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CHAPTER FIVE  
BOUNDARY-MAKING IN CONSERVANCIES:  
THE NAMIBIAN EXPERIENCE  
ALFONS W. MOSIMANE AND JULIE A. SILVA

**Introduction**

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programmes have spread rapidly in rural areas of the developing world as part of integrated conservation and economic development strategies (Blaikie 2006; Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008). These programmes take many forms but, in general, have been extensively criticised in the development literatures for failing to improve the well-being of rural residents living in or near national parks and protected areas (Büscher and Arsel 2012; Büscher et al. 2012; Dressler and Büscher 2008; Dressler and Roth 2011; Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Schilcher 2007). Namibia, the case examined in this chapter, is generally considered to have one of the more progressive approaches for involving local residents in natural resource management, enabling them to derive both monetary and non-monetary benefits from their participation in these efforts (Sullivan 2003; Suich 2010; Boudreaux and Nelson 2011). Since 1996, Namibian residents of communal lands have had the right to establish communal conservancies – legally established CBNRM zones. Once a conservancy is recognised by the government, local residents receive conditional rights to profit from wildlife and tourism in exchange for managing natural resources in a manner consistent with Namibian conservation law and reporting on conservation outcomes (e.g. regular wildlife counts and monitoring of poaching) to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) (MET 1995; Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management Support Organisations (NACSO) (NACSO 2009).

The Namibian conservancy programme employs a community-based approach that formally devolves considerable responsibility for managing natural resources to communal land residents wishing to organise, establish, implement, and maintain a participatory natural resource management programme. The approach relies on local resource users participating in

decision-making and is intended to empower communities to propose quotas for huntable species based on their knowledge of wildlife stocks in the area. In theory, the Namibian approach respects local knowledge in managing natural resources, the rights of residents to use and profit from sustainable land use practices, and their need for economic development (Jones 1999; Child 2009). The consortium of Namibian CBNRM support organisations, NACSO, finds that the main benefits of the Namibian conservancy approach are the choices it provides rural residents both in terms of whether communities choose to form a conservancy or not, and the options they have to use and profit from wildlife and natural attractions in their areas (NACSO 2012). The conservancy approach allows rural communities to add wildlife and tourism to their existing livelihood activities and to choose how they balance these activities. But the Namibian programme is not without room for improvement – studies have noted the need for better governance and management capacity at the community level, including financial and human resource management; conservancy management committees also need to be more accountable and more transparent in their dealings with other community members (Lapeyre 2010; Boudreaux and Nelson 2011). Conservancies in Namibia should also be understood within the broader context of neoliberalism.

The neoliberalisation of conservation – protecting natural resources through the expansion and creation of capitalist markets (Büscher et al. 2012) – has engendered the widespread creation of borders throughout rural societies, where delimited territories function to identify both conservation spaces and community boundaries. Namibia proves an extremely illustrative case of a country where an increasing amount of communal territory has been demarcated as conservation area. In 1998, four communal conservancies existed in Namibia (NACSO 2006). By 2013, the number had grown to 79 communal conservancies covering almost 150,000 km<sup>2</sup> or 18% of the entire land area of the country (NACSO 2012). In the context of CBNRM in Namibia, these new borders rarely involve fencing territory, but rather serve as discursive lines on national maps and in the minds of local residents. The types of Namibian conservation spaces vary, including national parks, private game farms, and communal conservancies. Yet borders serve as a critical component of all conservation areas; they are the means by which these areas are defined, used, and regulated by a range of people, including international agencies and tourists, national policy-makers, and local residents. However, as local-level actors have the greatest influence in the production of communal conservancy borders, this chapter focuses on the delimiting of these spaces within their respective social, economic, cultural, and historical contexts.

We contend that conservancies represent a form of extending neo-liberalism into communal land, and that this happens via two primary mechanisms. First, communities living in communal conservancies are expected to facilitate their own socio-economic development using conservation-based revenue. As a result, poverty alleviation and some social services become reliant on revenue from capitalist markets, and the tourism sector in particular, as opposed to government social welfare programmes. Second, conservancies promote formal (i.e. neoliberal) labour market participation within rural communities and often result in decreased participation in non-market activities such as subsistence agriculture. Conservancies themselves also become employers and hire staff. In certain cases, the establishment of conservancies also creates opportunities for some residents to invest in tourism enterprises. Namibian conservancies have had varying financial success, and empirical evidence suggests that the conservancy model has improved the quality of life for some rural residents (Suich 2010; Kanapaux and Child 2011; Lendelvo, Munyebvu and Suich 2012; Silva and Mosimane 2013). However, the Namibian case also illustrates potential problems that may arise in communal conservancies due to the neoliberalisation of conservation. Conservancy residents are expected cover the costs of conservation (e.g. crop and livestock losses, reduction of available grazing and cultivation) themselves, which can often be quite high (Jones 1999; Corbett and Jones 2000; Stuart-Hill et al. 2005). For example, compensation schemes for farmers who experience crop or livestock losses due to wildlife are financed by conservancy revenues rather than by the government. In addition, conservancies may perpetuate existing structural inequalities in the global economy, whereby large multinational tourism operators are poised to capture more financial benefits than local residents (Lapeyre 2011a, 2011b).

