Etosha Pan to the Skeleton Coast

Conservation Histories, Policies and Practices in North-west Namibia

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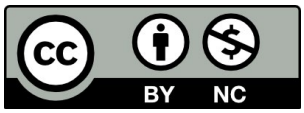

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3. CBNRM and landscape approaches to conservation in Kunene Region, post-Independence

Selma Lendelvo, Sian Sullivan and Ute Dieckmann

Abstract

We review how national post-Independence policy supporting Community-Based Natural Resources Management has played out in Etosha-Kunene, highlighting a new impetus towards a "landscape approach" for conservation in communal areas. Communal land immediately to the west of Etosha National Park is currently divided into a series of communal area conservancies, inhabited by pastoralist populations relying additionally on varying combinations of horticulture, gathering, hunting and wage employment. A new donor-funding trend is now noticeable towards recognising how landscapes with conservation and livelihood value overlap these areas. In the 2000s a Kunene People's Park was proposed to connect the Hobatere, Etendeka and Palmwag Tourism Concessions between Etosha Pan and the Skeleton Coast, although this was never formalised. In 2018 proposals for a 'People's Park' were reignited with international support by conservation donors and the British royal family. Present proposals for an Ombonde People's Park/Landscape currently comprised primarily of two conservancies on the western boundary of Etosha National Park are being implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism with support by multiple donors. We provide an overview of these conservation changes in Etosha-Kunene for the three decades since Namibia's Independence in 1990.

3.1 Introduction

Wildlife is an important part of African cultures and livelihoods. Coexistence between African communities and wildlife was maintained through traditional conservation practices existing prior to formal colonisation, comprised of traditional rituals, beliefs and taboos.[1] During colonial times, protected area management followed a fortress conservation model (see Chapter 2): local and Indigenous communities were excluded from the use and management of wildlife, thereby de-coupling socio-ecological systems. In Namibia, this detachment of local communities from interactions with wildlife—linked especially with colonial land appropriation, as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2—had tremendous effects both on wildlife populations and human inhabitants, including on cultural values and value practices around indigenous fauna and flora.[2] While protected areas have rescued many species from extinction all over the world, declines have also been associated with the expansion of infrastructure development, human settlement and economic activities.[3] For example, in the early 1970s, black-faced impala (*Aepyceros melampus petersi*) in north-west Namibia were declining in numbers with translocation into Etosha National Park (ENP) enacted to support remaining populations.[4]

1 Kideghesho (2008)
2 Songorwa *et al.* (2000)
3 Naughton-Treves *et al.* (2005), Chape *et al.* (2005)
4 Green & Rothstein (1997) *in* Matson (2004)

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Protected areas, however, have also been criticised for creating isolated conservation islands that disconnect wildlife from human populations living beyond their boundaries.[5] In Namibia, indiscriminate and substantial decimation of wildlife occurred from "pre-colonial" and through colonial times, often due to the hunting and trading activities of non-local people—as documented in Chapter 1.[6] This situation continued following implementation of the Odendaal Plan and the creation of "homelands", which extended the historical exclusion of local people from utilisation rights to wildlife resources in communally-managed areas.[7] This situation ran parallel to the enactment of Nature Conservation Ordinance 31 of 1967 which enabled "game" to become a resource with economic value on freehold farms:[8] as detailed in Chapter 2. Conservation legislation was further updated with Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975, through which the former Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (MWCT) again relaxed prohibitions for hunting by white settler farmers on freehold land, whilst retaining them for hunting and trapping by African residents in communal areas.[9] Private game reserves and "hunting farms" could be established in freehold settler farming areas, if certain species-dependent requirements for fencing and security were adhered to.[10] The former South West Africa thereby became aligned with similar apartheid-era game farming policies on freehold land in South Africa.[11] Wildlife management reform was clearly necessary after Independence to reverse this situation for communities living outside protected areas, so that they may also benefit from the conservation of wildlife and other "natural resources".

It is sometimes asserted that losses of wildlife through illegal hunting in communal areas in the 1980s occurred because these areas were excluded from the provisions of the 1975 Ordinance.[12] A particular focus of this anxiety was the Kaokoland and Damaraland Homelands of north-west Namibia—an area framed as a 'last wilderness' by South African environmentalists[13]—also see Chapters 12 and 13. Conservation concern in the 1970s and 1980s focused especially on losses of internationally-valued large mammal species—particularly desert-dwelling elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) and black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*). At the same time, the reasons for wildlife losses at this time in north-west Namibia are many and complex.[14] In the 1960s the area was reportedly exploited as something of a private hunting reserve by top government officials, including Cabinet Ministers in the South African government.[15] As mentioned in Chapter 2, in the late 1970s and early 1980s drought contributed to wildlife losses, both directly and through stimulating local "poaching" in attempts to counter erosion of livelihoods. Organised illegal trafficking in ivory and horn during the 1980s, known to have been pursued as a 'deliberate policy of the various organs of the South African state',[16] also may have reduced elephant and rhino populations. The situation in north-west Namibia was exacerbated by regional warfare between South Africa, Namibia and Angola, which made firearms available, often via distribution by the South African Defence Force (SADF) to local people as a means of fostering tensions between different groups so as to compromise regional and national opposition.[17] In other words, the ultimate causes of wildlife losses in the north-west appear largely beyond the control of local people in these years.

As detailed in Chapter 2, this backdrop of drought, civil war and illegal hunting of especially elephant and rhino in the north-west of the country stimulated responses by concerned

5 Songorwa *et al.* (2000)
6 Sullivan *et al.* (2021)
7 Botha (2005), Bollig & Olwage (2016), Heydinger (2020)
8 Joubert (1974), Botha (2013)
9 Barnes *et al.* (2002), Sullivan (2002: 162)
10 Abbiati *et al.* (2013: 15–18); also Degeorges & African Advisory Board (1996: 90)
11 Wels (2015)
12 Jacobsohn & Owen-Smith (2003)
13 Reardon (1986), Hall-Martin *et al.* (1988)
14 Sullivan (2002: 171–72)
15 Reardon (1986: 13)
16 Ellis (1994: 3)
17 Fuller (1993: 81)

conservationists that ultimately became Namibia's celebrated post-Independence Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programme.[18] In encouraging a view of local people as caretakers of natural resources—including land and wildlife—these initiatives proved successful in helping with the recovery of wildlife numbers in the region. Its community-led approach defied the political climate of the time by encouraging active participation by local people in conservation activities—thereby nurturing a vision of wildlife as a valuable social and economic resource for those living in communal areas.[19] In 1990, these initiatives formed the kernel of a new NGO called Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) that began a similar programme of community-based conservation work in what was then Caprivi Region, now Zambezi Region, in the north-east of Namibia.[20] As the late Mike Hearn summarises:

> [f]ocusing on the charismatic megafauna, a community-based conservation approach in the early 1980s was balanced by intensive field operations and strong law enforcement carried out by both government and non-governmental organisations. These measures greatly reduced poaching and contributed to wider biodiversity conservation objectives.[21]

After Independence in 1990, Namibia identified conservation as a constitutional obligation: Article 95 of the Namibian constitution thus emphasises the need for the

> maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future.[22]

This constitutional commitment was followed by the development of a formal policy on CBNRM and the ratification of the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996. This Amendment Act sought to ensure the inclusion of communal land in the "sustainable use" and management of wildlife and other natural resources, leading to the establishment of communal area conservancies as part of CBNRM.[23] The introduction of CBNRM in Namibia acknowledged that local communities, whether on communal or commercial (freehold) land, were important conservation partners who needed to be granted rights to support them when utilising and managing wildlife resources.[24] In doing so, Namibia became aligned with participatory approaches to conservation that were simultaneously market-oriented, the assumption being that both local communities and wildlife populations would benefit from commercialisation of the latter and the enrolment of the former in wildlife and tourism enterprises. This "new" conservation was thus driven by: acknowledgement of the costs experienced by farmers living alongside wildlife in these areas; a need to counter the alienating effects of past exclusionary conservation policies; the assertion that economic incentives were needed for local people to maintain a benign relationship with animal-wildlife; and recognition of the economic development needs of rural populations. In this neoliberal moment, the primary 'facilitators' of CBNRM and other participatory and inclusive approaches to conservation tended to be NGOs, and the emphasis was on establishing profit-oriented wildlife and tourism businesses through encouraging external investment, as elaborated in Section 3.2.[25]

18 Clements *et al.* (1984), Berger *et al.* (1993: 923), Jacobsohn (1995, 1998[1990]), Durbin *et al.* (1997), IRDNC (2015), Sullivan (2022: 3–7)
19 Owen-Smith (2002)
20 Taylor (2012), IRDNC (2015)
21 Hearn (2003: 1)
22 GRN (2014[1990])
23 NACSO (2004), Weaver & Petersen (2008)
24 Murombedzi (1999: 288), Jacobsohn & Owen-Smith (2003), Jones & Weaver (2009), Hauptfleisch *et al.* (2024)
25 Sullivan (2006)

3.2 Community-Based Natural Resources Management in Namibian communal land areas

Namibia's CBNRM programme attempts to tackle the historical decoupling of Indigenous communities from indigenous fauna. Protected areas and national parks are widely criticised in southern Africa for displacing local communities and forfeiting their rights to wildlife and ancestral connections in those areas.[26] In combination with colonial appropriation of the most productive lands for farming, the loss of land by local and Indigenous Namibians has been both rapid and very substantial (as documented in Chapters 1 and 2).

