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# *Giving Land (Back)? The Meaning of Land in the Indigenous Politics of the South Kalahari Bushmen Land Claim, South Africa*

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*In this article, we analyse the land claim of the South Kalahari Bushmen (≠Khomani) to reflect critically on the South African land restitution process in relation to their contemporary marginalised socio-economic situation. South Kalahari Bushmen were gradually displaced between the 1930s and 1970s and, after apartheid, they were reinstated as landowners in 1999. This does not mean, however, that the historical injustice of land dispossession is now solved. We argue that this can be explained by theoretically comparing a genealogical and a relational approach (based on so-called 'building' and 'dwelling' world views/ontologies, respectively) on land as different ways of looking at the claim. The genealogical model often used by advocates (non-governmental organisations [NGOs], governments, some anthropologists and donors) of 'indigenous' peoples' rights generally overlooks a crucial element that becomes apparent when looking at the claim from a relational perspective, namely that the meaning of the regained land has changed; it is not the same as the environment that was taken away. Moreover, the people from whom the land was taken are not the same as those to whom it is returned. We conclude that the dominant focus on giving land 'back' to previously dispossessed peoples in South Africa needs to account for the ways in which different world views influence the nature of land claims and consequent developments on the land afterwards; this relates to ideal-types of world views that in practice always blend into more concrete, worldly politics, which, in this case, happens especially around ideas of 'indigeneity'.*

**Keywords:** South Africa; Bushmen; dwelling perspective; land claim; Kgalagadi; indigeneity; ≠Khomani

## **Introduction**

The 2012 documentary *Tracks Across Sand*<sup>1</sup> shows the 'successful' land claim of the South Kalahari Bushmen (or ≠Khomani San)<sup>2</sup> in South Africa. The claim has brought justice and

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1 H. Brody, *Tracks across Sand: The ≠Khomani San of the Southern Kalahari – The Story of a Land Claim* (DVD, DER Documentary, 2012).

2 This group is generally known as the ≠Khomani San, but Koot has spoken to many individuals who preferred to be named (South Kalahari) Bushmen, because the ancestry of this group of Bushmen is based on various groups that used to live in the southern parts of the Kalahari, of which the original ≠Khomani were only one small group. The name ≠Khomani was given just before the land claim by the government. See A. Barnard, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992).

victory to a marginalised group of (former) hunter-gatherers: the ‘indigenous’ Bushmen who used to live on the land that has now been returned to them. However, the documentary also reveals unfulfilled expectations, failed development initiatives, alcoholism, violence, murder and suicide. Thus the marginalisation and related social challenges that the people experienced before the claim did not end with the restitution of land: ‘[t]he claim may have brought justice, but it could not ensure wellbeing’.<sup>3</sup> As a claimant, a middle-aged man selling crafts to tourists at the roadside, explained in an interview in 2010, ‘I am happy and grateful to the government that they gave us land [...] but I also complain, because development goes slow’ (interview, 6 July 2010). An important element in the claim was the use of genealogical ancestry that has helped to prove who is or is not indigenous to the land under claim. In fact, ‘[p]utting together family trees was an important part of the work for the land claim’.<sup>4</sup> This is familiar in the global indigenous people movement, in which genealogies are often fundamental to claiming a collective indigenous identity.<sup>5</sup>

The South Kalahari Bushmen land claim is unique because it is the first settled claim in South Africa after the demise of apartheid in 1994, and because Bushmen are former nomads who have therefore always been disregarded in relation to land ownership under colonial rule, while they themselves never thought that they indeed ‘owned’ the land. Moreover, the claimants in this case lived spread out over various locations in South Africa with different livelihoods (see below) and cannot therefore be regarded as a (relatively) homogeneous group, such as the famous Ju/’hoansi of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, Namibia, or the /Gui and the //Gana of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana. Instead, they more closely resemble other geographically dispersed groups with heterogeneous livelihoods, such as the Hai//om in Namibia. Furthermore, while only 10 per cent of today’s Bushmen retains access to their former natural resources, ‘the cultural revival, socio-economic development, and political empowerment that many believed would be part of the ≠Khomani land-claim victory have yet to materialize in full’.<sup>6</sup> Formerly displaced populations often remain at risk of long-term social marginalisation.<sup>7</sup> Various other Bushmen groups in southern Africa are involved in ongoing land claims and access to resources. For example, the Khwe of the Okavango delta, Botswana, the Khwe in Bwabwata National Park, Namibia, the Hai//om of the Etosha area, Namibia and the Ju/’hoansi, /Gui and //Gana populations mentioned above have all been or still are involved in land disputes, often in relation to access to natural resources and nature conservation strategies.<sup>8</sup> In fact, some Bushmen groups are still being deprived of their lands today because, during colonial history, ‘derivative Western formal models have been implicitly applied to San polities’.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, in South Africa a politics of indigeneity seems to become more prominent, for example among the Griqua and Korana people of the Western Cape and the Karretjie people of the Great Karoo, mostly residing in the Northern Cape. The latter group, in particular, tends to identify for a large part as San (or Bushman) today, rather than coloureds (which is how they have been presented in the past, just like the South Kalahari Bushmen) and they

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3 Brody, *Tracks across Sand*; see also R. Fleming Puckett, “‘The Space to Be Themselves’: Confronting the Mismatch Between South Africa’s Land Reform Laws and Traditional San Social Organization among the ≠Khomani’, *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 99 (2018), pp. 285–343.

4 Brody, *Tracks across Sand*.

5 A. Kuper, ‘The Return of the Native’, *Current Anthropology*, 44, 3 (2003), pp. 389–402.

6 Fleming Puckett, “‘The Space to Be Themselves’”, p. 287.

7 G. Rodgers, ‘Internal Displacement and Social Marginalisation in Southern Africa’, *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies*, 36, 2 (2006), pp. 131–41.

8 R.K. Hitchcock, “‘We Are the Owners of the Land’: The San Struggle for the Kalahari and Its Resources’, *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 70 (2006), pp. 229–56.

9 E.N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 165.

are now also seeking ways to claim land.<sup>10</sup> Reflecting on the pivotal land claim of the South Kalahari Bushmen, how and why this claim has come about and with what consequences, allows us the better to understand similar claims and issues currently at stake.

The concept of 'indigeneity' often plays a central role in these claims and, as with the land itself, indigeneity is often used in a static manner.<sup>11</sup> This has resulted in an identification of indigenous people by policy makers based on a racial classification as *descendants of* (mostly, but not only) hunter-gatherers, leading them to claim an essentialised 'authentic' identity and culture, in which they show that they are in tune with 'nature', to enable them to receive rights and land in today's world. Such reasoning is often used to justify indigenous land claims,<sup>12</sup> based on an imagining of the indigenous people as primordial,<sup>13</sup> something that was also prevalent in our case study here.<sup>14</sup> In many such cases, the imperative to 'give land back' remains a strong one, which is based on the idea that people have rights to current and future occupation because in the past they continually used and occupied land. While, for former land dwellers, restitution can be very important to make up for past injustices and to build up an identity in relation to place, it is often not the key to solving historical injustice and current marginalisation, as was regularly assumed in the communalist land reform discourse by claimants, NGOs and the government in South Africa.<sup>15</sup> Yet the discourse that Walker<sup>16</sup> refers to as the 'narrative of loss and restoration' – which entails, and is at least partly instigated by, severe emotions about returning land to 'the people' – remains strong.