Conservation borders have both legal and social meaning, in that they create spaces that confer rights to some and exclude others. In extreme cases, such as national parks, legal protection of animals becomes more stringently enforced and peoples' access to park resources becomes restricted. With private game reserves, legal ownership of property entitles certain individuals to control spaces for their independent well-being (and, by extension, protect natural wildlife habitats with high economic value). In the context of Namibia's CBNRM programme, we argue that the borders of communal conservancies involve complex social processes of cooperation and competition for rights and recognition. The residents of communal lands themselves must negotiate and reach agreement on conservancy boundaries. Lines must be drawn on maps designating what territory is

associated with which community. Legally, these boundaries allow people within the delimited area rights to benefit from the management of natural resources and share in the profits of nature-based tourism. Socially, they identify people inside those boundaries as ‘belonging’ to a particular area (Silva and Mosimane 2014).

In the Namibian context, temporal and spatial dynamics influence the boundary formation process for all types of conservation spaces. Each particular conservation border has its own story. And these stories highlight the many ways in which boundaries may enhance or diminish the prospects of both people and wildlife to thrive or even simply survive in this era of neoliberal conservation. In the following sections, we present a brief historic overview of the ways in which borders come into being for different types of conservation areas in Namibia. We argue that the borders of communal conservancies involve particularly complex processes and motivations that shape the territories they define, and affect the achievement of both conservation and development objectives. We present four detailed accounts of how different communal conservancy boundaries came into being to highlight the ways in which border-making occurs at the local level. We then discuss the broader implications these stories have for human societies living near conservation spaces.

### **A brief history of conservation boundaries in Namibia**

There are three main types of conservation areas in Namibia that have led to the production of borders: national parks, private game farms, and communal conservancies. Conservation boundaries in Namibia can be traced back to the establishment of protected areas in 1907 (Barnard 1998), and have taken different forms supported by various conservation ideologies. Boundary-making processes differ from one conservation space to another, each shaped by geopolitical and conservation discourses that have changed over time.

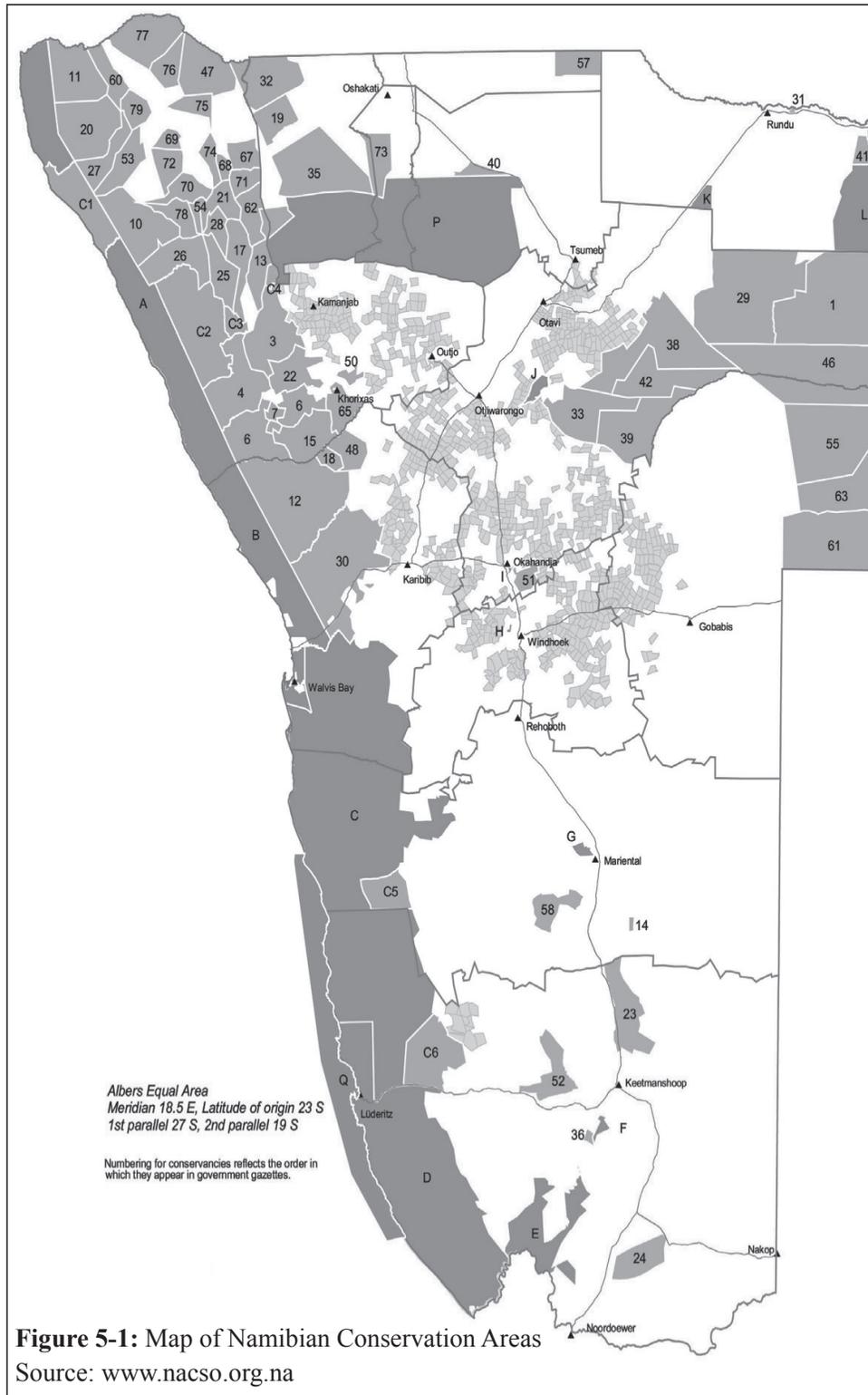
#### **National Parks and Private Game Reserves**