Namibia's conservancy policy for communal areas was therefore developed as the basis for CBNRM through devolved management of wildlife without moving people from the land.[27] In Namibia's CBNRM programme, residents of communal land areas who become conservancy members may benefit from, and have management responsibilities over, animal-wildlife. To be registered as a wildlife management institution, a conservancy requires a defined boundary and membership, a representative management committee, a legal constitution and a plan for the equitable distribution of benefits.[28] Like the much-publicised CAMPFIRE programme of Zimbabwe—the blueprint for USAID (United States Agency for International Development) funded CBNRM programmes throughout southern Africa and elsewhere[29]—conservancy policy has been informed by the assumption that 'conservation and development goals can be achieved by creating strong collective tenure over wildlife resources in communal lands'.[30] Additionally, CBNRM focuses on creating mechanisms for harnessing market values from wildlife by providing communal area conservancies with rights to the 'consumptive and non-consumptive use and sustainable management of game [...] in order to enable the members to derive benefits'.[31]

The belief is that market values will act to mitigate or "offset" the costs of living alongside populations of large-bodied mammals that may damage livestock, crops and farming infrastructure.[32] Consumptive use of wildlife thus forms a major part of "sustainable use" in Namibia's CBNRM programme. As Bollig reviews, in circumstances in which wildlife populations are buoyant,

> [c]onservancies receive annual game quotas [...] set in annual meetings in which conservancy members, officers of the MET [Ministry of Environment and Tourism, now Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MEFT)], NGO staff, and also trophy-hunting companies participate. About 20% of the quota is designated for trophy hunting, whereas 80% is kept for own-use hunting [...] The latter category consists of animals assigned to traditional authorities to furnish meetings with meat, animals traded in shoot-and-sell contracts to butchers from the wider region, and animals exchanged with local agencies for their services.[33]

Regarding trophy animals, '[t]rophy hunters, or more often their helpers, usually only cut off the "trophy part" of the animal that has been shot. The meat is left with the community for distribution',[34] as per the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996.[35]

As with CBNRM elsewhere, the ethos of Namibia's programme is that appropriate incentives to use natural resources sustainably will arise if these resources have sufficient economic value

26 As Dieckmann (2007) and Hoole (2008) document for ENP.
27 Nujoma (1998)
28 MET (1995a, b)
29 In the 1990s USAID-funded CBNRM programmes in southern Africa included Botswana's Natural Resources Management Programme (NRMP), Zimbabwe's Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE), Zambia's Administrative Management Design (ADMADE) programme, and the Namibian programme Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE). See discussion in Sullivan (2002)
30 Murombedzi (1999: 288)
31 GRN (1996: 24A (4)), also Hewitson & Sullivan (2021: 3)
32 Drake *et al.* (2021), Tavolaro *et al.* (2022)
33 Bollig (2016: 792–93)
34 *Ibid.*; also see Hewitson & Sullivan (2021)
35 Corbett & Daniels (1996)

to local people, conferred through rights of use, benefit and management.[36] Unsurprisingly, given both intense NGO, donor and government efforts to facilitate 'land acquisition for conservation in the non-formal sense',[37] as well as local uptake of conservancy establishment as a forum for expressing claims to land, historically marginalised communities have seized the opportunity to gain rights over natural resources.[38]

In general, the CBNRM conservancy programme forms part of Namibian government policy whilst receiving support from varied donors, NGOs and other organisations. Indeed, the integration of wildlife conservation with rural development via conservancies in communal land areas has been the focus of an impressive list of donor-funded, NGO-implemented projects. For example: a five-year Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) project from 1993, extended in 1999, brought major donor funding from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and USAID to the CBNRM project; the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and World Bank funded an Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management (ICEMA) project focusing on selected conservancies from around 2003–2011; the Strengthening the Protected Areas Network (SPAN) from 2004 onwards brought finance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), GEF, and Germany's state-owned investment and development bank (KfW), and included communal area conservancies in proposals for new forms of protected areas; and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) is funding 'biodiversity economy' initiatives that include communal area conservancies.[39] A new Legacy Landscapes Fund (LLF) established in 2020 as a charity under German law—involving the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), KfW, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and WWF—has recently approved a 'Skeleton Coast-Etosha Conservation Bridge' project led by WWF Namibia and IRDNC, to the tune of USD 1 million a year for 50 years.[40] These and other donor-funded initiatives have directed millions of dollars towards developing CBNRM and sustainable use businesses.[41]

The primary facilitators of CBNRM, through which donor funds are applied for and channelled, have tended to be NGOs working in conjunction with government, especially the MEFT, formerly the MET and MWCT. In the Namibian case, the primary national facilitating NGO is IRDNC, which in the 1990s was considered to have 'a particular onus [...] to facilitate conservancy registration and development'.[42] In 2013, a new *National Policy on Community Based Natural Resources Management* published by the then MET thus emphasised NGOs as partners in the 'institutional framework' of CBNRM.[43] Conservancies are also described as organisations established to facilitate business, such that a conservancy is 'a business venture in communal land use [...] although its key function is actually to enable business'.[44] The conservancy programme has grown since its initiation in the 1990s, with conservancy governance allowing future-oriented thinking and an ideal of engaging in sustainable practices while maximising returns.[45] The institutional context means that as well as connecting communal areas with consumers from afar (such as tourists, investors and trophy hunters), the programme places these lands within the orbit of state, donor, NGO and private sector aspirations, governance and control (see Chapter 5).[46]

Namibia's conservancy policy has been heralded as the most progressive initiative of its kind in southern Africa.[47] In September 1998 Namibia became the first country worldwide to be

36 Naidoo *et al.* (2016)
37 Jones (1999a: 47)
38 Sullivan (2002: 162, 165), Bollig & Menestry Schweiger (2014: 169–170, 178), Bollig (2016: 780)
39 Sullivan (2023: 16)
40 LLF, WWF, IRDNC (2024); https://legacylandscapes.org/map/skeleton-coast-etosha/
41 Weaver (2016)
42 Durbin *et al.* (1997: 5)
43 MET (2013: 13–14)
44 NACSO (2014: 25)
45 Child (1993, 1996)
46 Gibson & Marks (1995: 942), Sullivan (2002: 163; 2023: 17)
47 Mafune (1998)

honoured for a people-centred environmental initiative with a WWF Gift to the Earth Award.[48] The programme has been celebrated for improving livelihood sustainability through diversifying income;[49] providing a participatory decision-making process that is empowering to women;[50] and empowering 'poor, disadvantaged rural people'.[51] This support aims to strengthen the capacity of local communities to successfully manage conservancy institutions, as well as to assist with compliance in relation to government guidelines and conservation standards, through activities such as game counts and audits, and conservancy "Event Book" documentation (see Chapter 14). Conservancies have generally been presented as having a positive track record, with communal areas benefiting from wildlife-generated wealth alongside pastoralism and other livelihood activities.[52] It is also considered that wildlife conservation and tourism play a role in preserving culture and values of Namibian local people involved in CBNRM, and that the CBNRM programme provides for sustainable development for the poor (although for complexities see Chapters 5 and 6). Integrating wildlife management with livestock is thought to be a good option for rangelands affected by climate change through offering possibilities for livelihood diversification, although mitigation of possibly problematic human-wildlife interactions remains an issue (see Chapters 11, 17, 18 and 19).[53]

At the same time, CBNRM advocates are increasingly suggesting the regulation of pastoral activities in core areas of conservancies set aside for tourism and trophy hunting, through development of wildlife management and conservancy zonation plans.[54] The enforcement of this practice limits and denies communities on communal land access to such areas for pastoral activities, thereby further constraining pastoralist and other traditional livelihood practices on communal land.[55] In addition, persistent negative human-wildlife interactions hinders progress and harmonious coexistence in conservancy areas. Some wildlife animals have become habituated to tactics designed to deter them, thereby causing more damage to property.[56] Cases in point are the damage caused by elephants to communal water points utilised by residents in dryland conservancies in west Namibia (as documented in Chapter 11), and rising predation levels on livestock which heavily affects local livelihoods (as documented in Chapters 17, 18 and 19).[57] As the late conservationist Garth Owen-Smith stated in *The Namibian* newspaper in 2017,

> [p]ut simply, during droughts, predator numbers increase because hunting is easier, while their prey populations decrease due to little or no reproduction, higher drought-related mortalities and increased predation. In communal areas, this predator/prey imbalance causes lions to turn on the easiest alternative available—the local farmer's livestock.[58]

In the years since, however, concerns have also been raised about the status of the lion population in Namibia's north-west, given the decline in prey availability linked with drought and possibly unsustainable prey offtake, as detailed in Section 3.2.1.

The conservancy programme in Namibia is driven by the Namibian government, who through the years has worked in partnership with various partners, including civil society, donor agencies and the private sector to promote local-led conservation, including landscape protection to enhance connectivity with other areas.[59] Anthropologist Michael Bollig[60] also refers to the community

48 Sutherland (1998)
49 Ashley (1997), Hulme & Murphree (1999)
50 Jones (1999b: 302) – although also see Sullivan (2000)
51 Jones (1995), Ashley (1997), Callihan (1999)
52 Barnes *et al.* (2002)
53 Niamir-Fuller *et al.* (2012), Inman *et al.* (2020a, b)
54 Cruise & Sasada (2021)
55 Shilongo *et al.* (2018)
56 O'Connell-Rodwell *et al.* (2000)
57 Sullivan (2016), Schnegg & Kiaka (2018), Lendelvo *et al.* (2021)
58 Owen-Smith (2017: online)
59 Weaver & Skyer (2003)
60 Bollig (2016)

conservation programme in Namibia as the 'new commons', referencing the devolution of rights over natural resources, especially for wildlife management and through direct involvement in decision-making about use, protection, investments and benefits. The communal area conservancy programme demonstrated its importance over the years as a crucial vehicle for enhancing economic development in rural Namibia, through wildlife conservation and tourism that promotes community participation.[61] The first four conservancies in Namibia were gazetted by the MET in 1998, namely, Nyae Nyae Conservancy in Otjozondjupa Region, Salambala Conservancy in Zambezi Region, and Torra and ǂKhoadi-ǁHôas Conservancies in Kunene Region. By 2020, there were 86 conservancies covering 58.7% of communal areas in Namibia representing 20% of the country's surface area and encompassing more than 200,000 people:[62] see Table 3.1. A government *Policy on Tourism and Wildlife Concessions on State Land* was also applied as of 2007,[63] clarifying access arrangements for tourists (including hunting tourists), to previously and newly established concession areas, from which additional revenue would also be generated for the state in a sustainable way from Namibia's indigenous plant and wildlife resources—on which more in Section 3.3.

Table 3.1. Numbers of communal area conservancies registered by year following Independence in Namibia.

Year	Cumulative number of conservancies	Area coverage (in sq km)	Percentage coverage in communal areas (%)	Percentage coverage in Namibia (%)
1998	4	16,821	5.5	2.04
1999	9	21,669	7.1	2.6
2000	10	25,237	8.2	3.06
2001	15	40,714	13.3	4.9
2002	15	40,714	13.3	4.9
2003	29	70,995	23.2	8.6
2004	31	78,708	25.7	9.55
2005	44	105,038	34.3	12.74
2006	50	118,704	38.8	14.4
2007	50	118,704	38.8	14.4
2008	53	122,897	38.4	14.9
2009	59	132,697	43.3	16.1
2010	59	132,697	43.3	16.1
2011	66	146,321	47.8	17.8
2012	77	158,247	52.2	19.2
2013	79	160,244	52.4	19.4
2014	82	162,030	52.9	19.66
2015	82	162,030	52.9	19.66
2016	82	162,030	52.9	19.66
2017	83	163,151	53.2	19.8
2018-21	86	166,179	58.8	20.2

Source: Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), *State of Community Conservation* reports 2004–2021, https://www.nacso.org.na/.