We step into this debate by exploring the links between the politics of indigeneity – and in particular its crucial genealogical element – and the different perceptions and meanings of land in the South African Kalahari. As Leach and Mearns<sup>17</sup> have convincingly shown, different meanings of land are always a result of a broader context institutionally, historically and politically. This has led to a variety of ideas about what land is and how it should be used. Yet, in many academic interventions focused on combining environmental protection of land and development on it, so-called indigenous knowledge and the world views that these are derived from has been ignored. This often has to do with the specific

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10 M. de Jongh, 'No Fixed Abode: The Poorest of the Poor and Elusive Identities in Rural South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 2 (2002), pp. 441–60; M. de Jongh, *Roots and Routes: Karretjie People of the Great Karoo: The Marginalisation of a South African First People* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2012).

11 See also P. Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (Toronto, UBC Press, 2003); R. Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993).

12 Kuper, 'The Return of the Native'.

13 R. Sylvain, 'Essentialism and the Indigenous Politics of Recognition in Southern Africa', *American Anthropologist*, 116, 2 (2014), pp. 251–64.

14 See also S. Robins, 'Land Struggles and the Politics and Ethics of Representing "Bushman" History and Identity', *Kronos: Journal of Cape History*, 26 (2000), pp. 56–75; S. Robins, 'NGOs, "Bushmen" and Double Vision: The ≠Khomani San Land Claim and the Cultural Politics of "Community" and "Development" in the Kalahari', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, 4 (2001), pp. 833–53; S. Robins, 'Whose Modernity? Indigenous Modernities and Land Claims after Apartheid', *Development And Change*, 34, 2 (2003), pp. 265–86; W. Ellis, 'The ≠Khomani San Land Claim against the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park: Requiring and Acquiring Authenticity', in C. Walker, A. Bohlin, R. Hall and K. Thembela (eds), *Land, Memory, Reconstruction, and Justice: Perspectives on Land Claims in South Africa* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2010), pp. 181–97; W. Ellis, 'Bushman Identity, a Land Claim and the Three Agendas', in A. Barnard and J. Kenrick (eds), *Africa's Indigenous Peoples: 'First Peoples' or 'Marginalized Minorities'?* (Edinburgh, Centre of African Studies, 2001).

15 D. James, "'After Years in the Wilderness": The Discourse of Land Claims in the New South Africa', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 27, 3 (2000), pp. 142–61.

16 C. Walker, *Landmarked: Land Claims and Land Restitution in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2008), pp. 11–29.

17 M. Leach and R. Mearns, 'Environmental Change and Policy: Challenging Received Wisdom in Africa', in M. Leach and R. Mearns (eds), *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (Oxford, James Currey, 1996), pp. 1–33.

narratives upon which these interventions are based, and the forms of power and knowledge that they conjoin. Building on this and with due emphasis on the contentious concept of indigeneity, we highlight the important role of different perspectives behind such narratives and power relations. As such, the article adds to previous literatures about this land claim<sup>18</sup> an analysis of the ontological dimensions of indigenous politics. These dimensions have so far been neglected but are, we argue, an important part of the explanation as to why a successful land claim does not guarantee a successful aftermath.

We will show that – in the case of the South Kalahari Bushmen – the analysis of perceptual differences or conflicts reveals dimensions of power, and that this is strongly related to the different meanings of land on the part of the ‘ancestors’ and the ‘contemporary indigenous’. We argue that varying backgrounds and traditions in different world views/ontologies in turn lead to different perceptions or meanings that – especially when not made explicit – lead to complicated indigenous politics. We do this by contrasting different perceptions of land in relation to indigeneity, particularly as manifested in the land claim of the South Kalahari Bushmen, namely the ‘genealogical model’ and the ‘relational model’. These models are derived from two basic, contrasting ontological ideal-types: the building perspective and the dwelling perspective,<sup>19</sup> of which dwelling has been derived from hunter-gatherers. In the dwelling perspective, the hunter-gatherers’ view is based on an ongoing engagement with the land – or, rather, with the total environment, including everything that happens on the land – and the human and non-human beings that ‘dwell’ there. One of the central points of the dwelling perspective is that every organism relates to the powers in its environment through bodily activity unfolding through time; sites and paths are important elements in the process of life. This differs fundamentally from the so-called ‘building’ perspective, which is based on objectification and the position that the mind is detached from the world, which has led to a genealogical view of indigeneity. The genealogical model should be seen as Eurocentric, since it assumes a ‘precolonial world as a mosaic of cultures and territories that was already fixed in perpetuity before history began’.<sup>20</sup> An important assumption behind the genealogical model, in tune with the objectified ‘building’ perception, is that ‘the land is merely a surface to be occupied, serving to support its inhabitants rather than to bring them into being’.<sup>21</sup> So the relational model (based on dwelling) contrasts with the genealogical model (based on building) in its interpretation of indigeneity; genealogical ties imply an objectified, static group of people as well as an objectified, static piece of land, and this is crucial in contemporary indigenous rights, often emphasised in relation to land (claims). We will show that in the land claim at stake, elements of different world views mix together and so produce a common but differentiated world infused with a complicated politics of indigeneity that is influenced (though not fully determined) by these differentiated models.

Key for us in this politics is that the word ‘back’ signals something important in relation to indigenous land claims. Often when land is given to indigenous people, this is presented as something that is ‘given back’. The assumption is that indigenous people are the ‘rightful’ owners of the land and, based on the genealogical model, this may well be the case. But if we look only at the land transfer itself, we risk misunderstanding the deeper effects of many years of dispossession, oppression and marginalisation on ‘indigenous peoples’. As has now

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18 Such as A. Bradstock, ‘Changing Livelihoods and Land Reform: Evidence from the Northern Cape Province of South Africa’, *World Development*, 33, 11 (2005), pp. 1979–92; Robins, ‘Land Struggles’; Robins, ‘NGOs, “Bushmen” and Double Vision’; Robins, ‘Whose Modernity?’; Ellis, ‘The ≠Khomani San Land Claim’; Ellis, ‘Bushman Identity’; Walker, *Landmarked*.

19 T. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London, Routledge, 2000).

20 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

been recognised, at least in South Africa, returning land does not solve most socio-political, economic, psychological and ecological problems that cause and are caused by marginalisation.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the South Kalahari Bushmen, this was confirmed by both qualitative<sup>23</sup> and quantitative economic research.<sup>24</sup> We conclude that a sensitivity to world views and how these translate into indigenous politics, as explained above, highlights the fact that the meaning of the regained land has changed when compared to the environment that indigenous people were evicted from. Moreover, the descendants of the people that the land was taken away from are not the same people as their ancestors and seem today to combine ideas and practices derived from both models.