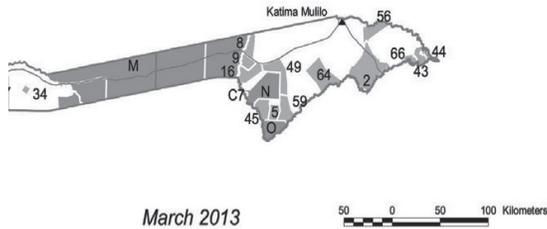
During colonisation in southern Africa, including Namibia, national parks were established for the conservation and preservation of wildlife, primarily for hunting by colonial settlers (Jones 1995; Barnard 1998; Barnard et al. 1998; Wardell-Johnson 2000; Child 2004). These park boundaries were originally established to meet the interests of colonial governments

without the consultation of local people (Adams, Werner and Vale 1990). However, boundary-making around parks has been a partially fluid process in Namibia, expanding and contracting in response to the desire to conserve land for wildlife habitats and the needs of rural Namibians to access natural resources and re-establish ties to communal lands (Baker 1996; Barnard 1998; Barnard et al. 1998). Most parks established near communal areas, such as the Bwabwata National Park in 1968, Khaudum National Park in 1989, Mamili National Park in 1990, and Mudumu National Park in 1990 are not fenced (Barnard 1998) (see Figure 5-1). The lack of fences was, in part, a response to the criticisms of fortress conservation tactics, such as those used by Etosha National Park, which physically restricted local residents from entering these areas.

In theory, open boundaries facilitate the movement of wildlife between the parks and allow partial access to residential areas. However the high costs associated with fencing off protected areas also influenced Namibia's decision to abandon this method of demarcating conservation spaces (personal communication 2009). Although it could be argued that unfenced parks avoid some of the social injustices associated with fortress conservation, with fenced-off areas that visually signify the exclusion of local residents, they share many of the same issues. Wildlife moves from the parks onto communal farming land; some raid crops and others kill livestock, thus threatening local livelihoods. At the same time community members are prohibited from entering the unfenced parks because of laws that, if violated, could lead to fines and imprisonment (Republic of Namibia 1996). Thus permeable conservation boundaries are beneficial for wildlife management but not necessarily for local communities.

Private game reserves or game farms also emerged as a form of conservation during colonial rule. These protected areas exist as a form of private conservation on freehold land because the private sector wanted to participate in tourism activities associated with national parks. Private game reserves have been established on freehold land since 1975 (Child 2009), when colonial settlers bought several adjacent farms to consolidate them into unified private game reserves (Barnes and Jones 2009). Some examples include the Erindi Game Reserve, Onguma Game Reserve, NamibRand Nature Reserve and Sandfontein Nature Reserve. These territories use the private land markets to delineate spaces where land owners could benefit from the commercialisation of wildlife and growth in the wildlife tourism industry. Legislative changes after independence, especially the Nature Conservation Amendment Act No. 5 of 1996, allowed freehold land owners more forms of wildlife use. Such commercial utilisation of wildlife led to





## Conservation Areas

### Communal conservancy

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 01 Nyae Nyae             | 41 George Mukoya        |
| 02 Salambala             | 42 Okamatapati          |
| 03 =Khoadi-//Hoas        | 43 Kasika               |
| 04 Torra                 | 44 Impalilla            |
| 05 Wuparo                | 45 Balyerwa             |
| 06 Doro !nawas           | 46 Ondjou               |
| 07 Uibasen Twyfelfontein | 47 Kunene River         |
| 08 Kwandu                | 48 Ohungu               |
| 09 Mayuni                | 49 Sobbe                |
| 10 Puros                 | 50 //Audi               |
| 11 Marienfluss           | 51 Ovitoto              |
| 12 Tsiseb                | 52 !Han /Awab           |
| 13 Ehi-Rovipuka          | 53 Okondjombo           |
| 14 Oskop                 | 54 Otjambangu           |
| 15 Sorris Sorris         | 55 Eiseb                |
| 16 Mashi                 | 56 Sikunga              |
| 17 Omatendeka            | 57 Okongo               |
| 18 Otjimboyo             | 58 Huibes               |
| 19 Uukwaluudhi           | 59 Dzoti                |
| 20 Orupembe              | 60 Otjitanda            |
| 21 Okangundumba          | 61 Otjombinde           |
| 22 //Huab                | 62 Orupupa              |
| 23 !Khob !Naub           | 63 Omuramba ua Mbinda   |
| 24 //Gamaseb             | 64 Bamunu               |
| 25 Anabeb                | 65 !Khoru !Goreb        |
| 26 Sesfontein            | 66 Kabulabula           |
| 27 Sanitatas             | 67 Okongoro             |
| 28 Ozondundu             | 68 Otjombande           |
| 29 N=a Jaqna             | 69 Ongongo              |
| 30 =Gaingu               | 70 Ombujokanguindi      |
| 31 Joseph Mbambangandu   | 71 Otuzemba             |
| 32 Uukolonkadhi Ruacana  | 72 Otjiu-West           |
| 33 Ozonahi               | 73 !ipumbu ya Tshilongo |
| 34 Shamungwa             | 74 Okatjandja Kozomenje |
| 35 Sheya Shuushona       | 75 Ombazu               |
| 36 !Gawachab             | 76 Okanguati            |
| 37 Muduva Nyangana       | 77 Epupa                |
| 38 Otjituuo              | 78 Otjikondavirongo     |
| 39 African Wild Dog      | 79 Etanga               |
| 40 King Nehale           |                         |