Regardless of the success stories and general stance of acceptance of CBNRM, however, diverse and opposing narratives also surface in discussion about whether these are really community-driven

61 *Ibid.*, Mosimane & Silva (2014), NACSO (2021)
62 *Ibid.*
63 MET (2017[2007])

conservation efforts or imposed forms of organisation and governance.[64] It is also important to acknowledge that communal area conservancies became established on top of the pattern of land control set up during the country's colonial and later apartheid history.[65] As documented in Chapters 1 and 2 and shown in Figure 3.1, most of the central and southern parts of the country were surveyed, fenced and settled by commercial white farmers once African Namibians had been constrained to more marginal lands which also acted as labour reserves (the dark shaded areas on the left-hand map). In 2018, more than 70% of freehold land was owned by 'previously advantaged farmers', which in Namibia's racialised history means they are white.[66] It is Namibia's remaining communally-managed land areas—those often more marginal lands (for farming) beyond the predominantly white-owned freehold farms—that are the focus of CBNRM, through the registration of communal land areas as conservancies with defined boundaries, members, and plans for wildlife management. As the map on the right of Figure 3.1 indicates, communal area conservancies remain limited to areas designated under colonialism and apartheid as communal lands where African land-users were permitted to live. The registration of communal area conservancies has not disrupted the highly unequal and enclosed pattern of land distribution established through Namibia's colonial and apartheid histories;[67] although, as mentioned, the registration process has often been drawn on to assert and negotiate historically understood and contested claims to land. In addition, some ethnic groupings of Namibians who were not allocated communal land under South Africa's administration of the territory have remained excluded even from CBNRM initiatives, as is the case for Hai‖om inhabitants of Etosha-Kunene (see Chapters 2, 4, 15 and 16).

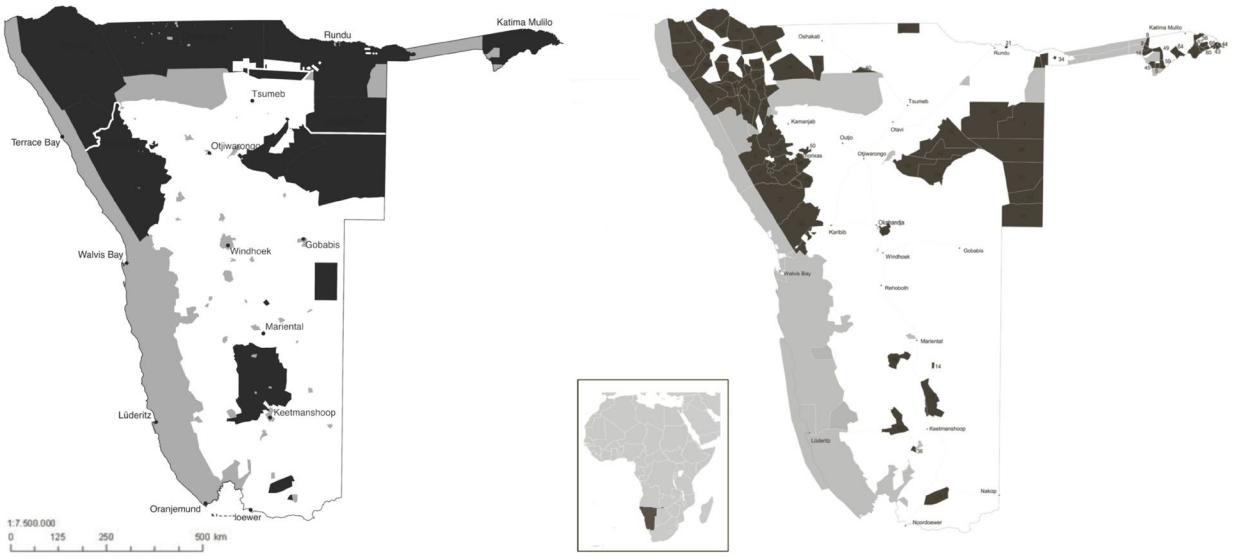


Fig. 3.1 Broad patterns of land tenure in Namibia: the dark shading on the map on the left shows areas under communal tenure in 2000 (John Mendelsohn pers. comm.); the dark shading on the right-hand map shows 82 registered communal area conservancies in 2014 (there are now 86) (NACSO, Windhoek, https://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies). The white areas on both maps are mostly under freehold tenure (other than in north-central Namibia). The pale-shaded areas are under state protection for conservation or (formerly) diamond mining, or are designated as tourism concessions.
Source: © Sullivan (2023: 17), CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

3.2.1 CBNRM in Kunene Region

With regard to Kunene Region specifically, 38 conservancies (44%) have been established in this region where they encompass an area of 60,735 km^2 with a population of around 71,500 people, making up 52.7% of the region and 7.4% of the country's surface area (as extracted from conservancy

64 Taylor (2012), Mosimane & Silva (2014), Koot *et al.* (2023)
65 Becker (2022a, b)
66 NSA (2018), Becker (2022a, b)
67 Sullivan (2018)

data, https://www.nacso.org.na/): see Figure 3.2. Kunene is the largest of the 14 political regions in Namibia, covering 144,255 km², which constitutes 18% of the land area of the country. The climate of Kunene Region is characterised as arid to semi-arid, with high temperatures and a rainfall gradient from the east where more than 400 mm of rain may be received, to the west where desert conditions mean that rainfall is lower than 100 mm.[68] The key feature of the climate here is the unpredictable variability of rainfall, especially in the drier west, meaning that primary productivity is similarly dynamic. Rainfall for the settlement of Sesfontein, for example, has been documented as having an annual mean of 95 mm and a coefficient of variation of 70% (n=24).[69] The region is characterised by an incised landscape with mountainous areas (see Chapters 9 and 11), alluvial plains and ephemeral rivers, i.e. rivers that flow only when there is enough rainfall in their catchment areas,[70] providing rich sources of biodiversity and important habitats in this dryland area.[71] The region is home to a fluid diversity of ethnic identities, as documented in Chapters 1 and 2.

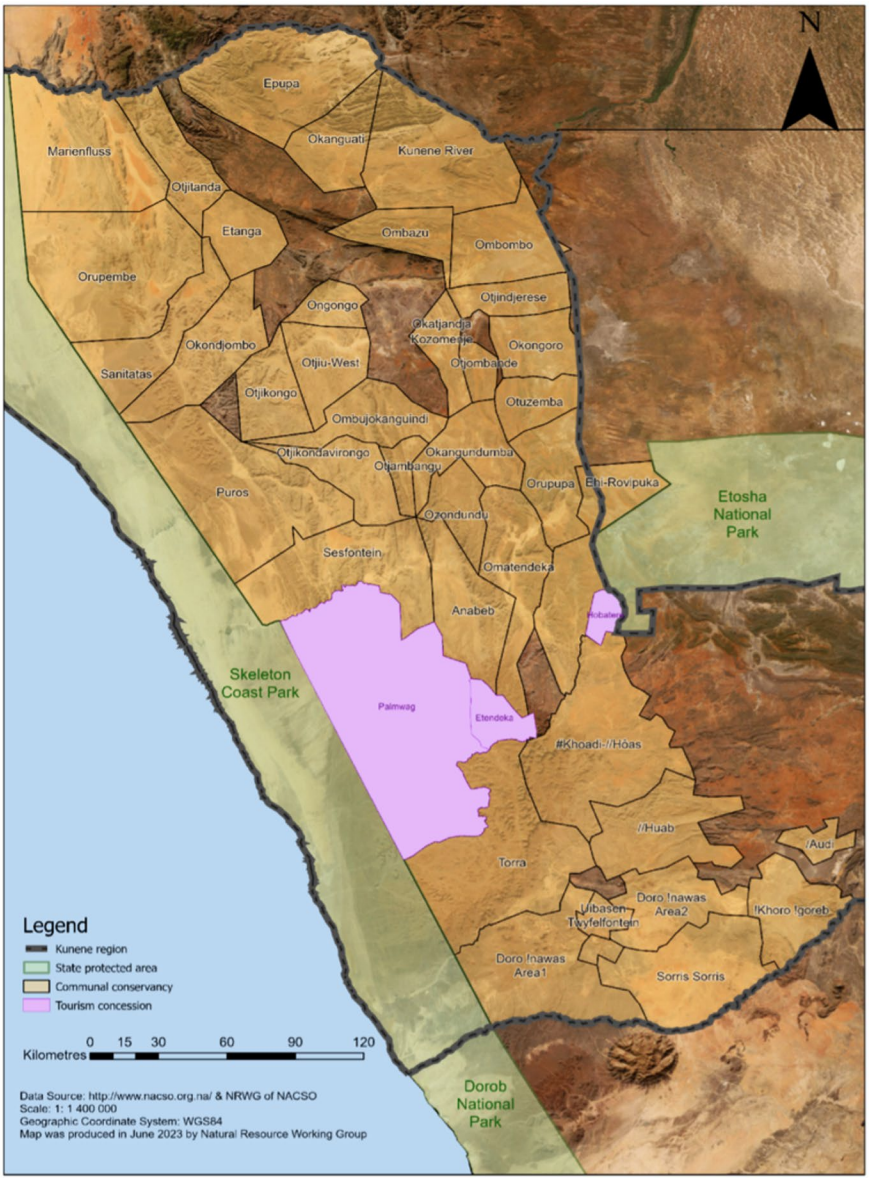


Fig. 3.2 Map of conservancies, state protected areas and tourism concessions in Kunene Region. Source: public data, NACSO Natural Resources Working Group (https://www.nacso.org.na/working-groups/natural-resources-working-group), CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

68 Ndimwedi (2016)
69 Sullivan (1999: 259)
70 Jacobson *et al.* (1995)
71 Shikangalah & Mapani (2021)

Kunene Region is notable for having the highest number of conservancies by region by far. The region's conservancies now sustain multiple joint venture arrangements with tourism enterprises, as well as having contracts with eight professional hunting businesses operating in 21 conservancy hunting concessions (according to recent data);[72] although wildlife declines in the last decade have caused a corresponding decline of hunting quotas (discussed further below). In addition, wildlife dispersal methods such as translocation were also carried out at different stages of the programme to increase wildlife species ranges and to enhance the "tourism product" (also see Chapter 9): indeed, 40 gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*) were translocated in 2023 to locations in the Palmwag Tourism Concession in response to a severe decline in the population of this species in north-west Namibia. Translocations in this context normally involve movement of wildlife species from protected areas or freehold farmland into community-managed, communal areas;[73] with some occasional translocation of animals identified as problematic (such as predators or elephants) from communal areas to protected areas and freehold farms.