The findings of this article are mostly based on two months of ethnographic fieldwork by Koot in 2010, as part of his engagement with Bushmen in the region since 1999. During this stay, he looked into South Kalahari Bushmen's tourism initiatives that have taken place at or in relation to the newly acquired land. The history of the land claim and its consequences came up regularly during the 41 interviews that were conducted. Twenty-nine of these were conducted in Afrikaans (without a translator) and twelve in English. Five of the interviews were held with academics and three with tourism operators/managers. A total of 33 interviews were held with a variety of South Kalahari Bushmen, living spread out over their acquired six farms, where Koot would visit them, mostly at their homes. In many instances, a respondent would be joined by a friend or a family member, who was interested and listened and would later add to the answers. The respondents included young people, many of whom were working (or had previously worked) in tourism, as well as elders, including traditional leaders, who have played a crucial role in the land claim. The livelihoods of the people at the reclaimed farms were very diverse, but most people complained about a lack of opportunities and employment and their reliance on social welfare and government projects. Many people tried to sell crafts at the roadside towards the nearby Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park or to make a living from small stock farming or collecting wild foods. Living conditions also varied: whereas some families lived in shacks, others had occupied the old farm houses after the claim.

In what follows, we first describe the history of the land claim and its aftermath. Then we analyse by comparing the genealogical and relational models and their limits. The conclusion revisits the central arguments of the article.

## **The South Kalahari Bushmen and Land**

### *Historical Background*

The South Kalahari Bushmen consist of various language groups, who historically have mostly lived in the southern half of what would become the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. The dominant language groups are ≠Khomani, /'Auni and N/amani.<sup>25</sup> From the 1860s onwards, white farmers and coloured stock owners started to settle in the area, which forced the Bushmen to move deeper into the Kalahari or to work in servile relationships with these newcomers. Eviction of the Bushmen from their land started when the land became part of

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22 D. James, 'Citizenship and Land in South Africa: From Rights to Responsibilities', *Critique of Anthropology*, 33, 1 (2013), pp. 26–46; Walker, *Landmarked*.

23 J. Grant, 'Rural Development in Practice? The Experience of the ≠Khomani Bushmen in the Northern Cape, South Africa' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011).

24 J. Dikgang and E. Muchapondwa, *The Effect of Land Restitution on Poverty Reduction among the Khomani San 'Bushmen' in South Africa*, Economic Research Southern Africa working paper 352 (Cape Town, ERSA, 2013).

25 S. Robins, E. Madzudzo and M. Brenzinger, *An Assessment of the Status of the San in South Africa, Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe* (Windhoek, Legal Assistance Centre, 2001). Available at <http://www.lac.org.na/projects/lead/Pdf/sansazz.pdf>, retrieved 29 March 2019.

the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (established in 1931). Some, however, were allowed to live in the park, for example as herders.<sup>26</sup> Many of the elderly indeed recalled in our interviews that they had become herders for the coloureds and whites, mostly herding sheep. This acquainted them with ‘modern’ ideas of landownership and influenced perceptions of their surroundings and of land. Ironically, these same modern influences led to Bushmen being denied the right to hunt traditionally, as they were no longer seen as ‘pure’ or ‘traditional’ and because they were thought to be a threat to the game that attracted tourists.<sup>27</sup>

This process, in which Bushmen’s relations to the land and environment gradually changed, continued during the apartheid era. From the 1950s onwards, when the remaining small Bushmen groups were classified as ‘coloureds’, they were reduced to living in harsh, poverty-stricken conditions in remote parts of the Northern Cape. After a further limitation of their hunting and gathering rights, almost all the Bushmen were forced to leave the park in the early 1970s.<sup>28</sup> The late Dawid Kruiper, who would go on to play a crucial role in the land claim as a traditional leader, would explain that ‘we were hunting with dogs, spears and bow and arrow [ ... ] Then they [nature conservation] gave us meat but this became less and then they shot our dogs, and they told us that we had to move out’ (interview, 9 July 2010). Many settled in the adjacent reserve of their coloured neighbours the Mier, where they were also classified as coloureds. Very little was known about the Bushmen living in South Africa during the apartheid years, and they were generally thought to have died out.<sup>29</sup> In these years, some started living and working at cultural tourist facilities in the Northern Cape, while others moved to different parts of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. As a displaced group of people, the Bushmen were assimilated into or dominated by local pastoralist groups, and their cultural practices survived only sporadically, while their hunter-gatherer lifestyle was severely compromised or effectively destroyed.<sup>30</sup> Paternalism, surveillance and social control made them dependent on a conservative white farming community.<sup>31</sup> Ownership of commodified land had become the dominant socio-economic reality, and the Bushmen remained not only landless but had by then also lost their relationships with and access to many of the elements in their environment that were historically important to them.

### *The Land Claim*

The end of apartheid in South Africa instigated a sudden increase in the number of people claiming ‘to be the authentic voice of one or another indigenous Khoisan people’.<sup>32</sup> The South Kalahari Bushmen launched a claim in 1995 with the assistance of a lawyer, Roger Chennels, who has played a crucial role in supporting and shaping the

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26 R. Sylvain, ‘“Land, Water, and Truth”: San Identity and Global Indigenism’, *American Anthropologist*, 104, 4 (2002), pp. 1074–85; H. White, *In the Tradition of the Forefathers: Bushman Traditionalism at Kaggga Kamma* (Rondebosch, University of Cape Town Press, 1995).

27 M. Schenck, ‘Land, Water, Truth, and Love: Visions of Identity and Land Access: From Bain’s Bushmen to ≠Khomani San’ (MSc thesis, Mount Holyoke College, 2008).

28 J. Carruthers, ‘Past and Future Landscape Ideology: The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park’, in W. Beinart and J. McGregor (eds), *Social History and African Environments* (Oxford, James Currey, 2003), pp. 255–66; Robins, Madzudzo and Brenzinger, *An Assessment of the Status of the San*.

29 Carruthers, ‘Past and Future Landscape Ideology’.

30 D. Grossman and P. Holden, ‘Towards Transformation: Contractual National Parks in South Africa’, in H. Suich, B. Child and A. Spenceley, *Evolution and Innovation in Wildlife Conservation: Parks and Game Ranches to Transfrontier Conservation Areas* (London, Earthscan, 2009), pp. 357–72.

31 Robins, Madzudzo and Brenzinger, *An Assessment of the Status of the San*.

32 R.B. Lee, ‘Indigenous Rights and the Politics of Identity in Post-Apartheid Southern Africa’, in B. Dean and J.M. Levi (eds), *At the Risk of Being Heard: Identity, Indigenous Rights, and Postcolonial States* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 91.

claim, and he managed to settle the case out of court.<sup>33</sup> When the South African San Institute (SASI, the NGO working with Chennels) decided to claim lands, various Bushmen went into the park and pointed out trees, the graves of relatives, the best places for a variety of plants and so on. A list of names was made of this indigenous knowledge, which is strongly embedded in the different San languages; the knowledge of water, plants, animals, dunes and spirits has often been wiped out because of the loss of these languages, which is common among indigenous people all over the world, who say that to have stories about a land is to own it.<sup>34</sup> In this case, the National Parks Board resisted the original land claim and disputed whether the group of claimants had really lived inside the park and thus questioned the group's indigenous status. However, there was political support for the claim<sup>35</sup> and the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights considered the ≠Khomani 'the last remaining first nation of Southern Africa'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, their indigenous status was probably strengthened by the international attention that the traditionally dressed Bushmen attracted and their stereotypical representation as primordial.<sup>37</sup> In addition, by claiming land, the Bushmen clearly demonstrated their willingness to mix forms and elements of traditional beliefs with dominant political economies of landownership and with crucial articulations about themselves as indigenous through genealogical ties to the land.