### State protected Area

- A Skeleton Coast Park
- B Dorob National Park
- C Namib-Naukluft National Park
- D Sperrgebiet National Park
- E Ai-Ais Hot Springs
- F Naute Recreation Resort
- G Hardap Recreation Resort
- H Daan Viljoen Game Reserve
- I Von Bach Recreation Resort
- J Waterberg Plateau Park
- K Mangetti National Park
- L Khaudum National Park
- M Bwabwata National Park
- N Mudumu National Park
- O Mamilili National Park
- P Etosha National Park
- Q Namibian Islands' Marine Protected Area

### Tourism Concession Area

- C1 Skeleton Coast
- C2 Palmwag
- C3 Etendeka
- C4 Hobatere
- C5 Namib Sky Ballooning
- C6 Klein Aus Vista
- C7 Lianshulu

### Freehold conservancy

— Regional boundary

the increase in the number of game farms (Barnes and Jones 2009). The boundaries of these territories also demonstrate fluidity as additional land or adjacent farms are bought and incorporated into existing game farms or developed into new game farms. The location of private reserves or game farms on freehold land (i.e., privately owned), which cover 43% of Namibia's total land area (Barnes and Jones 2009), results in well-defined legal boundaries of these conservation areas and requires no negotiation with other residents beyond legal land purchases.

### **Communal Conservancies**

After Namibia gained its independence in 1990, wildlife management legislation was changed to address past discriminatory laws and to open up new opportunities for the development of conservation in Namibia (MET 1995). The Nature Conservation Ordinance No. 4 of 1975 was amended to give communal land users additional conditional rights over wildlife (MET 1995), which freehold land owners had enjoyed since 1968 (Child 2009). These include rights to tourism concessions, hunting, and the buying and selling of wildlife. The change in regulation resulted in the establishment of communal conservancies. Sullivan (2003) suggests the Namibian CBNRM model may also appeal to rural communities as a means to secure land rights, although communal conservancies do not entail formal tenure reform.

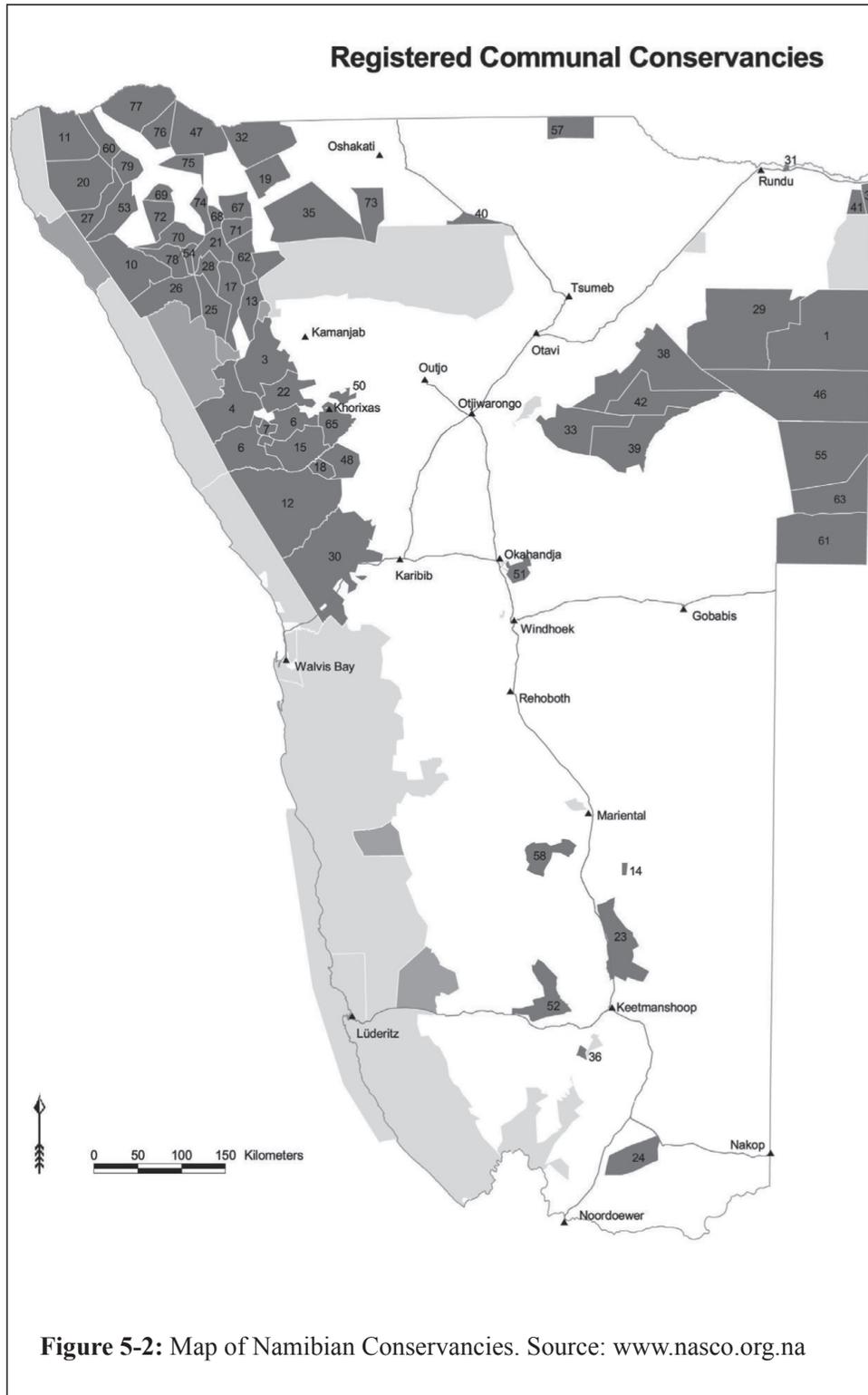
Conservancies on communal land are defined as “a community or group of communities within a defined geographic area who jointly manage, conserve and utilise the wildlife and other natural resources within the defined area,” (MET 1995, 6). The conservancy policy states that residents should have clearly defined physical boundaries (e.g., a physical description of geographic boundaries or a map sketch must be appended to the conservancy application), a representative management body elected from the community, and a constitution in order for the conservancy to be registered (MET 1995). Thus the policy makes the provision for residents to self-define what constitutes their community and their territory. In addition, the conservancy policy requires that the neighbouring communities and conservancies must have accepted the conservancy boundaries before it can be registered. Thus establishing conservancy boundaries is a complex social process that requires consensus and negotiation among rural residents.