These changes have not only contributed to increasing the amount of land under conservation both nationally and in Kunene Region specifically, but they have also increased the range within which wildlife in Namibia could freely move, thereby contributing to the diversity of wildlife species with viable populations. Adding complexity, wildlife species population increases from the 1980s until around 2012 that are attributed to the success of CBNRM[74] are considered to have also contributed to heightened multispecies "Human-Wildlife Impacts", including livestock depredation, crop raiding, damage to infrastructure and human attacks. For this reason, 1,415 'problem animals' were destroyed across 79 conservancies between 2001–2019.[75]

The 2007 Concessions Policy (plus 2017 amendments[76]) additionally clarifies formal arrangements whereby conservancies can enter into contractual relationships with operators awarded a concession. The Concessions Policy distinguishes four broad types of concession: lodge-based tourism, camp site-based tourism, trophy hunting, and traversing rights (whereby a communal conservancy or tour operator have rights to traverse national park areas with tourist clients). In effect, these arrangements were already consolidating an approach focusing on connecting landscapes through which wildlife move, prefiguring a "landscape approach" to conservation in communal areas, as outlined further in Section 3.3. As a result, connections between largely unfenced conservancy, concession and protected areas have been consolidated, as shown in Figure 3.3. Concessions such as Palmwag have additionally been awarded to conservancies to permit conservancy committees to co-manage and look after these areas in partnership with government agencies and NGOs; additional proposals have also been made to reduce concession sizes and divide tourism areas between operators.[77] The Big 3 Trust, established around 2012 and led by the Chairmen of Torra, Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies, is thus now the concessionaire for the Palmwag Tourism Concession, able to enter into legal contracts with operators awarded tourism contracts in the concession (see Chapter 13). These approaches build on co-management programmes developed throughout African contexts[78] and elsewhere, to allow active participation by local communities for the purposes of inclusion and reducing conflicts over resources.[79]

Despite these forward-looking innovations, for north-west Namibia specifically, concern about declining populations of some wildlife species now appears warranted, alongside entrenched poverty in this region. The combined impacts of high permitted wildlife offtake quotas extended into a multi-year drought—as shown in Table 3.2 and Figures 3.4 and 3.5—have led to a current situation of reduced offtake possibilities. Significant and sustained declines of populations of gemsbok,

72 https://www.nacso.org.na/hunting-partners, last accessed 1.8.2023; also Naidoo *et al.* (2016)
73 NACSO (2013), Paterson *et al.* (2008), Thomsen *et al.* (2022)
74 NACSO (2022)
75 Tavolaro *et al.* (2022: 8)
76 In the Nature Conservation Amendment Act 3 of 2017.
77 MET (2009)
78 Baghai *et al.* (2018)
79 Nath *et al.* (2016), Fedreheim & Blanco (2017), Petursson & Kristofersson (2021)

springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) and Hartmann's mountain zebra (*Equus zebra hartmannae*) have been observed between 2011–2017 in Sesfontein, Anabeb and Puros conservancies,[80] as well as the Palmwag Concession with which these conservancies are contractually connected. Relatively good rainfall in 2022 does not appear to have contributed to a recovery of populations, for which a sustained run of good rain years would be needed.[81]

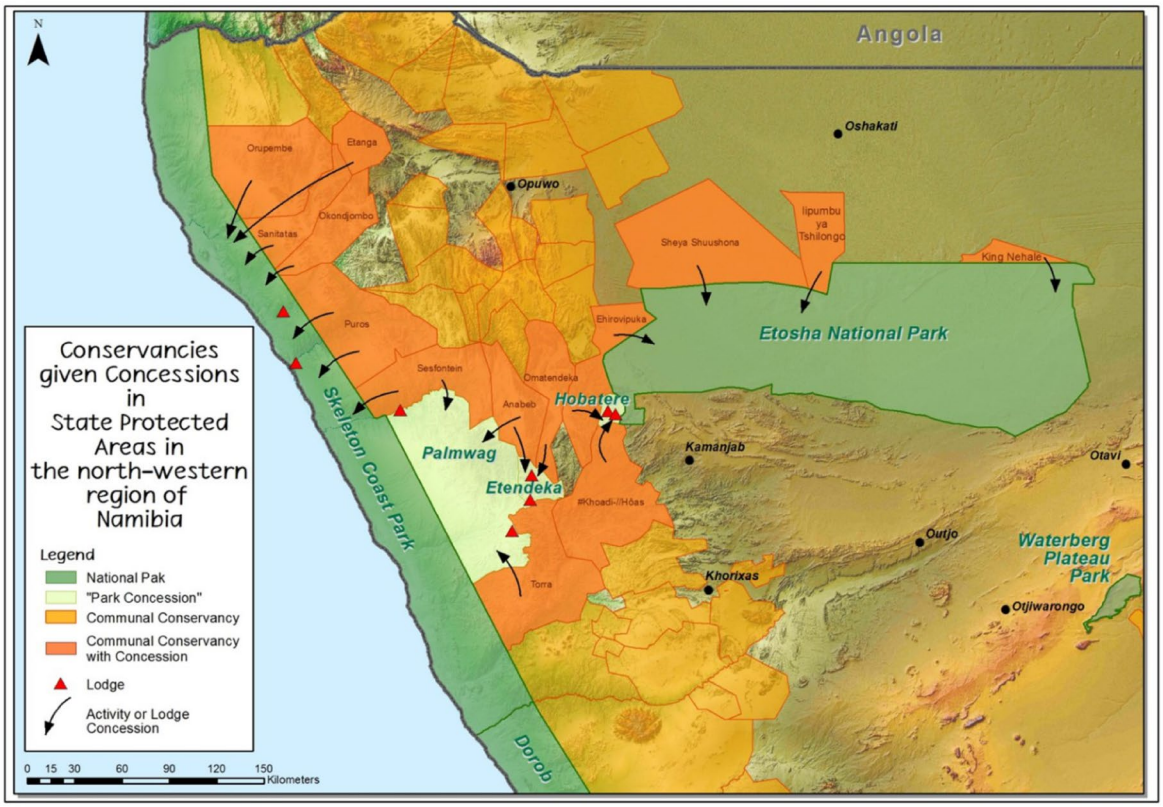


Fig. 3.3 Map of tourism concession areas utilised by conservancies in Kunene Region and next to Etosha National Park. Source: public 2015 data at https://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/Concession%20map.jpg, 19.7.2023, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

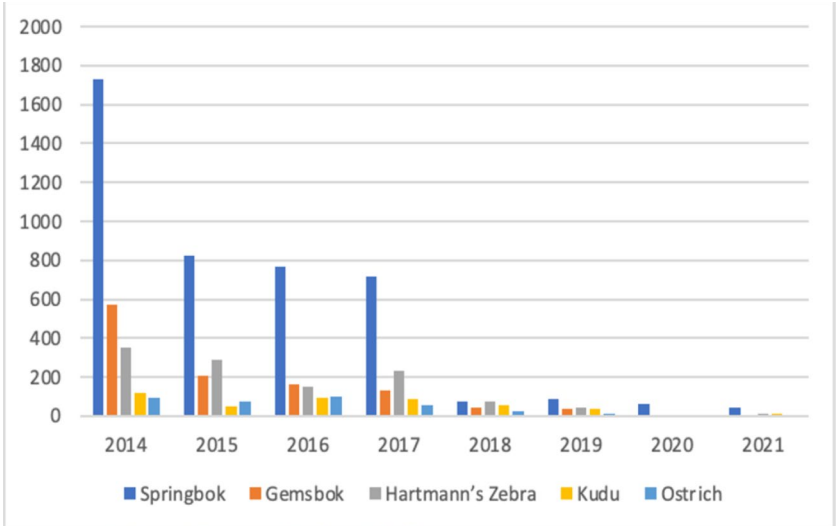


Fig. 3.4 Graph showing declines in numbers of harvested animals from the five primary prey species focused on for consumptive use in north-west Namibia, 2014–2021. Source: graph created by Sian Sullivan from NACSO Game Count North-west Namibia May 2022, public data, https://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/North%20West%20Game%20Count-Regional%202022%20final.pdf, 1.8.2023, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

80 Heydinger *et al.* (2019: 497–98)
81 For figures, see NACSO (2022)

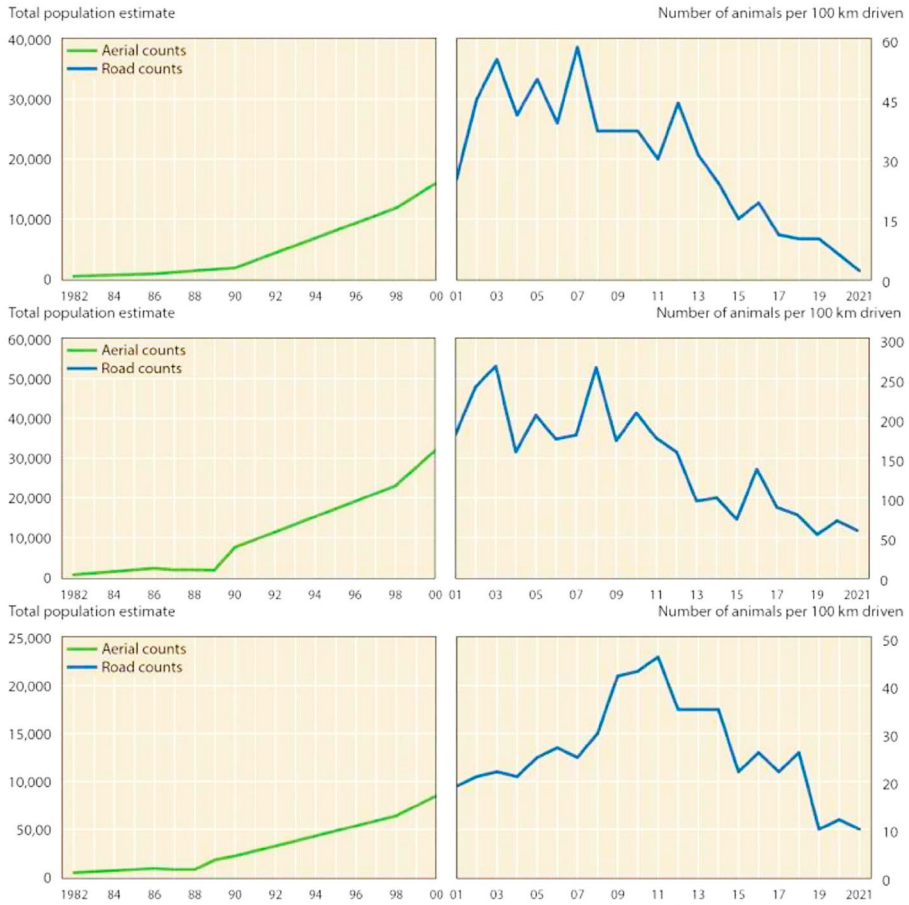


Fig. 3.5 Graphs showing population count data for gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*) (top), springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) (middle) and Hartmann's mountain zebra (*Equus zebra hartmannae*) (bottom) for Erongo and Kunene Regions in north-west Namibia, from aerial counts for 1982–2000 and road counts from 2001–2021. Source: NACSO State of Community Conservation 2021 public data (https://www.nacso.org.na/resources/state-of-community-conservation-figures-and-tables, 1.8.2023), CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

