the primordial Bushmen are highly valued. White Namibians are not a homogeneous group and, indeed, we should be careful of generalising the argument of this paper to "white Namibians (in tourism)" or even "white Southern Africans" (even though the social phenomena applicable to some white farmers in Namibia can, of course, apply elsewhere in the region where there are similar contexts). Regarding the white informants for this paper, they are German- and Afrikaans-speaking Namibians. While different population groups in Namibia have their own histories and characteristics, both of these groups are increasingly involved in tourism today.

Paternalism and the Bushman image in tourism

As Suzman (2000, 56–57) argued, it is not so much in culture and a past of hunting and gathering where the marginalised class of Bushmen finds its identity, but in their relation with others, often their more dominant neighbours. Today, such neighbours are manifold, from the local level to the national and the global level. In addition to the white population, many other groups have also been involved in strong (historical) paternalist relations with Bushmen. One of them is the government in the form of the MET which, for example, caused numerous problems at the Treesleeper project due to its controlling and paternalistic approach to matters concerning Bushmen (Koot 2013, 233; cf. Dieckmann 2011, 175–176).

Paternalism is an important feature of white belonging through Bushmen. This phenomenon originates in rural environments where it "takes a culturally unique form in southern Africa" (Sylvain 2001, 718; cf. Suzman 2000, 56–57). This uniqueness makes it useful to compare with the situation in other countries of the region. In the southern African countryside, paternalism has long been an important way of engaging between whites and blacks. It was very common that children would grow up together inter-racially until puberty, which would lead to whites claiming to know the "other" well and to own him/her (van Onselen 1992, 139–141). Paternalism towards Bushmen continues today (cf. Gordon 2003), albeit in slightly changed format, in the tourism sector where the idea of the "noble savage" only seems to increase despite all the current knowledge about Bushmen.

In stories told in tourist settings, for example in narratives about what wildlife had been seen during an outing, tourists are sometimes described as ignorant of the bush, thus as outsiders who *do not* belong, whereas the local whites are presented as knowing the bush and as participants who *do* belong (cf. Gressier 2011, 367–370). In this rhetoric, Bushmen are often positioned in nature as exotic people. They fit well because tourism in southern Africa is heavily nature-based and wild-life-oriented, and conjoins with the values of nature conservation. Based on the old farm system, paternalistic relationships and dependencies can continue into post-colonial times and spread to off-farm settings (Du Toit 2004, 997–998). Through the maintenance of paternalist relationships in tourism, Namibian whites not only essentialise Bushmen as people of nature, but also consider themselves as their protectors. Such behaviour shows a strong sense of belonging, simultaneously connecting to nature and society. Based on colonial history, nationalist and post-colonial histories in southern African countries tend to deny whites an autochthonous status as ethnic minority, and they are often presented as inauthentic (Gressier 2014b, 5; cf. Geschiere 2009). This ambivalence makes belonging an important strategy for white Namibians, in which paternalism, (essentialised) Bushmen and tourism are crucial elements.

In Namibian tourism, a romantic picture of nature dominates. In fact, two important Namibian bestsellers among tourists are *The Sheltering Desert* by Henno Martin (originally published in 1957 but continuously reprinted since; cf. Gordon 2003) and the autobiography *The White Bushman* by Peter Stark (2011). These adventurous books, both written in German, are about white men encountering and conquering nature. Both were translated into English and Afrikaans. This means that these books are popular among a wide range of people, including tourists and locals of southern Africa, who might all well identify with the main characters of the books. In fact, the late Peter Stark was a farm manager, a lion hunter and a nature conservationist whose "fearless

personality and phenomenal knowledge of the San people and their culture make for stories and experiences that most people can only dream of" (Stark 2011, back cover). He was known "for his in-depth knowledge of the bushveld and his adventures with wildlife and the [Hai//om] bushman [sic]" (Berry 2013).

Conclusion

The histories and social lives of the two ethnic minorities of this paper, white Namibians and Bushmen, have to a high degree merged, based to a large extent on a history of paternalism in southern Africa. Such paternalism seems to be perpetuated in Namibian tourism. Although it originated on white farms in southern Africa, the boundaries of the farm have not proven as limitation for this social construction. Within this power relation, the construction of Bushmen as primordial hunter-gatherers in nature is continually redefined.

The respondents in this paper are all white Namibians who are involved in tourism and all show a strong attachment to Bushmen. They create a forceful connection with Bushmen as people of nature, but also one with Bushmen as people in need of development and protection. Together, this shows a strong sense of belonging to nature *and* society simultaneously. Although this construction is characterised by a clear contradiction, this tends to be overlooked in tourism and paternalist practices. In fact, both images seem to be easily compatible. On the one hand, Bushmen need to be "primordial" to be visible. On the other hand, they are in need of "development," which means that they would abandon the same image that created their need for development in the first place. In this way, they are continually reconstructed as an underclass. In the end, Bushmen need to be seen as "un(der)developed" to be suitable for development in the first place. What this "development" entails is fully based on the patron's values. In this way, both images, that of the primordial and that of the "almost-modern" citizen, function as complementary. So, paradoxically the "to-be-preserved" culture is also "to-be-developed": while preservation implies keeping culture as it is, in this case meaning a culture of nature, development implies change.

Justified by global images of indigenous essentialism and the search for the "traditional" Bushman in tourism, this narrative is also used by certain white Namibians to make political claims and to reveal a strong sense of belonging to Namibian society. From their powerful position, these white Namibians tend to speak for the Bushmen as if they are in need of protection from groups that are politically and economically more powerful (e.g. the government or pastoralist groups). In this manner, certain white Namibians perform politics through Bushmen, a politics of belonging that strengthens Bushman dependency and their status as the underclass. How Bushmen respond to this is beyond the scope of this paper but their resistance and agency need to be further investigated. The examples in this paper have shown that white Namibians in tourism seem to be very susceptible to belonging through Bushmen.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The synonyms "Bushmen" and "San" are both used in the literature for the original hunter-gatherers of southern Africa. Both are considered derogatory or racist and arouse emotions in their relationships with other cultures (Gordon and Douglas 2000, 6). In Namibia, the term "Bushmen" is used by most people. I use it for three reasons: the people of Tsintsabis and Nyae Nyae, the areas of research for this paper, tend to use it; it dominates in the tourism industry, another focus of this paper; and it captures the relevant image that is the focus of this paper (as people from the bush, people from nature) (also see "Methodological note" in the Introduction).
2. "Bragging" about nature and knowledge of the Bushmen is not limited to white Namibians and seems quite widespread in the tourism industry, especially among tour guides. For example, a tour guide from London who lived in Namibia told me that he was very good friends with the Muramba owner and that

they regularly "discussed Bushmen" and "shared knowledge." When I later mentioned the tour guide to the Muramba owner, the latter did not have a clue about whom I was talking. He explained that he received too many tour guides to remember them all.

3.   Although hunters are generally white, today some members of the new black elite (for example, the former president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma) have become eager hunters.

4.   In general, southern African paternalism is based on patriarchy and clear gender relations (see, for example, van Onselen 1992; Rutherford 2001; Sylvain 2001). For another example of matriarchy in Namibian tourism, see Koot (2013, 318–319).

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