In much of the CBNRM literature on Namibia, conservancies are described as aligning with pre-existing community territories (Jones 1999; NACSO 2004). Examples include the Impalila Island Conservancy

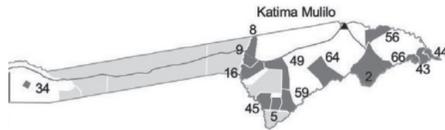
(Mosimane 2003a), Kasika Conservancy (Mosimane 2003b), Mashi Conservancy (Mosimane 2003c), Sorris Sorris Conservancy (Mosimane 2003d), Doro !Nawas Conservancy (Mosimane 2000a), Tsiseb Conservancy (Mosimane 2000b), //Huab Conservancy (Mosimane 2000c), Mayuni Conservancy (Mosimane 1999a), and the Wuparo Conservancy (Mosimane 1999b) (see Figure 5-2). Oversimplified notions of community suggest that these defined territories existed prior to the establishment of conservancies. As such, the formation of these borders has received limited attention in the literature. In the following section we focus on specific cases of boundary-making within communal conservancies because these processes challenge general understandings of conservancy borders and highlight the many ways in which community formation and fragmentation may actually follow the establishment of conservancies.

## **Research Methods**

The qualitative analysis of this study draws from extensive fieldwork and research over the past 16 years in various conservancies in Namibia. Over the years, the work of the authors has focused on baseline studies of socio-economic and institutional development in 11 conservancies, including understanding the process of conservancy formation. The authors conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with conservancy residents, and used oral histories, focus groups, and participant observation to gather data. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with key informants in conservancies, such as conservancy management committee members, elders in the community, traditional authorities, non-governmental organisations' support staff to conservancies and MET officials supporting conservancies, on broad topics during several visits to the conservancies reported on in this chapter. Although in most cases the studies were not exclusively focused on boundary formation, they provided a rich source of information with which to analyse the motivations and experiences of conservancy residents about the formation of conservancies. In addition, the authors used secondary reports, which conservancies and non-governmental organisations submitted as progress reports to funders, to verify information on the formation of conservancy boundaries. The research participants were randomly selected in all case studies and consisted of both men and women. Thus, this analysis draws on the cumulative lessons learned from 16 years of field-level interaction with conservancy residents to analyse boundary formation in conservancies.



**Figure 5-2:** Map of Namibian Conservancies. Source: [www.nasco.org.na](http://www.nasco.org.na)



**Registered conservancy**  
(Name and Date Registered)

01 Nyae Nyae	1998 Feb	41 George Mukoya	2005 Sep
02 Salambala	1998 Jun	42 Okamatapati	2005 Sep
03 =Khoadi-//Hôas	1998 Jun	43 Kasika	2005 Dec
04 Torra	1998 Jun	44 Impalila	2005 Dec
05 Wuparo	1999 Dec	45 Balyerwa	2006 Oct
06 Doro !nawas	1999 Dec	46 Ondjou	2006 Oct
07 Uibasen Twyfelfontein	1999 Dec	47 Kunene River	2006 Oct
08 Kwandu	1999 Dec	48 Ohungu	2006 Oct
09 Mayuni	1999 Dec	49 Sobbe	2006 Oct
10 Puros	2000 May	50 //Audi	2006 Oct
11 Marienfluss	2001 Jan	51 Ovitoto	2008 May
12 Tsiseb	2001 Jan	52 !Han /Awab	2008 May
13 Ehi-Rovipuka	2001 Jan	53 Okondjomboka	2008 Aug
14 Oskop	2001 Feb	54 Otjambangu	2009 Mar
15 Sorris Sorris	2001 Oct	55 Eiseb	2009 Mar
16 Mashi	2003 Mar	56 Sikunga	2009 Jul
17 Omatendeka	2003 Mar	57 Okongo	2009 Aug
18 Otjimboyo	2003 Mar	58 Huiibes	2009 Oct
19 Uukwaluudhi	2003 Mar	59 Dzoti	2009 Oct
20 Orupembe	2003 Jul	60 Otjitanda	2011 Mar
21 Okangundumba	2003 Jul	61 Otjombinde	2011 Mar
22 //Huab	2003 Jul	62 Orupupa	2011 Mar
23 !Khub !Naub	2003 Jul	63 Omuramba ua Mbinda	2011 Mar
24 //Gamaseb	2003 Jul	64 Bamunu	2011 Mar
25 Anabeb	2003 Jul	65 !Khoru !Goreb	2011 Sep
26 Sesfontein	2003 Jul	66 Kabulabula	2011 Nov
27 Sanitatas	2003 Jul	67 Okongoro	2012 Feb
28 Ozondundu	2003 Jul	68 Otjombande	2012 Feb
29 N=a Jaqna	2003 Jul	69 Ongongo	2012 Feb
30 =Gaingu	2004 Mar	70 Ombujokanguindi	2012 Feb
31 Joseph Mbambangandu	2004 Mar	71 Otuzemba	2012 Feb
32 Uukolonkadhi Ruacana	2005 Sep	72 Otjiu-West	2012 May
33 Ozonahi	2005 Sep	73 !ipumbu ya Tshilongo	2012 May
34 Shamungwa	2005 Sep	74 Okatjandja Kozomenje	2012 May
35 Sheya Shuushona	2005 Sep	75 Ombazu	2012 May
36 !Gawachab	2005 Sep	76 Okanguati	2012 May
37 Muduva Nyangana	2005 Sep	77 Epupa	2012 Oct
38 Otjituuo	2005 Sep	78 Otjikondavirongo	2013 Mar
39 African Wild Dog	2005 Sep	79 Etanga	2013 Mar
40 King Nehale	2005 Sep		