What these data show for north-west Namibia are that prey species have declined, leading to a situation in which predators such as lion and leopard are increasingly preying on peoples' livestock (see Chapter 17). This combination of dynamic factors led to a moratorium on "shoot-and-sell" offtake by commercial butcheries in the north-west,[82] radically reducing actual or potential conservancy income from consumptive use of wildlife, although trophy-hunting of predator species appears to be continuing in the area.[83]

Presenting additional challenges, and despite several decades of donor-financed CBNRM, Kunene Region also remains the area of Namibia where eradication of poverty appears to be the hardest. In 2022 the World Bank confirmed that 1.6 million people in Namibia (of a total population of 2.6 million) are living in poverty,[84] with Kunene Region in north-west Namibia the worst hit area. In 2011 39% of the population in Kunene Region were classified as 'poor', i.e. living on <USD 1/day.[85] In 2021, and partly reflecting subsequent years of drought as well as the impacts of COVID-19,[86] over 64% of the population of Kunene Region was considered "multidimensionally poor", with a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 0.379—the highest poverty intensity level in Namibia.[87] Alongside these figures, and prior to the COVID pandemic, tourism was the third largest sector in

82 Heydinger *et al.* (2019: 498)
83 Africa Geographic (2023)
84 Petersen (2022)
85 GRN (2015)
86 Lendelvo *et al.* (2020)
87 NSA (2021: 29)

terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), contributing around 14.7% of GDP in Namibia in 2019,[88] suggesting that tourism gains may not be reaching people in rural areas where tourism business and investment are prominent.

Table 3.2 Numbers of prey species harvested in north-west Namibia from 2014–2021.

Species		**Number of animals harvested**							
	2011	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Springbok	**Dry period begins in Kunene Region**	1727	821	768	719	76	85	64	42
Gemsbok		572	208	163	131	43	35	1	
Hartmann's Zebra		350	288	150	234	72	45	8	10
Kudu		120	49	91	86	54	34	7	10
Ostrich		95	75	100	55	27	12	1	3
Giraffe		16	9	6	11	2	6	1	3
Jackal		14	9	6	11	2	6	1	3
Steenbok		8	3	13	3	4	8		2
Klipspringer		5	5	7	5	4	5		

Source: Adapted from NACSO Game Count North-west Namibia May 2022, public data, https://www.nacso.org.na/sites/default/files/North%20West%20Game%20Count-Regional%202022%20final.pdf, 1.8.2023.

Given the contexts and challenges shaping CBNRM in Namibia, some of which—as with COVID-19—could not have been predicted in advance, it is perhaps unsurprising that research documents a variety of outcomes for the programme.[89] Recent research thus brings complexity into analyses of CBNRM success in Namibia observing, for example: discontent with CBNRM as a development strategy,[90] in part due to the exacerbation of "human-wildlife conflict"[91] (also see Chapters 11, 17, 18 and 19); low value and low volume levels of economic incentives;[92] concerns regarding the long-term financial viability of communal area conservancies;[93] the concentration of skilled knowledge, resources and decision-making power in the hands of tour operators and NGOs,[94] combined with an emphasis on multiple trainings that do not lead to improved wages, thus compromising the retention of trained conservancy staff;[95] and exacerbation of local differences and inequalities through complex local dynamics that can act to privilege particular constellations of people over others with similar claims to conservancy opportunities and resources (see Chapters 5 and 6).[96] Mosimane and

88 US International Trade Administration (2021)
89 See discussion in Koot *et al.* (2023)
90 Silva & Mosimane (2012), Silva & Motzer (2015)
91 Silva & Mosimane (2012), Schnegg & Kiaka (2018), Tavolaro *et al.* (2022), Luetkemeier *et al.* (2023)
92 Suich (2013), Hewitson (2018), Kalvelage *et al.* (2020)
93 Humavindu & Stage (2015)
94 Newsham (2007), Hoole (2010), Lapeyre (2011a, b, c, d)
95 Stamm (2017)
96 Sullivan (2002, 2003), Pellis (2011), Taylor (2012), Gargallo (2015), Pellis *et al.* (2015), Koot (2019)

Silva additionally highlight the significance of conservancy establishment as a boundary-making exercise in which new conservation borders are created that, although unfenced, 'involve complex social processes of cooperation and competition for rights and recognition'.[97] A strong focus on economic benefits may thus crowd out attention to other relevant factors such as strong cultural attachments to place and cultural dimensions generating social cohesion and resource value.[98] In addition, a combination of neocolonial labour relations in trophy hunting businesses,[99] limited incomes deriving from CBNRM-related activities,[100] and dependency on sometimes reducing donor support,[101] may act to limit autonomy and self-sufficiency amongst rural communities, thereby hampering the sustainability of CBNRM initiatives.

This is the complex setting into which a new impetus to create jointly managed conservation areas on communal land is emerging in north-west Namibia. In Section 3.3 we continue this CBNRM journey by engaging with these nascent landscape approaches to conservation in Kunene Region, documenting their form and the perspectives shaping them.

3.3 New landscape approaches to conservation in Kunene Region

> The 1,140 km² Ombonde Peoples' Park (OPP) is the first step towards developing the greater vision of a Kunene People's Park. It is a progressive new type of protected area—an African way of linking conservation of wildlife to enhanced quality of life of the communities who co-manage and live around the wildlife and tourism area they have chosen to protect. What makes this different from conventional national parks is that it builds on and enhances community ownership of wildlife and valuable natural resources—the key to the success of community-based conservation in Namibia—as it will be a genuine partnership between two communal conservancies and the government.[102]

Conservancies are now becoming subjects of new conservation arrangements called People's Parks or People's Landscapes, as permitted through the category "contractual parks" in the long-awaited Wildlife and Protected Areas Management Bill of 2017.[103] Currently the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 (and amendments) makes no provision for the establishment of conservation areas such as "People's Landscapes" or "People's Parks". Indeed, this lack of appropriate legislation was one reason why, in the late 2000s, a major donor-funded effort to establish a "Kunene People's Park" (KPP) that would connect the Hobatere, Etendeka and Palmwag Concessions between ENP and the Skeleton Coast National Park (SCNP) eventually floundered.

In Namibia several landscape approaches to conservation have emerged recently, whereby projects are implemented at the landscape level rather than the local level. Initiatives taking a landscape approach to address environmental concerns are supported by the MEFT, GIZ and Namibia's Environmental Investment Fund (EIF). An earlier project deploying a landscape approach was the GEF-funded Namibia Protected Landscape Conservation Areas Initiative (NAM-PLACE). This project identified five protected landscape conservation areas and adjacent areas of different land-uses for promoting corridors to sustain the viability of wildlife populations.[104] In addition, a Green Climate Fund (GCF) project was implemented in Namibia partitioning conservation areas into landscapes to address climate change related challenges faced by communities. The landscape concept has been embraced by GIZ, as demonstrated by its financial support for landscape-level approaches to conservation.[105] Recently, a GEF-funded MEFT project has also started using the

97 Mosimane & Silva (2014: 85); also Sullivan (2022)
98 Jacquet & Delon (2016), Koot (2019), Silva & Mosimane (2014), Sullivan & Ganuses (2021), Sullivan (2022)
99 Hewitson (2018), Koot (2019), Becker (2022a, b) Sullivan (2023)
100 Paksi & Pyhälä (2018)
101 Nuulimba & Taylor (2015), Lubilo & Hebinck (2019)
102 IRDNC (n.d.)
103 Denker (2022: 5)
104 These landscapes are Mudumu North Complex incorporating Mudumu National Park and other conservation designations in Zambezi Region (NACSO 2012), Greater Waterberg in Otjozondjupa Region, the Windhoek Green Belt, Greater Sossusvlei-Namib and the Greater Fish River Canyon Landscapes in southern Namibia.
105 Schütz (2019)

landscape approach to address "human-wildlife conflict" (HWC) and "wildlife crimes" in Kunene and other regions. Transboundary conservation—including the Iona-Skeleton Coast Transfrontier Park agreed by the governments of Namibia and Angola in 2018 (see Figure 3.6)—also sits with landscape-level conservation initiatives.[106]