The claimants consisted of four groups of people who, all in their own way, identified as 'Bushman'.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the Kruiper family, a second group of original claimants were three family groups that were linked to the removals from the park in the 1930s; a third group consisted of N/u speakers, most of whom did not have links with the evictions but they were chosen because of their Bushman identity. A fourth group joined owing to officials from the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), who advised the claimants that their chances would increase if they included all the Bushmen from the Northern Cape province, which resulted in what many call 'fake' Bushmen participating in the claim.<sup>39</sup> In interviews, it was often stated by the original claimants, especially by the 'traditionalist' members of the Kruiper family, that it has been a mistake to allow the other groups into the process, especially the 'fake' Bushmen. Arguably, it was in the government's interests to incorporate as many Bushmen into this claim to reduce the chance of further claims.<sup>40</sup>

One of the crucial characteristics of this land claim is the invention of the '≠Khomani' as a group of primordial Bushmen indigenous to the country, while they were in fact politically constructed for the land claim by various outsiders as well as themselves. Although there was indeed a ≠Khomani clan historically, this was only one out of many South Kalahari Bushmen clans.<sup>41</sup> Even Chennels explained that their biggest challenge is 'to make the myth that we've actually created in order to win the land claim now become a reality. It is the myth that there is a community of ≠khomani San'.<sup>42</sup> In post-apartheid South Africa, the symbolic value of the Bushmen and the idea that they would go 'back' to their land created sympathy, but most '≠Khomani' who

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33 R. Chennels, 'The ≠Khomani San Land Claim', *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 26, 1 (2002), n.p., available at <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/khomani-san-land-claim>, retrieved 29 March 2019.

34 H. Brody, 'Taking Their Words from Their Mouths', *Indigenous Affairs*, 2 (2000), pp. 4–9.

35 Carruthers, 'Past and Future Landscape Ideology'.

36 Cited in Walker, *Landmarked*, p. 198.

37 Robins, 'Land Struggles'; Robins, 'NGOs, "Bushman" and Double Vision'.

38 Ellis, 'The ≠Khomani San Land Claim'.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Schenck, 'Land, Water, Truth, and Love'.

41 Barnard, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa*.

42 Cited in Robins, 'NGOs, "Bushman" and Double Vision', p. 840.



joined the land claim lived in Kuruman, Upington or other faraway rural villages or towns in the Northern Cape province.

Furthermore, many people are a mix of one of the South Kalahari Bushmen groups, coloureds (Mier) and the Nama (or Khoikhoi, a group of small-scale pastoralists). People started to see themselves as ≠Khomani because of the land claim; the advantages of being a '≠Khomani' or 'a Bushman' renders the identity desirable. However, while some have embraced this newly constructed identity, not everybody is happy with it, as a male respondent clearly explained: 'I am not so familiar with the word "≠Khomani" [...] I am a descendant of the Kalahari Bushmen' (interview, 26 July 2010). The case of the South Kalahari Bushmen thus shows the difficulty of deciding who should and should not be seen as indigenous. Moreover, it shows the political expedience of essentialising indigeneity in particular (modern) contexts.

In the end, 350 adult Bushmen were involved in the land claim as original claimants, but soon the number of the '≠Khomani community' had grown close to 1,000, spread out over Namibia, Botswana and the Mier area in the Northern Cape. The claim was settled in two phases (see Figure 1).<sup>43</sup> The first phase was successfully completed in 1999, which meant a transfer of ownership and management of six farms (Erin, Andriesvale, Scotty's Fort, Miershooppan, Witdraai and Uitkoms) in the southern Kalahari, over an area of approximately 38,000 hectares about 60 kilometres south of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.<sup>44</sup> At the signing of the agreement on 21 March 1999, under the attention of the world's media, the Minister of Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom, said that '[w]e are here today celebrating more than just the settlement of a land claim. We are celebrating the rebirth of the ≠Khomani San nation'.<sup>45</sup>

It seems that the idea of the 'rebirth' of this group of Bushmen was symbolically and politically important in its own right within post-apartheid South Africa, but it should be stressed that the Bushmen themselves have played a crucial and active role in this, most notably the Kruiper family.<sup>46</sup> At the same event, President Thabo Mbeki explained: '[t]his land claim [...] will stand out among all land claims [...] because this land claim is about the rebirth of a people'.<sup>47</sup> He thus again stressed the idea of a rebirth, which implies their genealogical ties to the land, an idea we contest. To be sure, we do not deny the knowledge and connections that many of the elders showed when they were interviewed for the land claim; their knowledge of the land, traditions and identity included rich information about burial sites, hunting and gathering places, water sources, rituals, stories and so on.<sup>48</sup> What we contest is that a group of people is 'reborn', as if they had ever existed as ≠Khomani before, while they obviously are a modern, constructed group. Based on genealogical ancestry, the ≠Khomani were perhaps born that day, but not reborn. Nevertheless, various people have explained to us that their histories and memories as well as their genealogical ties played an important role in the claim. As an elderly man who now sells crafts at the roadside, explained: 'our people were hunted out [of Kgalagadi], but we were born there, we were raised there, it is our place' (interview, 6 July 2010). A 33-year-old woman explained,

43 Robins, 'Whose Modernity?'; Robins, Madzudzo and Brenzinger, *An Assessment of the Status of the San*.

44 In 2000, Kgalagadi became the first transfrontier park in Africa, an amalgamation of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, South Africa, and the Kalahari National Park, Botswana.

45 Cited in K. Finlay and S. Barnabas, 'Kom 'n Bietjie Kuier: Kalahari Dreaming with the ≠Khomani San', in W.E.A. van Beek and A. Schmidt (eds), *African Hosts and their Guests: Cultural Dynamics of Tourism* (Woodbridge, James Currey, 2012), p. 139.

46 S. Koot, 'Contradictions of Capitalism in the South African Kalahari: Indigenous Bushmen, their Brand and Baasskap in Tourism', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 24, 8–9 (2016), pp. 1211–26.

47 Cited in Walker, *Landmarked*, p. 198.

48 R. Chennels, 'Case Study 9 – South Africa: The ≠Khomani San of South Africa', in J. Nelson and L. Hossack (eds), *Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas in Africa: From Principles to Practice* (Utrecht, Forest Peoples Programme, 2002), pp. 269–93.