State Protected Area      Concession

### **The formal processes of boundary formation in communal conservancies**

The Nature Conservation Amendment Act 1996 and the conservancy policy require the process of defining conservancy boundaries to be consultative and based on consensus. In most cases knowledgeable community members or motivated individuals who are able to access information from the government or non-governmental organisations approach the traditional authority and other community leaders with the suggestion to establish a conservancy. If agreeable, the Traditional Authority of an area then establishes a committee to consult the community on the formation of the conservancy and the proposed boundaries of the conservancy, such as in the case of Impalila Island Conservancy (Mosimane 2003a), Kasika Conservancy (Mosimane 2003b), Mashu Conservancy (Mosimane 2003c), Sorris Sorris Conservancy (Mosimane 2003d), Doro !Nawas Conservancy (Mosimane 2000a), Tsiseb Conservancy (Mosimane 2000b), //Huab Conservancy (Mosimane 2000c), and Mayuni Conservancy (Mosimane 1999a). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the MET play a mediation role during the boundary negotiation process, first within the community and then with neighbouring communities. Representatives of NGOs and the MET inform the community of legislative requirements if they are to register as a conservancy. They also advise on the process communities have to follow to define their boundaries, in order to meet policy requirements. The committee consults the relevant traditional authorities, community leaders and community organisations regarding these proposed boundaries.

The community committee entrusted with demarcating the territory presents the map with boundaries to the community for approval. The committee reviews the feedback in order to determine the most acceptable proposal for a conservancy's official territory, which is then presented to the community leaders and the community. Once community members have agreed or reached consensus on their conservancy boundaries, an external consultation process starts with neighbouring communities. This process is critical as the borders of traditional hunting and grazing territories between neighbouring communities are known through oral communication and upheld in traditional courts prior to conservancy formation. The boundaries agreed upon by the community are presented to neighbouring communities to make sure they view these borders as legitimate before an application is submitted for registration as a conservancy.

Thus only by social consensus can conservancy boundaries be verified. The NGOs and MET further mediate conflicts to ensure the consultation

process is participatory and inclusive of the majority of community members.

Since conservancy borders are largely socially determined, disagreement and conflict often accompany the creation of conservancy boundaries. During the consensus-building process, boundaries are often adjusted to address local conflicts that commonly ensue when formalising traditional boundaries between communities. As a result of the boundary-making process, some areas are often removed from the borders originally proposed. A conservancy cannot be registered if it includes disputed land. Disputes typically involve cases where residents on the land opt out of belonging to the proposed conservancy based on economic and identity considerations.

Once consensus with neighbouring communities is reached, the NGOs and MET then provide the human and financial support and skills to demarcate the agreed boundaries for the conservancy registration process. The demarcation involves NGOs and the MET, together with the community, taking geographical positioning coordinates of the boundaries, and then developing a map which describes the conservancy boundaries. After a conservancy receives government recognition, national maps are modified to incorporate its boundaries and signposts are commonly used to signify where a conservancy territory begins or ends. Natural features, such as rivers, or infrastructure, such as roads, are also commonly used to physically represent the edges of conservancy territory. However, conservancy territories in Namibia are not fenced, reinforcing the need for social acceptance of established boundaries to maintain the rights to natural resources legally conferred upon residents of a particular conservancy.

The cases described below demonstrate that vague legislative processes for determining conservancies' boundaries have both positive and negative effects on boundary-making at the local level. The wording of the legislation allows for flexibility, and is meant to accommodate differences in how residents self-define as communities across the country. However, this flexibility also enables community elites and other stakeholder groups to manipulate the boundary-making process for their own interests. In the following section, we examine some specific cases of boundary formation within the context of Namibia's communal conservancy programme. These stories illustrate the various motivations and power dynamics that may lead residents to collectively define themselves as a conservancy.