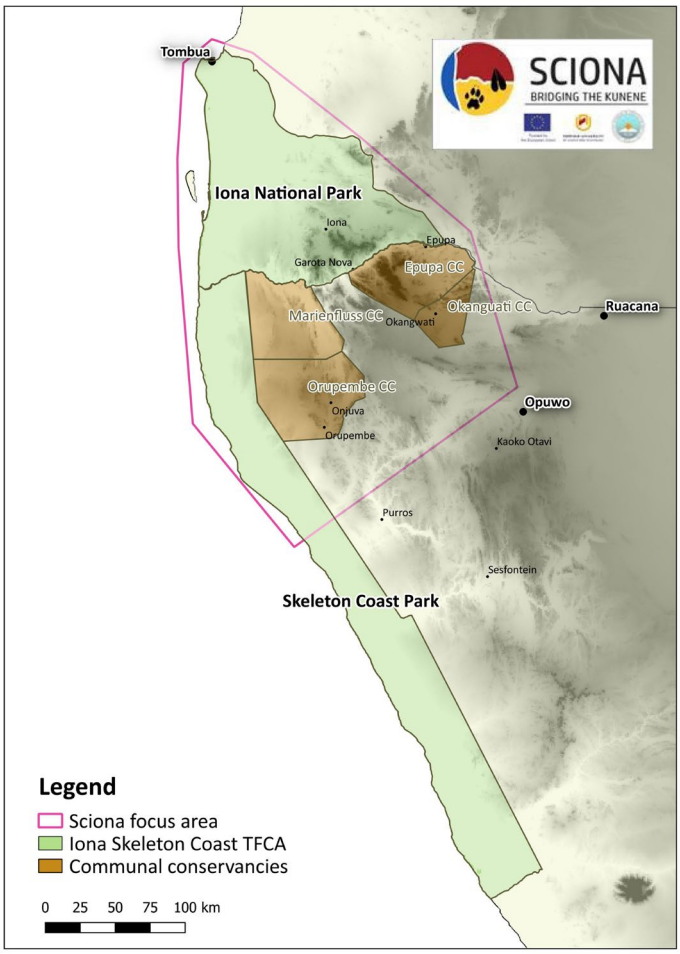


Fig. 3.6 Map of Iona-Skeleton Coast Transfrontier Conservation Area of Angola and Namibia. Source: public domain image, http://sciona.nust.na/about, 31.3.2024, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Iterating multiple pre-Independence proposals for a formalised conservation corridor between ENP and SCNP (see Chapter 13), an impetus remains to connect the different ecologies of these two protected areas to create a "wildlife corridor" between them.[107] Currently this impetus is manifesting in a new Ombonde People's Landscape, also referred to as the "Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape", proposed 'as a protected area in the form of a "landscapes of special conservation importance"'.[108] Initiated in part so as to enable more control over 4x4 self-drive tourists, in the first instance '[t]he Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape is a joint initiative between the Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka conservancies' immediately west of Etosha National Park[109] (Figure 3.7). Both these conservancies were registered in 2003. This People's Park/Landscape initiative has been emerging since at least 2018, with international support by conservation donors and the British royal family.[110] According to the Communal Land Reform Act 5 of 2002,[111] north of the Ombonde tributary to the Hoanib River the territories of these conservancies sit within the Kaokoland

106 Bollig & Vehrs (2021)
107 KREA (2008), MET (2009)
108 Denker (2022: 5)
109 *Ibid.*, p. 4
110 As reported at https://www.irdnc.org.na/women-for-conservation.html; https://www.irdnc.org.na/seen-on-the-banks-of-the-Hoanib-River.html; https://twitter.com/kensingtonroyal/status/1044861632436994048; also IRDNC (n.d)
111 Available at https://www.lac.org.na/laws/annoSTAT/Communal%20Land%20Reform%20Act%205%20of%202002.pdf

Communal Land Area, whilst their areas south and west of the Ombonde are in the Damaraland Communal Land Area. These areas are thus also governed by the relevant Communal Land Boards and Traditional Authorities, of which several are formally recognised in Etosha-Kunene: see Figure 3.8 and discussion in Chapters 4, 6, 13, 14 and 16.

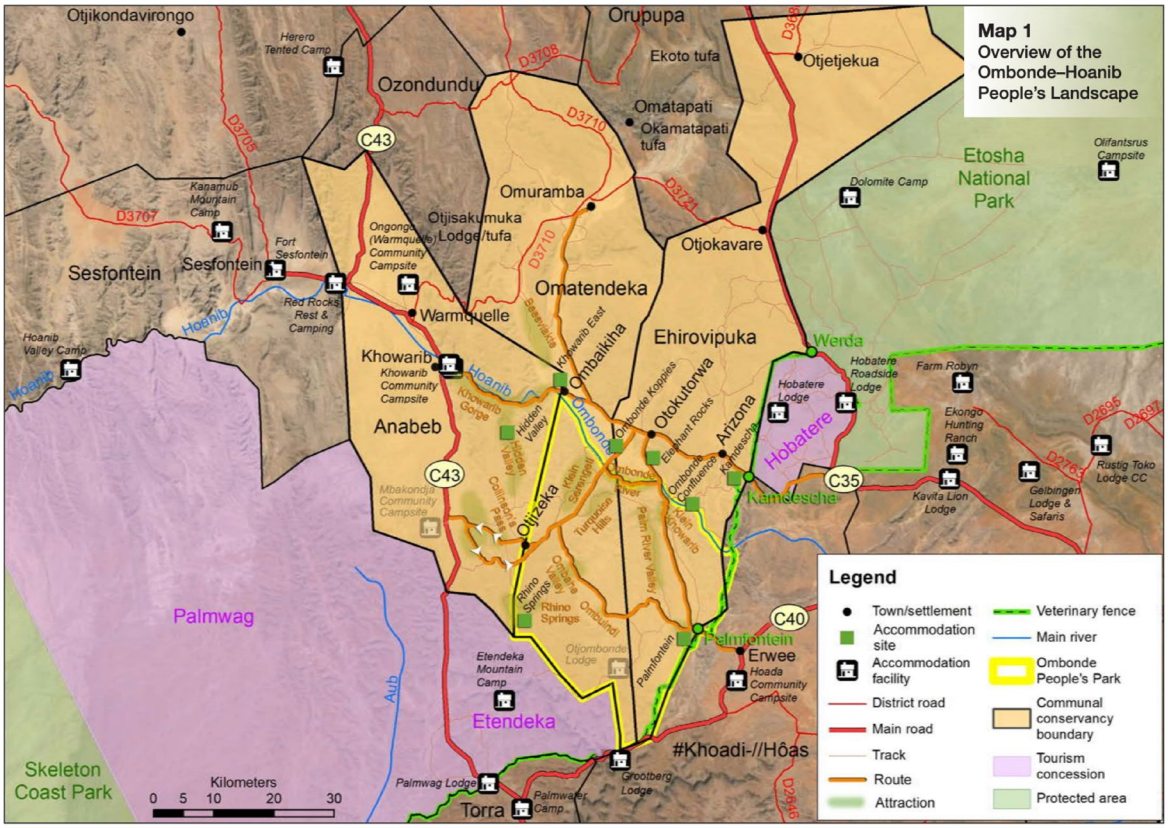


Fig. 3.7 The proposed boundaries of the Ombonde People's Landscape, labelled here as Ombonde People's Park due to the previously proposed name for the area. Source: public domain image, Denker (2022: 6, data from NACSO), CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

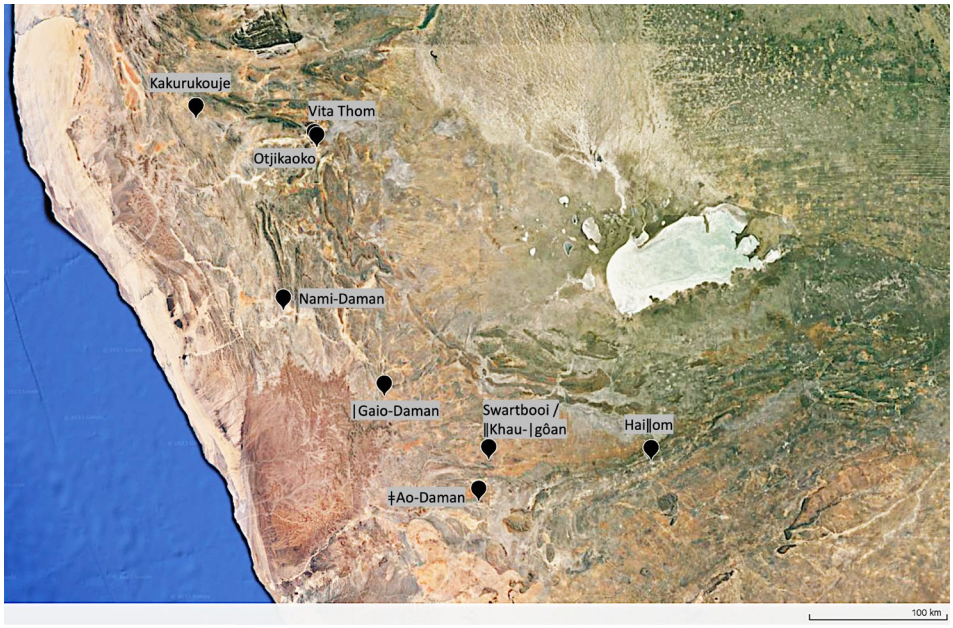


Fig. 3.8 Locations of recognised Traditional Authorities in Etosha-Kunene. Source: drawing on Mendelsohn (2008: 7, 92), with updates. Map created by Sian Sullivan on Google Earth, map data attribution: Landsat / CopernicusData SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, from 2015 onwards, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

In this section we look at the drivers of this process to connect conservancy areas into a new landscape focused conservation configuration. A series of 11 interviews were conducted by Lendelvo involving stakeholders from different organisations including conservancy members and government officials, coupled with Focus Group Discussion (FGD) (see Table 3.3). These interviews and discussions form the basis for our contextualisation of landscape approaches to conservation in this section. Landscape level wildlife conservation approaches have been applied in different contexts worldwide for various purposes.[112] There are cases where integrated landscape approaches were implemented to enhance biodiversity through increasing habitat area and connectedness.[113] For example, in their article 'Bigger is better', Kennedy and co-authors[114] demonstrate that landscape level mitigation initiatives were able to provide cost-effective conservation and sustainable development outcomes when this approach was tested in Brazil. Wildlife species in most African landscapes are migratory, moving over long distances even beyond national territories. It is indicated that management of wildlife resources over larger areas provides better results economically, socially and ecologically.[115] Landscape approaches can be broadly defined as a practice of multiple land-uses across boundaries within a particular area, to promote environmental and land integrity, strengthening measures for large-scale challenges such as human-wildlife conflicts and climate change, while taking advantage of opportunities such as tourism and "conservation hunting".[116]

Table 3.3 List and description of respondents in research by Lendelvo regarding new landscape approaches to conservation and the Ombonde People's Landscape.