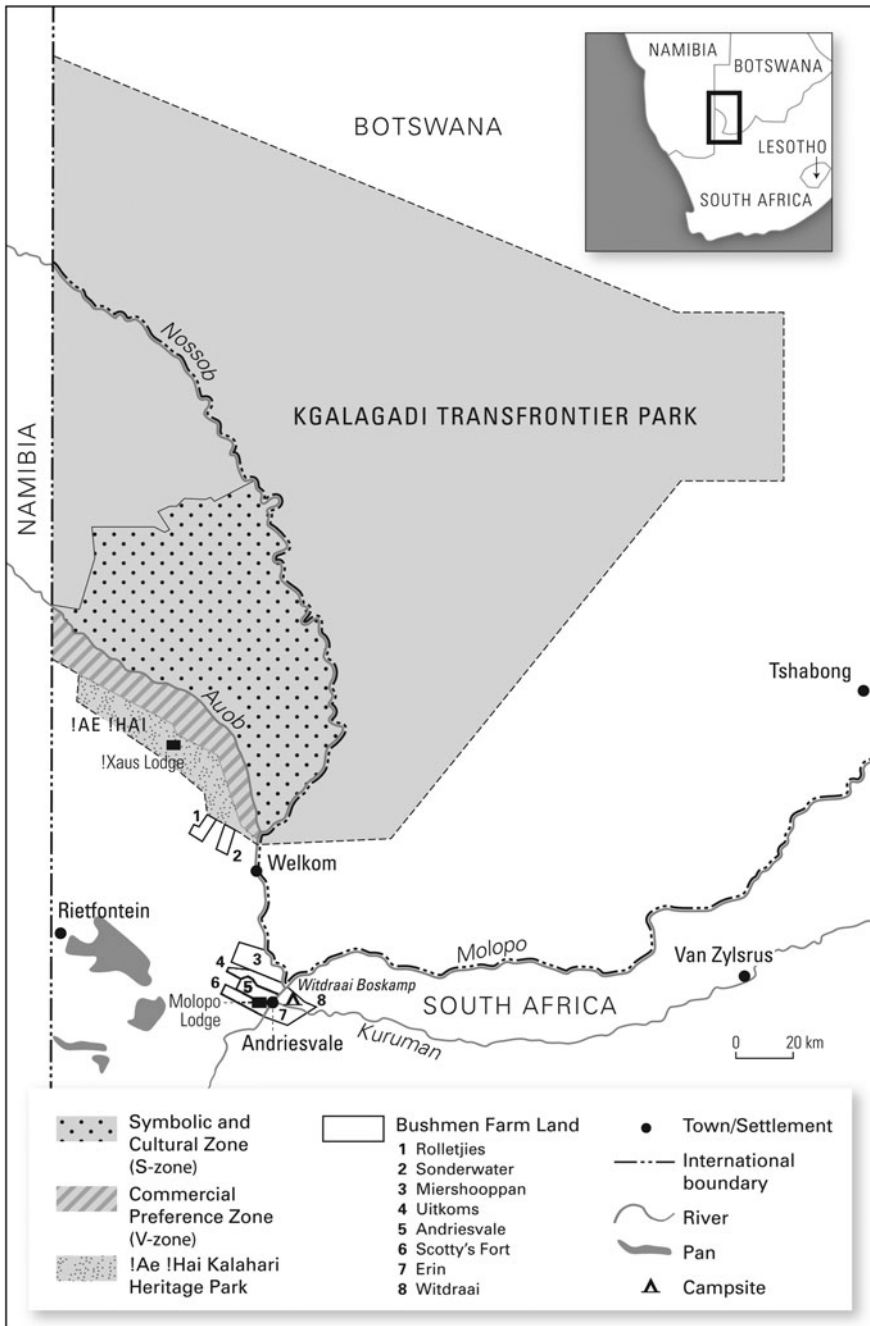


Figure 1. Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and the 'returned' lands.

my grandmother used to be a Bushman leader. But I never knew I was a Bushman. I always thought my mother's mother speaks such a strange language [...] So for the land claim research was done about the San people and that's how they found us [...] but we always thought we were coloureds. [interview, 8 July 2010]

Moreover, many Bushmen explained, in our interviews, their genealogical ancestry and where they came from when talking about the land claim, regardless of the place where they lived, their sex or age.

The land claim was fulfilled in 2002, when conditions and activities inside Kgalagadi (an area named !Ae !Hai, see Figure 1), had been negotiated in addition to the transfer of two farms adjacent to the park in 2006 and 2007, namely Rolletjies and Sonderwater, to the ≠Khomani.<sup>49</sup> So, in total, the Bushmen received eight farms, but they were allowed to live at only the six that they received first.

### *After the Claim*

After the claim, of the 1,024 South Kalahari Bushmen residing in various places in the Northern Cape, only 218 had settled at the six farms, while most refrained from relocating owing to limited housing, water and livelihood opportunities, a situation that persisted throughout 2017.<sup>50</sup> Of those who returned, some opted not to return to a ‘traditional’ lifestyle but to continue livestock farming.<sup>51</sup> Others wished to return to a hunting and gathering lifestyle and highlighted this by marking their ‘cultural authenticity’ through genealogical ties, language, ‘bush knowledge’, clothing and bodily appearance. The possibilities for leading a lifestyle based on hunting and gathering, however, are severely restricted. Some of the ≠Khomani use elements of this way of life in ‘modern’ industries such as tourism and trophy hunting. Tracking, especially, is still considered an important skill; a traditional ecological school, the so-called *Veld Skool*, was founded so that young South Kalahari Bushmen could learn from elders during hunts.<sup>52</sup> In interviews, many respondents confirmed the importance of this initiative so that ‘traditional knowledge’ can be transferred to the younger generation. Moreover, such knowledge is now also being taught to youngsters in a more modernised development setting, namely at the !Khwatla tourism and education centre for San people in the Western Cape, where ‘they also have indigenous plants’ for teaching purposes, as a young man explained (interview, 2 July 2010). Most subsequent developments, however, including those connecting to the hunting and gathering lifestyle, were rather neoliberal: for example, by commodifying ‘traditional culture’ in tourism activities through public–private partnerships.<sup>53</sup> If neoliberalism is defined as a ‘political ideology that aims to subject political, social, and ecological affairs to capitalist market dynamics’,<sup>54</sup> the Bushmen’s and other tourism actors’ current strategy to commodify the Bushmen’s image in tourism, as well as the further application of capitalist market mechanisms to provide for ‘development’ – which originally took place mostly in the public sphere – through tourism, illustrates this contention.<sup>55</sup> However, few of the proposed development plans were achieved, owing to a lack of transport and

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49 Grossman and Holden, ‘Towards Transformation’; P. Holden, ‘Conservation and Human Rights: The Case of the ≠Khomani San (Bushman) and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, South Africa’, *Policy Matters*, 15 (2007), pp. 57–68.

50 Fleming Puckett, “‘The Space to Be Themselves’”.

51 Ellis, ‘Bushman Identity’; Robins, ‘NGOs, “Bushman” and Double Vision’.

52 R. Fleming Puckett, “‘Your Soul Will Remember’”: Reconnecting with the Kalahari, Celebrating Traditional Knowledge, Sharing the Meat, and Becoming a Community on the ≠Khomani San Lands Today’, paper presented at the Society for Applied Anthropology, Santa Fe, USA, 31 March 2017.

53 Koot, ‘Contradictions of Capitalism in the Kalahari’.

54 B. Büscher, S. Sullivan, K. Neves, J. Igoe and D. Brockington, ‘Towards a Synthesized Critique of Neoliberal Biodiversity Conservation’, *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 23, 2 (2012), p. 5; cf. N. Farrell, “‘Conscience Capitalism’ and the Neoliberalisation of the Non-Profit Sector’, *New Political Economy*, 20, 2 (2015), pp. 254–72.