### **Multiple drivers of boundary formation**

The brokers of conservancy boundaries consist of motivated individuals who mobilise the traditional authority to legitimise the formation of a conservancy. After internal consultation, the relevant traditional authority selects some motivated individuals to form a committee charged with consulting the respective community members, community leaders, NGOs, and MET representatives. However, as is widely recognised in the CBNRM literature (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Varughese and Ostrom 2001; Poteete and Ostrom 2004) communities are not homogenous, and this often leads to complex processes of negotiation over what constitutes a conservancy territory. The case studies of Mayuni, Nyae Nyae, Doro !Nawas and Uibasen conservancies (numbered 1, 6, 7, and 9, respectively, on Figure 5-2) demonstrate that communities, with the support of non-governmental organisations, use various criteria to define conservancy boundaries. The spectrum of influences on boundary formation ranges from traditional/ethnic motivations, financial motivations, and a combination of these and other factors.

#### **Traditional/ethnic drivers: the case of Mayuni Conservancy**

The most commonly used approach to conservancy boundary formation involves adopting traditional authorities' administrative boundaries on communal land. Traditional administrative boundaries refer to the nationally recognised territories under the jurisdiction of different traditional authorities. In most cases the contemporary administrative boundaries of traditional authorities were established under colonial rule and are being reinforced by the conservancy boundary-making process. Traditional authorities in Namibia administer communal land on behalf of the state while also acting as custodians of land on behalf of their communities. To help avoid conflict, all traditional authorities have traditional boundaries which signify the land under their administration. Each traditional chief and their communities know the boundaries of their land which is very important for land and grazing allocation to community members. Traditional administrative boundaries are not physically represented on the land (e.g. fences or signs) but are well known by members of the local communities. However, land under a traditional authority's jurisdiction may be fragmented in the conservancy boundary-making process, as demonstrated by the case of Mayuni.

Mayuni Conservancy is in north eastern Namibia, in the Zambezi region. The conservancy covers 151 km<sup>2</sup> with an approximate population of 2,400 people (NACSO 2010). The average annual rainfall in the region is 600 mm supporting grassland, woodlands, and swamp vegetation. The river systems, rich biodiversity, and large wildlife populations make the conservancy attractive for tourism. The conservancy is involved in joint venture tourism and trophy hunting for income generation. The main source of livelihoods is crop and livestock farming (Mosimane 1999a). The conservancy was registered in 1999, but the history of its formation reveals the role ethnic identity and place attachment can play in border formation

Mayuni Conservancy was initiated by Joseph Tembe Mayuni, when he was the area's local representative (i.e. headman of the Choi Khuta<sup>1</sup>) of the Mafwe Traditional Authority. In interviews with scholars and the press, he attributes the desire to form a conservancy to concern about the decline of wildlife in his area. Given the challenges of human wildlife conflict (HWC) in his community, he said he felt a conservancy would enhance the sustainability of wildlife in the area by providing a means for compensating households for HWC-related crop and livestock losses. In his words, "I thought, how best can wildlife live together with my people?" (*Namibian* 21 June 2012). In 1997, a Namibian NGO, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), joined forces with Joseph Mayuni (then still a headman) to begin the process of establishing a conservancy. The IRDNC supported the Choi Khuta, through information and financial resources to mobilise the community, mediate conflicts, and engage with neighbouring communities.

The traditional authority, under the leadership of Joseph Mayuni, formed a committee to consult with the residents of the Eastern Zambezi Region to establish the boundaries of the conservancy. Since the conservancy borders Bwabwata National Park to the west and the Kwandu River was a recognised boundary between the community and the park, there was no need for negotiations. But the close proximity of the park without any fences to the Choi community was a contributing factor to human-wildlife conflict. The committee engaged the community and the traditional representatives of neighbouring communities to define the boundaries of the conservancy. Originally, the boundaries of the Choi sub-khuta, under headman Joseph Mayuni, were suggested as the conservancy boundaries. This suggestion was contested by several community members with allegiance to the Mafwe Tribal Authority. In these consultations, the committee suggested the conservancy encompass only villages south of the main road to Katima Mulilo.

However, a dispute arose and the community could not reach consensus on the boundaries of the conservancy. The disagreement arose from the Mafwe Traditional Authority's belief that Joseph Mayuni was overstepping the bounds of his authority by initiating a conservancy. It is important to note that the Mafwe Tribal Authority was the only multi-ethnic traditional authority in the Zambezi Region, consisting of the Mafwe, and other groups, such as the Mbukushu and a small number of Kxoe (San) (Suzman 2001). The dispute eventually resulted in new conservancy boundaries that included only territory originally under Joseph Mayuni's jurisdiction as head of the Choi Khuta. Other communities sided with the greater Mafwe Tribal Authority and decided not to be part of the Mayuni Conservancy. Although they refused to belong to Mayuni Conservancy, these neighbouring communities eventually registered as separate conservancies. Chief Mayuni later separated himself from the Mafwe Traditional Authority and was recognised as the Chief of the Mashi Traditional Authority.

The contention about boundaries illustrates that the conservancy borders were not only a definition of the Mayuni Conservancy, but resulted from disputes over traditional authority in respect of a community seeking to establish its own identity. The area of the Mayuni Conservancy later became the boundaries of the Mayuni Tribal Authority, when Chief Mayuni was sworn in as the Chief of the Mashi Tribal Authority in 2004 (*Caprivi Vision* 19 June 2012), five years after the conservancy was registered (i.e. 1999). The contention about boundaries shows a strong link between the formation of the Mayuni Conservancy and the breakaway of the Mayuni community from the Mafwe Tribal Authority. The conservancy was initiated around 1997, the same time Chief Mayuni, then headman of the area, was proposed as the Chief of the Mashi Tribal Authority (*Namibian* 31 May 2012). This suggests that the demarcation of the conservancy boundaries was closely linked with the demarcation of the Mashi Tribal Authority boundaries.