Details of Respondents	Affiliation	Date
Individual interviews		
Landscape Conservation Officer	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT)	10.9.2021
Former Committee member	Kunene Conservancy Association	10.9.2021
NGO Regional Leader	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)	16.9.2021
Freelancer/NGO Technical Advisor	Private/IRDNC	21.9.2021
Eba Project Official	Environmental Investment Fund (EIF)	23.9.2021
Traditional leader	Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy	28.9.2021
NGO National Leader	IRDNC	15.3.2022
Member of Conservancy Management Committee	Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy	10.6.2022
Member of Conservancy Management Committee	Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy	11.6.2022
Community Activist	Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy	12.6.2022
Women in Conservation activist	Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy	12.6.2022
Focus-Group Discussion		
Mixed Groups (All ages & gender with different portfolio is conservancy	Omatendeka Conservancy (15 persons)	10.06.2022

112 Beale *et al.* (2013), Sayer *et al.* (2013), Doyle-Capitman (2018), Yeiser *et al.* (2018)
113 Pedroza-Arceo *et al.* (2022)
114 (2016)
115 Denker (2022: 10–11)
116 Sayer *et al.* (2013)

The emerging 'Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape' in Kunene Region west of ENP is thus connected with a growing post-Independence emphasis on landscape approaches to conservation. Named for the Ombonde and Hoanib Rivers—the former being a tributary of the latter and thus part of the Hoanib River catchment[117]—Omatendeka and Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancies are currently inhabited predominantly by ovaHerero and ovaHimba pastoralists incorporating mobility into their livestock herding practices (see Chapter 14). As with other conservancies, Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka implement zonation plans that divide areas into tourism, wildlife, hunting and livestock farming or multi-use areas. Wildlife core areas were designated where livestock activities are highly regulated, but conservancies have had difficulties enforcing these plans successfully, because wildlife core areas are also viewed as rangeland reserves for livestock during dry seasons (also see Chapters 6 and 19). Indeed, pastoralist mobilities are often a reason why conflict may emerge in relation to access restrictions relating to wildlife conservation areas in African drylands.[118] Limited control over the influx of livestock into wildlife areas has resulted in conflicts between farmers and conservancies, sometimes leading to legal cases to evict pastoralists viewed as "intruders" into conservancy areas demarcated for wildlife and/or trophy hunting.[119] Legal cases to evict pastoralists who are not conservancy members have been initiated by Sesfontein, Ehi-Rovipuka and Anabeb conservancies.[120] Indeed, a motivation for establishing an Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape is precisely to strengthen the designation of 'clearly zoned core wildlife areas', following an understanding that 'a registered people's landscape has the powers to enforce such zonation, which a conservancy does not'.[121]

Apart from the primary objective of sustainable wildlife use and tourism, the proposal for the Ombonde People's Landscape envisages finding solutions for addressing "illegal" livestock movement to core wildlife areas. Views from interviews with community members continue to refer to those with livestock inside the Ombonde Landscape as 'illegal'; others indicated 'it is not allowed by the government' to graze within the wildlife core area. The movement of cattle into the core area has been kept low through a mutual understanding by members of the conservancies. However, an unprecedented increase in livestock observed in the Ombonde area and attributed to people from areas outside Omatendeka and Ehi-Rovipuka conservancies, has stimulated a sense that this issue might be more easily be tackled at a landscape level rather than by individual conservancies. During an interview with a member of the Kunene Conservancy Association,[122] it was evident that many conservancies spend much time seeking court orders to remove livestock from "core wildlife areas".

Indeed, in conservancies, wildlife core areas are expected to have minimal human interactions to allow for the healthy build-up of animal numbers and diversity, including protection of rare and endangered species. In an interview with one of the conservancy leaders in the Ehi-Rovipuka conservancy—a wildlife core area of a conservancy was framed as the 'bank or treasure area' for any conservancy, because this is the area where hunting and tourism, and even the entire economy of the conservancy, is dependent on. Mr Asser Ujaha from Ehi-Rovipuka conservancy (also see Chapter 14) indicated that the idea to establish the Ombonde People's Landscape was born out of the notion of the sustainable use of wildlife, and improving the benefits of wildlife conservation for members of the conservancy. A leader from IRDNC with interests in new lodge development indicated that their conservancies are rich in resources, but the current model of management of core areas within conservancies is preventing conservancies from maximising the potential of

117 Jacobson *et al.* (1995)
118 Homewood *et al.* (2012)
119 Shilongo *et al.* (2018)
120 For example, *Anabeb Conservancy Committee v Muharukua & 39 Others* (HC-MD-CIV-ACT-OTH-2016/03267) [2021] NAHCMD 24 (1.2.2022), https://namiblii.org/na/judgment/high-court-main-division/2022/24.
121 Denker (2022: 32)
122 The Kunene Conservancy Association is a regional voluntary body of elected officials from Conservancies to provide coordination and drive community conservation in Kunene Region.

connections across areas; whilst additionally draining conservancy management through having to resolve one conflict after another. An elderly respondent from a group discussion indicated that:

> conservancies were not established for us but for our future generations, and as we now gain better understanding of the challenges, we put minds together to think on how to better the conservancy programme for our future generations. The landscape approach helps us to preserve that area for tomorrow and those who are against it today will see the benefits tomorrow.

In the case of Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka conservancies, designated wildlife core areas are adjacent to one another, presenting an opportunity for cooperation for sustainable wildlife management and benefits for conservancy members.

The initially proposed Ombonde People's Park/Landscape thus resulted in proposals for these two neighbouring conservancies to combine their wildlife core areas to allow for management of wildlife and promotion of tourism at a landscape level.[123] As indicated in Figures 3.2 and 3.7, the area envisaged for the Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape in fact includes a disputed area between the two conservancies.[124] This land has not been registered as a conservancy,[125] and the "landscape approach" is deemed a way to solve this unresolved dispute by connecting the dispute area to the conservancies via the Ombonde People's Landscape. Given overlapping land designations, it is important to iterate that the area selected for the Ombonde People's Park/Landscape sits in the Damaraland Communal Land Area (as per area definitions in the Communal Area Land Reform Act 5 of 2002), with implications for TA jurisdiction.

In 2018, the Ombonde landscape approach was presented by the Conservancy Management Committees at separate annual general meetings of the two conservancies, as well as at a meeting of 46 'representatives of the Ehi-Rovipoka [*sic*], Omatendeka, Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies at Opuwo Country Lodge' in May 2022.[126] In terms of leadership, the governance of the "Ombonde People's Park", which is already operational, comprises an 18-member board of directors who will serve for three years. Directors are drawn from the two conservancies, and the board is currently chaired by a member from the Omatendeka conservancy with a member from the Ehi-Rovipuka conservancy deputising. Each conservancy delegated their Conservancy Executive Committee Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary as board members, as well as three women from the Women for Conservation Group and two members of the Traditional Authority (TA). The Vita Traditional Royal House is a recognised TA by the Namibian government in the area and is connected with Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy (see Figure 3.8). The Vita TA work closely with two TA headman groups in the Omatendeka Conservancy, namely the Tjauira and Kandjii TAs, which do not have official government recognition.

This governance body of the Ombonde People's Park is accountable to the management committees of the two conservancies and has already facilitated the drafting of a constitution, drawing site maps, and formulating management plans and feasibility surveys in collaboration with partners: mainly NACSO, IRDNC, WWF, GIZ, MEFT and investors interested in tourism and other opportunities in the area.

Indeed, a major impetus shaping the Ombonde People's Landscape is to enhance controlled tourism access to the area, for example, through opening a currently "dormant" high-end lodge built in the south of the Omatendeka Conservancy,[127] and developing additional accommodation

123 Denker (2022)

124 As outlined in Section 3.2, part of the registration process of a conservancy in Namibia requires that conservancies clearly define their boundaries and negotiate these with their neighbours: see Silva & Mosimane (2014), Sullivan (2022). During the development stage of Omatendeka and Ehi-Rovipuka conservancies, the two conservancy communities could not come to agreement over the disputed area, as shown in Figure 3.2.

125 Denker (2022: 7)

126 *Ibid.*, p. 32

127 See https://www.africa-discovery.com/namibia/camps/damaraland/omatendeka-lodge.php. The lodge is also called Otjombonde Lodge, as in Figure 3.7.

sites through the landscape—as indicated by the green squares on Figure 3.7.[128] Part of this impetus involves creating a vision towards 'branding' the 'Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape'. As a Namibian tourism and conservation consultant, commissioned to assess the tourism potential of the 'Ombonde-Hoanib People's Landscape', writes:

> the creation of a strong 'Ombonde-Hoanib Brand' that produces a clear identity by defining the "Ombonde-Hoanib Experience" and the "Ombonde-Hoanib Vision", as well as other identity elements, is an important first step in attracting visitors to the area; visitors travel to a destination for a perceived experience that is created by a particular notion of being in that destination—a "sense of place"; this is created only in part by the physical features of the destination and must be enhanced ("built") through a combination of branding and marketing.[129]

The Ombonde People's Landscape (OPL) works closely with IRDNC as a core support organisation, in partnership with other agencies. Seven people from the two conservancies are currently employed by OPL with a vehicle donated through the funding efforts of IRDNC and other partners to realise the operations of the OPL: these employees include a driver and six game rangers (see Figure 3.9). In addition, the German government through a GIZ-funded project on 'Biodiversity Economy in Selected Landscapes in Namibia' recently showed its support when they released a Tender Invitation advert (Figure 3.10) in a local newspaper for business and tourism development for the Ombonde People's Landscape. The advert suggests there are also other landscape approaches with a similar purpose.

Fig. 3.9 The first employees of the Ombonde People's Landscape and the Toyota land cruiser used during patrols in the "Park". Photo: © Asser Ujaha, 2023, used with permission, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

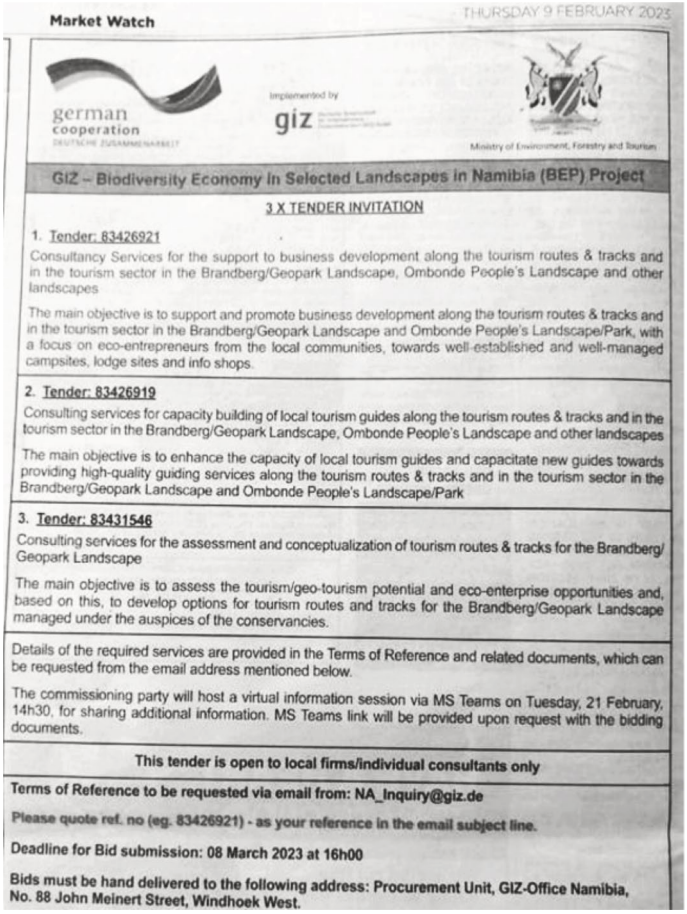
The chairpersons of the two conservancies have confirmed that the OPL application was presented to the MEFT and received support from the Ministry. In a group discussion in Omatendeka Conservancy, one of the local members of the TA made a statement alluding to this response of the MEFT, saying: 'it will be a glory day of my life the day I open my eyes and hear the [Protected Areas and Wildlife Management] Bill has been passed'. Community members in a FGD in Omatendeka acknowledged that the conservancy approach is a novel idea, that has 'bonded and unified the community not only as a community but also in looking after the natural resources commonly and fighting together against common "enemies" affecting both the people and the resources'. These common enemies included hunger, poverty, alcoholism, poaching, overgrazing and lack of finances. Respondents in group discussions in Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka agreed that the continuation of conservancy-level management alone may lead to ecosystem fragmentation or separate people