55 S. Koot, ‘The Bushman Brand in Southern African Tourism: An Indigenous Modernity in a Neoliberal Political Economy’, *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 99 (2018), pp. 231–50.

complicated bureaucratic requirements;<sup>56</sup> the difficulty in acquiring a permit and the distance of 60 kilometres between the park and the farms make it difficult for the majority of Bushmen to visit the park. Moreover, receiving land and use rights inside the park has not led to a profound change in their marginalised circumstances. As Dawid Kruiper explained, he expected a lot more ‘development’ after the claim, particularly from donors and NGOs, to receive ‘some advantages [...] some money from them. [But today] SASI is on my land and they make money there and I get nothing from that’ (interview, 9 July 2010). Many respondents would also blame the government, whom they thought had lost interest in the Bushmen since the claim had been settled. For example, an elderly tracker explained that ‘the government gave us only the land, but with nothing else [...] look, we have all learned to farm, but we have not received any capital to farm on’ (interview, 2 July 2010). Or a man who explained at his souvenir road stall that he would love to farm but lacks the resources to do so: ‘we get a large income from our land [...] but I cannot farm, I know how to do it [...] animals have now become part of our culture, goats, milk, and such things we need it as in the old days’ (interview, 6 July 2010). These quotes show that the Bushmen’s wish to return to a lifestyle of hunting and gathering does not preclude them from, at the same time, desiring forms of ‘modern’ development. However, development, according to one of the women, ‘came with a lot of strings attached [...] the western version. Everybody was determined to help the bushmen, and all had their own agendas to impose’.<sup>57</sup> Most of the ‘traditional’ claimants, many of whom belong to the Kruiper family or identify as ‘traditionalists’, now believe that outsiders and ‘fake’, non-indigenous claimants are at the roots of their contemporary marginalised position. As one member of the Kruiper family explained, Thabo Mbeki told him at the land ceremony that Dawid Kruiper ‘must be careful for [*sic*] the vultures, and for the hyenas. It looks to me as if the hyenas and vultures have already started eating from Oupa Dawid’ (interview, 21 July 2010).

Considering the historical background and contemporary political economy of marginalisation and subordination, it comes as no surprise that the newly established Communal Property Association (CPA) was not in a position to solve these problems either. CPAs were created in South Africa as structures for communities to reclaim land, and they have been criticised throughout South Africa because communities often lack the expertise and capacity to manage the land collectively.<sup>58</sup> Also, in the Kalahari, this association was supposed to become the vehicle for development, but this never materialised and they were accused of mismanagement and fraud. Moreover, the Bushmen’s minimal formal education and lack of experience of land management, leadership or ownership mean that the CPA has not operated since 2006. These struggles led the government to start intervening from 2002 onwards, but this support, as well as NGO involvement, has generally been considered inadequate.<sup>59</sup> Such post-colonial structures that were supposed to represent a large community based on a blueprint model rarely lead to ‘development’ for hunter-gatherer communities; they tend to be focused on representative democratic leadership, centralisation, hierarchy and decision-making models more common in the west. In hunter-gatherer societies, however, decisions were often made in decentralised small groups, where social structures contained only limited hierarchy.<sup>60</sup> These practices, in turn, are derived from particular ontological ideal-typical

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56 Holden, ‘Conservation and Human Rights’.

57 E. Bregin and B. Kruiper, *Kalahari Rain Song* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), p. 92. This quote comes from Belinda Kruiper, who herself married into the Kruiper family.

58 Holden, ‘Conservation and Human Rights’; Schenck, ‘Land, Water, Truth, and Love’.

59 Grossman and Holden, ‘Towards Transformation’.

60 Fleming Puckett, ‘“The Space to Be Themselves”’; see also Fleming Puckett, ‘“Your Soul will Remember”’; Holden, ‘Conservation and Human Rights’.

backgrounds that are crucial to getting a better understanding of the land claim and its consequent development problems. In fact, after the CPA was dismantled, various development initiatives were created by the people in smaller groups, especially since 2012, some of which look rather hopeful. For example, at the farms Erin and Witdraai, a small group called the Boesmanraad, consisting of approximately 40 people, started to combine various livelihoods together, such as tracking, hunting, gathering, selling traditional medicines, tour guiding and keeping goats, thereby blending more ‘traditional’ with more ‘modern’ livelihoods, which of course originate in different ontologies. Organising themselves and making decisions in relatively small, egalitarian groups seems at first sight to work better when compared to the imposed, hierarchical, representative, community-wide committee structures such as the CPA.

Despite this, however, the national CPA Act, as of 2017, still means that they have to either form a new CPA committee or liquidate their lands; in 2014, a new official administrator was appointed from the government. To be ‘successful’, therefore, was largely decided by their ability to manage through a CPA committee. But the question whether this structure suits them is not being asked,<sup>61</sup> showing how different world views – and different practices related to these – continuously interact and how particular elements of one world view can dominate elements of the other.

## **The Indigenous Politics of the Genealogical and Relational Models**

### *The Limitations of the Genealogical Model*

If we want to understand the contemporary Bushmen’s perceptions of the land claim and the different meanings attached to land, it is important to outline the world views that inform these, and to contrast these to more modern world views. We argue that Bushmen perceptions have been greatly informed by what Ingold refers to as the ‘dwelling perspective’, which offers ‘an extremely creative thought experiment [that] needs to be tested by being grounded in the actual political struggles and lifeworlds of those [it] describes’.<sup>62</sup> In a dwelling perspective and its consequent relational model, hunter-gatherers understand concepts such as ancestry, generation, substance, memory and land very differently from the ways in which they are conceptualised within the genealogical model common to western modernity. According to Ingold,<sup>63</sup> the idea of ‘indigeneity’ encompasses the descendants of the people who lived on the land before colonists arrived, which is a very Eurocentric, unrealistic idea. In this genealogical model, land and people are objectified as an outside reality. This raises the question of whether it is reasonable to withhold indigenous status from people who were born and lived their whole lives in certain places simply because their ancestors arrived there a few generations ago but later than other peoples’ ancestors. Of course, at a more fundamental level, this relates to the question of what it really means to be ‘indigenous’, and which point in time denotes when ancestry starts to count. Furthermore, it is a matter of debate how widely people can disperse and still consider themselves indigenous,<sup>64</sup> as was also shown in our example of the South Kalahari Bushmen.

The problem with ancestry is that it tends to consider a person’s genealogical position as objectively fixed, independent of their recent or current life dynamics. It implies that people do not create their knowledge and substance from the land/environment or their relationship

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61 Fleming Puckett, “‘The Space to Be Themselves’”.

62 J. Kenrick, ‘Unthinking Eurocentrism: The Political Writing of Adam Kuper and Tim Ingold’, *Anthropological Notebooks*, 17, 2 (2011), p. 23.

63 Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*.

64 A. Bétéille, ‘The Idea of Indigenous People’, *Current Anthropology*, 39, 2 (1998), pp. 187–92.

with it (as is the case in the relational model), but simply from direct genealogical antecedents.<sup>65</sup> This is what happened to the South Kalahari Bushmen: today they *occupy* the land, meaning that they either focus on income-generating activities such as cultural tourism or they take part in small-scale agricultural activities. Thus we suggest that the focus on genealogy is a rather limited view on which to base ‘justice’; the land they occupy is not the same as the environment that was taken away several generations earlier.

Moreover, for the South Kalahari Bushmen, their hybrid status as an indigenous group poses further problems using the genealogical model; Bushmen stereotypes tend to be perpetuated to strengthen their claims to land, but such stereotypes have also made them deal with political pressures – for example through the inclusion of many ‘non-≠Khomani’ into the claim, as suggested by DEA – and their status as ‘indigenous’ provides some possibilities, but it also increases the complexity of their positionality. Let us delve into these contradictions further, noting that the ideal-type models do not translate directly in practice, but do so in complex ways that become particularly apparent, as we will argue, in a hybrid ‘politics of indigeneity’.

### *Hybrid Indigenous Land Politics*

A young woman explained that ‘there is a big chance for indigenous people, you know, because they are the ones who stayed in nature, who know nature’ (interview, 8 July 2010). In this line, Mhlanga explained that for the South Kalahari Bushmen land contains ‘psycho-spiritual significance’ that they do not conceive as property.<sup>66</sup> But property is a central concept in the process of the land claim, and therefore in the contemporary living situation of the Bushmen, who now consider themselves the owners of this newly acquired land. However, Mhlanga explains that, to the Bushmen, every grain of sand in the Kalahari contains a spirit and even healing power. In their traditional belief, they could achieve communion with their ancestors, wild animals and the future through this spirit. The land was seen as something they were living with, not just on,<sup>67</sup> as if they were a part of it. Petrus Vaalbooi, one of the leaders in 2000, even suggested that ‘the Bushman is the same as the land’,<sup>68</sup> thereby emphasising the idea of a total environment of which they were part. Hence, importantly, in addition to losing their lands, indigenous peoples have lost their livelihoods, sacred sites, history, graves and religions, while Europeans and colonial offshoots have offered their own forms of civilisation based on the principles of Christianity, ownership and individualism.<sup>69</sup>

The case of the South Kalahari Bushmen land claim provides us with a concrete example of political struggle and, we argue, allows us to reconceptualise the relational model (and thus the dwelling perspective) as more explicitly political than Ingold did. By claiming land and ‘taking over’ crucial ideas and elements from the genealogical model (and thus from other world views), the South Kalahari Bushmen have created a sense of ownership that today strongly resembles the view of land common to agricultural societies in which the land is functionally divided into plots,<sup>70</sup> contrary to their former, much more loosely defined stewardship over territories often revolving around water holes.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, before and after

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65 Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*.

66 B. Mhlanga, ‘Developmental and Cultural Conceptions – A Matter of Injustice’, in K.G. Tomaselli (ed.), *Cultural Tourism and Identity: Rethinking Indigeneity* (Leiden, Brill, 2012), p. 150.

67 *Ibid.*

68 Cited in K. Tomaselli, ‘Introduction: Setting the Scene’, in K. Tomaselli, *Writing in the Sand: Autoethnography among Indigenous Southern Africans* (Plymouth, AltaMira Press, 2007), p. 4.

69 Hitchcock, “‘We Are the Owners of the Land’”.

70 T. Ingold, *The Appropriation of Nature: Essays on Human Ecology and Social Relations* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 153–4.

71 Fleming Puckett, “‘The Space to Be Themselves’”.

the claim, various elders referred to specific places that contained important meaning for them, such as trees, dunes, graves, paths and so on.<sup>72</sup> This shows how this group of Bushmen clearly had a sense of a core territory not as a fenced-in area but as an environment that they were living in and with, full of markers with important meaning for them. Thus such territories are crucially different from contemporary ideas about land in possession.

Similar territorial units were also found among other groups of Bushmen, most famously the *n!ore* system of the Ju'hoansi of Namibia and Botswana, which entails the sharing of natural resources with members of a larger community within a particular area. This traditional land use system still influences land use patterns today.<sup>73</sup> Other Bushmen groups have also shown analogous territorial units: the Khwe spoke of *ngu*,<sup>74</sup> the /Gui of *gu*, the //Gana of *g'u* and the Nharo of *gong*.<sup>75</sup> Such a history with a particular territory has created sites and paths that derive their significance from the whole environment. Consequently, in today's land claims, it is not enough to simply allow indigenous people access to such protected sites. It should be acknowledged that it is the whole environment that provides significance and identity.<sup>76</sup>

Worldwide, indigenous people follow political strategies that mix cultural transitions with cultural preservation, leading to hybrid political/cultural strategies and identities.<sup>77</sup> Therefore certain (ideas about) ideal-type models do not exist in real life, but are instead manifested in contemporary world views that are themselves amalgamations that continually co-create daily life. In the Kalahari, this mix is also visible, since many of the Bushmen today talk about themselves as people of nature, often positioning themselves 'in nature', thereby distancing themselves from modernity. A member of the Kruiper family explained at the roadside while selling crafts to tourists, that 'life is together with nature [...] the earth is meant for you [...] when I walk past a plant it calls me and I will look at it, and gather it' (interview, 7 July 2010). Not only does this show that the nature–culture dichotomy (absent in the relational model) has influenced Bushmen, it also shows the strategic positioning of the Bushmen in response to a modern, neoliberal context, since this positioning is most explicitly done by the group of 'traditionalists' to keep up an image consistent with tourist imaginaries. For Dawid Kruiper, this was a way to be 'seen', to garner respect for his people, but in a modern context and through market mediations.<sup>78</sup>

In another example, Koot went into the Kalahari with a guide from the Kruiper family. When the guide showed him the famous and controversial hoodia plant<sup>79</sup> and cut off a part to let him have a taste, he afterwards cut off a small piece of his own hair and buried it in the sand. When Koot asked him why he did this, the guide explained that it is important to give back to nature when one takes from it. This action could be seen as relational (dwelling), since it shows how one views oneself as part of the environment *and* as distancing oneself from dwelling, since the way in which he framed it was taking 'from nature' and giving 'to' it, as if nature is something that we human beings are objectively

72 Brody, *Tracks across Sand*; see also Chennels, 'Case study 9 – South Africa'.

73 Hitchcock, "'We Are the Owners of the Land'".

74 M. Taylor, "'Mapping the Land" in Gudigwa: A History of Bugakhwe Territoriality', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 16, 2 (2002), pp. 98–109.

75 R.K. Hitchcock, 'Sharing the Land: Kalahari San Property Rights and Resource Management', in T. Widlok and W. Gossa Tadese (eds), *Property and Equality Volume II: Encapsulation, Commercialisation, Discrimination* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 191–207.

76 Ingold, *The Appropriation of Nature*.

77 Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism*; see also Robins, 'NGOs, "Bushmen" and Double Vision'.

78 J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009).

79 Hoodia is controversial because it has been discovered as a food that can stave off hunger and fight obesity, leading to issues of power between NGOs and pharmaceutical companies. See Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*

detached from. Or, as another elderly man explained, it was historically bad to take the Bushmen out of nature (evict them from the park), because ‘nature becomes worse [but] when the Bushmen move around in nature, nature stays alive’ (interview, 4 July 2010), highlighting the Bushmen’s role as stewards of their environment instead of as owners of the land. Of course, identifying so strongly with nature also has a wildlife component, which is itself essential in contemporary development strategies such as tourism. A lodge employee explained that, to be able to protect tourists on a game drive, ‘Bushman, he knows the lion, he talks to him’ (interview, 6 June 2010). Yet, crucially, this positioning in nature is an important political statement by the Bushmen and, as we have seen, used politically to receive land (back) in the first place. Land claims make these dynamics explicit: land claims, even for a small fraction of land, have led indigenous people through legal processes to obtain a title, something that inevitably means compromising on traditional principles of land tenure.<sup>80</sup>