128 Denker (2022: 7, 22–25)
129 *Ibid.*, p. 30

from places of value outside conservancies from which they previously may have had access and connections. It was indicated that the management of a landscape will give an opportunity for adjacent conservancies to take common decisions over the landscape, unlike the past where each conservancy decided with limited inputs of their neighbour(s). Not engaging in landscape conservation can even lead to disconnecting communities in the Kunene landscape in the future—even though they may share similar cultural contexts—although it is not clear how this approach could shift the power-and-control dynamics of local resource use. Other respondents went further to indicate that open areas outside conservancies should be utilised through common agreement rather than in a disputed manner. At the same time, the realisation of landscape approaches is risky and currently not backed by legislation although other respondents believed that the forthcoming Wildlife and Protected Areas Management Bill will provide a promising mechanism to support the formalisation of landscape approaches to conservation.

Tourism consultant Helge Denker notes that,

> [a] range of development steps have taken place, including extensive community consultations, the formulation of a draft management plan, the formulation of a tourism development plan, and wide-ranging stakeholder consultation that has included private-sector engagement.[130]



Market Watch THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2023

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Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

GIZ – Biodiversity Economy in Selected Landscapes in Namibia (BEP) Project

3 X TENDER INVITATION

1. Tender: 83426921

Consultancy Services for the support to business development along the tourism routes & tracks and in the tourism sector in the Brandberg/Geopark Landscape, Ombonde People's Landscape and other landscapes

The main objective is to support and promote business development along the tourism routes & tracks and in the tourism sector in the Brandberg/Geopark Landscape and Ombonde People's Landscape/Park, with a focus on eco-entrepreneurs from the local communities, towards well-established and well-managed campsites, lodge sites and info shops.

2. Tender: 83426919

Consulting services for capacity building of local tourism guides along the tourism routes & tracks and in the tourism sector in the Brandberg/Geopark Landscape, Ombonde People's Landscape and other landscapes

The main objective is to enhance the capacity of local tourism guides and capacitate new guides towards providing high-quality guiding services along the tourism routes & tracks and in the tourism sector in the Brandberg/Geopark Landscape and Ombonde People's Landscape/Park

3. Tender: 83431546

Consulting services for the assessment and conceptualization of tourism routes & tracks for the Brandberg/Geopark Landscape

The main objective is to assess the tourism/geo-tourism potential and eco-enterprise opportunities and, based on this, to develop options for tourism routes and tracks for the Brandberg/Geopark Landscape managed under the auspices of the conservancies.

Details of the required services are provided in the Terms of Reference and related documents, which can be requested from the email address mentioned below.

The commissioning party will host a virtual information session via MS Teams on Tuesday, 21 February, 14h30, for sharing additional information. MS Teams link will be provided upon request with the bidding documents.

This tender is open to local firms/individual consultants only

Terms of Reference to be requested via email from: NA_Inquiry@giz.de

Please quote ref. no (eg. 83426921) - as your reference in the email subject line.

Deadline for Bid submission: 08 March 2023 at 16h00

Bids must be hand delivered to the following address: Procurement Unit, GIZ-Office Namibia, No. 88 John Meinert Street, Windhoek West.

Fig. 3.10 A newspaper advert for consultancy services to support tourism development in the Ombonde People's Landscape as supported by GIZ. Source: scan by Lendelvo from New Era Newspaper, 9.2.2023, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

At the same time, confusion and concern has also been generated by the Ombonde People's Park/Landscape proposal, particularly in neighbouring conservancies, perhaps indicating a lack of appropriately shared information about the initiative.[131] In 2019 a group of concerned persons

130 *Ibid.*, p. 5
131 Kambaekua (2023)

emerged opposing the landscape proposal. Although described in observed meetings as mainly made up of young people, in reality this group includes older residents with long histories of association with the broader Hoanib-Ombonde river system, as well as leadership roles in conservancies and TAs in the area.[132] Their opposition is on the basis that the landscape proposal was primarily focused on wildlife and excluded livestock grazing, whilst the area concerned is known for historically providing livestock farmers with grazing during dry seasons (see Chapters 1, 13 and 14). The emergence of a "concerned group" triggered the necessity of rigorous awareness-raising efforts by NGO, TA and conservancy leaderships. As the idea of the OPL gained momentum, the issues raised by the concerned group reappeared on the agenda of the annual general meeting in 2022. Indeed, newspaper reports into 2023 continued to share concern 'from exasperated community members', particularly around suspicions that 'the park will take up their grazing and ancestral lands'.[133] The Chairpersons of the two Conservancies both confirmed that Ombonde does not aim to take away grazing but rather regulates livestock numbers within the area zoned for sustainable wildlife conservation, and is intended to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and other challenges associated with a high influx of livestock (also see Chapters 6, 14 and 19).

Overall, then, initiatives such as the OPL in Kunene Region, adjacent to ENP, can be seen as an orientation towards "coupling" conservancy ecosystems to enable wildlife management across connected landscapes, and to ensure greater benefits from wildlife and tourism activities. Doherty and Driscoll[134] argue that coupled landscapes can be defined through the multiple ways in which ecosystem 'components' are connected across time and space, including through human use, access and mobilities. As Arthur Hoole has documented, historical 'decoupling' of members of the Ehi-Rovipuka community from Etosha National Park in the past might thus be redressed to some extent through recoupling conservancy areas with ENP and associated wildlife (see Chapter 14).[135] It should be noted too, however, that tensions also arise in terms of conservancy restrictions placed on areas zoned as "core wildlife" or "hunting" areas, that also act to "decouple" people and their livestock from conservancy land.

The Ombonde People's Landscape, in particular, covers a wide range of core areas, and plans are in place to aggregate two conservancies so that they can be collectively managed, a process from which one conservancy (Anabeb) has already withdrawn. Conservationists view the joint management of the OPL as an exclusive wildlife and tourism area to be progressive, in that competitive land uses such as grazing and other activities will be managed such that they have minimal impacts on conservation and tourism. The approach is also viewed as able to reduce fragmentation and encourage cooperation, with the belief that this type of ecosystem coupling will enhance the integrity of biodiversity within the area and the resilience of ecosystems to sustainably support conservation into the future. Others, however, view this approach as a familiar increase of externally funded control, enacting donor visions of the landscape disconnected from local mobilities and histories. Concerns exist about communal area dwellers losing access to communal land and grazing resources so that land can be zoned for exclusive use by tourists and monetised for gain by investors.[136]

It is clearly difficult to implement conservancy coupling to create the OPL and other connected landscapes as the success of this approach requires regulation of livestock numbers in the area. From a conservation perspective, dealing with those who are utilising the area for activities not deemed consistent with conservation, as well as observing an "invasion" into the landscape by the

132 Sullivan pers. obs.
133 Kambaekua (2023)
134 (2018)
135 Hoole (2008, 2010), Hoole & Berkes (2010)
136 On which, see new controversial plans for biodiversity and landscape management and monetisation in South Africa (Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment 2024) discussed, for example, by Pinnock (2024) and Vegter (2024).

landless (see Chapter 6), presents challenges that could lead to conflict. Another aspect of concern centres around community awareness, needed to bring communities on board regarding the benefits and challenges of integrating different land use regimes. The OPL may compete with grazing needs for livestock. For example, most areas in conservancies declared as "hotspots" for wildlife conservation or wildlife core areas are also "hotspots" for grazing, causing competition between conservation leadership and local livestock owners. In addition, the legislative process for the new Protected Areas and Wildlife Management Bill (of 2017, updated in 2020) has been prolonged, although is considered likely to support these activities. A possible outcome, however, could be that landscape approaches are halted on legal grounds, as occurred with the proposed Kunene People's Park. Uncertainties on collaboration between conservancies, in terms of looking at the different community needs, values, and government structures, adds to the envisaged challenges.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter has delved into the intricate relationships between the design of the conservancy programme permitted through amended conservation legislation, and the proposed landscape level conservation approach which is not currently supported by the national legal framework. While most programmes are designed based on the existing legal framework the Ombonde case study demonstrates the emergence of a different conservation approach, shaped by conservation leaders and their partners. Community-based conservation in Namibia has been in operation for close to three decades and community members have gained diverse experiences and exposure over these years, with different interventions leading to different outcomes. Local communities continue to participate in this programme and their experiences will shape its future, just as the past histories documented in Chapters 1 and 2 have shaped the conservation approaches of today.

In documenting how community-based conservation is changing to encompass landscape scale thinking we have shown that CBNRM in Namibia is not cast in stone but is evolving, as people become more aware and understanding of what it is they want to gain from this multi-faceted approach. At the same time, reforms of legal frameworks are ongoing. A reshaping of resource management into a collaborative and integrated approach is taking place, whereby it is assumed that this will increase community benefits, contribute to ecosystem integrity, and assist communities to deal with major challenges happening across and beyond their conservancy boundaries that are threatening conservation. For example, Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka conservancies seem to be moving towards identifying themselves as one community that shares a similar identity and assigns similar values to the areas around their communities. There is a perceived need for collaboration between "communities" to be strengthened for sustainable implementation of conservation initiatives, on the principle that benefits may be broader when communities collaborate across a larger landscape. This consolidating perspective is also a challenge for the OPL leadership, as well as the leadership of the wider "Skeleton Coast-Etosha Conservation Bridge" project, to ensure that this landscape approach yields equitable outcomes in Etosha-Kunene.

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