So, whereas the relational model is focused on a total environment – on a world in movement, continually constructed and non-hierarchical – contemporary indigenous claims operate in a modern political context, where the genealogical model centrally informs the dominant discourse and in which the land is mostly a functional provider of resources or ‘services’.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, indigeneity itself is based on a static construct in the popular imagination about essentialised images of former hunter-gatherers. So it seems as if important elements of the genealogical model have infused the way in which the Bushmen see the world today. However, according to Suzman, in today’s political context, Ingold’s reworking of indigeneity, based on the relational model as a crucial element of the dwelling perspective, seems to offer ‘little hope to many of the peoples whom indigenous rights instruments were designed to help in the first place [who] no longer enjoy a progenerative relationship with land in the sense he suggests’.<sup>82</sup> However, the case of the South Kalahari Bushmen shows that things are not so clear-cut; we do not assume that the South Kalahari Bushmen ‘no longer enjoy a progenerative relationship with land’, as if this evaporated after eviction. World views are not built solely on land, but consist of meanings, ideas and rituals, including the way in which one perceives ‘being’ in the world. Furthermore, world views continually change and, therefore, it is more likely that evictions and land claims are important moments that instigate such changes. World views are hybrid, and therefore the relational model does not just disappear with the introduction of other values and ideas, such as, for example, the genealogical model. In fact, historical relational elements play a crucial role in the constructions of genealogies, while the genealogical model itself has now become an important element of the contemporary environment of the South Kalahari Bushmen. Indigenous politics are thus, we argue, a hybrid mixture of different world views.

To take this into account is important also for the development process after the claim; when the CPA largely failed and was dismantled, some smaller groups of South Kalahari Bushmen used their agency to start non-hierarchical, small group initiatives by themselves, based on the more traditional world view of hunter-gatherers. These initiatives achieved much better results during their first few years compared to the CPA projects,<sup>83</sup> but most ideas of what development is were still based on western, neoliberal ideals. In fact, according to the UN, ‘[i]ndigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop

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80 Ingold, *The Appropriation of Nature*.

81 Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*; see also Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*; Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism*.

82 J. Suzman, ‘Etosha Dreams: An Historical Account of the Hai//om Predicament’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42, 2 (2004), p. 234.

83 Fleming Puckett, “‘Your Soul will Remember’”.



priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources'.<sup>84</sup> For example, Holden<sup>85</sup> found that, in relation to sustainable plant use in the Kalahari, "modern/western science" is presently not able to provide exact answers on what constitutes sustainable use for [...] plant species [...] there is reticence [*sic*] to accept the [...] guidelines that have been proposed by the San'. Therefore, it is crucial to accept 'that hunter-gatherers may have different world views that affect how they perceive leadership, organise and govern themselves, and make a living'.<sup>86</sup> So a mixture of different world views leads to different ideas about what land is and what it means for people, but also about what should be done with it once acquired. In 2017, most of the South Kalahari Bushmen would still prefer to have a more decentralised style of management, in which smaller groups take decisions over the developments on their land, in contrast to the current CPA structure. As a middle-aged woman explained, '[the government] should really recognise indigenous people, as the people of knowledge, and rich culture [...] They can learn from the San and the San can learn from the government' (interview, 8 July 2010).

## Conclusion

The land claim of the South Kalahari Bushmen showed that it is not easy to implement 'development' after a land claim. As an elderly traditional healer explained: 'oh, they received their democratic right, but now they do not have the power'.<sup>87</sup> In the process, little attention has been given to the different world views that can help to inform how and why this is the case.

In this article, we have invoked an ideal-type of the relational model, based on Ingold's dwelling perspective, as an important element of contemporary indigenous politics of the South Kalahari Bushmen in their land claim. This revealed a reason, so far neglected but crucial, why a land claim based on the genealogical model of indigeneity does not necessarily solve the problems of marginalisation for the South Kalahari Bushmen associated with earlier evictions; the environment that was taken away, should not be confused with the land that is returned: its meaning has changed. When looking at land from the relational model, it is only one crucial element of a much richer, total environment, whereas looking at land from a genealogical model, it is mostly regarded as a flat surface to be used for different types of production. Therefore, land is given, but not given back. Of course, this does not mean that indigenous people do not want this precious resource. They are citizens of today's world, not relics from the past. It is therefore understandable that some of them embrace their status as indigenous as part of a deliberate political strategy. Receiving land is an important next stage in a process that has, throughout recent history, been dominated by oppression and marginalisation, but we should be careful not to consider it a solution to their contemporary socio-economic condition.

Furthermore, the claimants now have become a different group from those from whom the environment was originally taken. Thinking that there is (or ever was) a 'pure', homogeneous group of 'genealogical descendants' is a fallacy. This does not mean, however, that we deem the relational model necessarily a better option. That is why we refer

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84 UNDRIP, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Art. 32–1, United Nations, 2008).

85 Holden, 'Conservation and Human Rights', p. 65.

86 Fleming Puckett, "The Space to Be Themselves", p. 308.

87 Cited in Brody, *Tracks across Sand*.

to politics of indigeneity as a hybrid space, where different world views and the ideas and practices that are derived from these should be discussed, but also where their historical and present-day blending into contemporary political strategies and situations is acknowledged. This, we believe, allows us to understand better how the current South Kalahari Bushmen politically and strategically employ a variety of ontological referents in the pursuit of various objectives. Different world views help to create different ideas about ‘what is’ and ‘what exists’, and this leads to different meanings and perceptions about many things, including land, a crucial concept in relation to indigeneity. Most people may be influenced by various world views, but this is arguably more so with ‘indigenous’ peoples; hence the emphasis on politics of indigeneity suggests that we need to take seriously how different world views start mixing, creating new, hybrid forms of politics.

Indeed, the group of South Kalahari Bushmen itself has also become hybrid to the degree that it is in fact a modern political construction, with some in the group not even descendants of Bushmen. We do not deny that many of the elders have strong historical and emotional ties with certain places and powers in the area, such as river beds, graves or trees, and we believe these ties should be respected. Nevertheless, including people as indigenous can exclude others, and this raises fundamental questions. First, there is the question of dispersion and how far one can live away from a certain part of land but still claim indigenous, genealogical ties to it. Second, indigeneity assumes a particular level of ‘purity’, but people are – and have always been – of mixed descent, to varying degrees. Third, there is the question of the role of marginalisation in land claims and how this informs any further rights to land. Fourth and last: what point in time is taken as the point of departure for indigeneity, and who decides this? So far, the start of colonisation seems to have been crucial. Indigeneity should not be seen apart from its context of (historical) power relations. Therefore, ‘indigeneity’ is a highly political concept, to be used by those who believe they can achieve certain political and economic goals by using the term. This is something that needs to be acknowledged in the Restitution and CPA Acts, which ‘must provide permanent space for group organisation, decision-making structures, and conceptions of land-use and leadership that differ from the standard, community-wide, representative, hierarchical systems that South Africa’s land reform laws currently assume and require’.<sup>88</sup> We hope that this article has shown the importance of including such space in land claims while, in hindsight, this might also partly explain why recent developments on the reclaimed land have not, in most cases, materialised into a better socio-economic situation for the South Kalahari Bushmen. Providing space for different perceptions and meanings of land, including the world views they are derived from can, we argue, help us understand better the contemporary socio-economic circumstances of the South Kalahari Bushmen and perhaps turn the actually existing ‘politics of indigeneity’ into a force for social and environmental justice.

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88 Fleming Puckett, “‘The Space to Be Themselves’”, p. 334.

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