The boundaries of this conservancy also illustrate the contest for power within communities and the various tribal authorities in the Zambezi region. They represent the desire for self-determination, to establish one's own identity that is recognised as reflected in Chief Mayuni's statement that, "If you are under another person, and you plan development he will ask why you are planning that instead of me. As a headman I was only reporting. Now I have responsibility, like a minister. I carry our people's needs to government, and I am responsible to them" (*Namibian* 31 May 2012). The statement affirms that the conservancy boundaries provided an opportunity for self-determination, to convince government that Mashi Tribal Authority has its own land of jurisdiction. The naming of the conservancy as Mayuni

also shows the identity the community would prefer to have, which differentiates them from the neighbouring communities. In the words of the Chief, “we named it (the conservancy) after our forefathers, because a father gives you things” (*Namibian* 31 May 2012). It could be argued that the naming of the conservancy after the Mayuni elders signifies their identity with the conservancy. The conservancy is associated with ‘the forefathers’ as a way of emphasising a collective allegiance to the community’s common cultural heritage.

The MET, representing government, although not involved in the process of defining conservancy boundaries, accepted the boundaries when the conservancy was registered in December 1999. The fact that five years after the registration of the conservancy, the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Rural Development recognised Mashu as an independent Tribal Authority illustrates the support Chief Mayuni received from the Namibian government. The chief was recognised in terms of the Traditional Authorities Act No 25 of 2000, after meeting the application requirements to be recognised as an independent tribal authority. The conservancy boundaries were endorsed as the Mashu Tribal Authority boundaries, giving the community of Mayuni conservancy a unique community identity.

### **Reclaiming land tenure rights: the case of Nyae Nyae Conservancy**

Nyae Nyae Conservancy is in Otjozondjupa region in eastern Namibia. The conservancy is one of the largest with a land area of 8,992 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of approximately 2,300 people (NACSO 2010). The conservancy is characterised by mix of broad leaf and acacia woodlands, large pans, and rich wildlife diversity. It is inhabited by Ju/’hoansi community who practised hunter gathering for generations. The legislation allows the San community to continue to practise hunter gathering under certain conditions (Corbett and Daniels 1996; Suzman 2001). The cultural practices of the Ju/’hoansi and the abundance of wildlife species, in particular elephants and lions, also make the conservancy attractive for tourism.

The Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNFN), a non-governmental organisation established for the support and empowerment of the Ju/’hoansi of Namibia to improve their quality of life economically and socially, played an important role in the formation of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy (Suzman 2001). The foundation was established before Namibian independence and six years prior to any official legislation

regarding communal conservancies. The Nature Conservation Amendment Act No 5 of 1996, provided the NNDFN with an opportunity to utilise the wildlife resources to reinforce the land rights of the Ju/'hoansi community. The NNDFN mobilised and organised the community to establish a conservancy, and thus supported the conservancy in the definition of the conservancy boundaries. The MET's local officials were also instrumental in supporting the Ju/'hoansi community to establish a conservancy. Financial resources were sourced from the Namibian office of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and several external donors to support the local committee that was established to form a conservancy and to mobilise community members.

The Ju/'hoansi community did not have a hierarchical traditional structure like other communities on communal land in Namibia. Decision-making is based on consensus through consulting elders of the various villages. To initiate the process of defining conservancy boundaries, the NNDFN and some elders in the community started to visit the respective villages to discuss with the elders the formation of the conservancy and the boundaries. The NNDFN and the elders reached consensus on establishing a conservancy, using the former colonial demarcation boundaries of the west Bushman Land as the conservancy boundaries. The use of these boundaries was thus be inclusive of all Ju/'hoansi villages that are part of the former west Bushman Land and allow the Ju/'hoansi community to practise hunter gathering in the land they have always regarded as their ancestral territory.

It could thus be argued that conservancy boundaries serve a broader purpose of reinforcing community identity, allowing residents to define the community of the conservancy and in some cases to confirm traditional claims to land under conservation. For example, in the case of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy and the N#a-Jaqna Conservancy in the Otjozondjupa region it could be argued that the conservancy boundaries were used to strengthen land rights and restrict external in-migration. Communities in communal land had no powers to exclude other communities from utilising natural resources on their land prior to the establishment of conservancies. No legal instrument existed prior to the Namibian conservancy legislation that defined the residents of the land, or allowed them specific rights to the area not available to other Namibians. For the San community of Nyae Nyae, whose livelihood is based on availability of natural resources for hunting and gathering, protecting their land against livestock invasion from farmers outside the area who are continuously looking for new grazing areas was crucial in deciding the conservancy boundaries.

The Nyae Nyae and N#a Jaqna Conservancies together include all land

under the former Bushman Land east and west. These communities used the traditional boundaries of their ancestral territories, and the sub-divisions established by colonial governments within the traditional authorities to define their boundaries. After these areas were registered as conservancies, the community, through the conservancy management committee, received rights to manage the land for conservation and exclude agricultural farming practices which could be detrimental to hunter gathering livelihoods. Thus, agricultural farming in these conservancies is controlled and restricted to some major villages while conservation is prioritised to support community livelihoods.

### **Mixed influences: the case of Doro !Nawas Conservancy**

The Doro !Nawas Conservancy, is in southern Kunene region. The conservancy covers 4,073 km<sup>2</sup> in the arid to semi-arid environmental area of Namibia (NACSO 2008). The conservancy has a population of approximately 1,500 people; the language spoken by the majority is Khoekhoegowab (NACSO 2008). The residents of the conservancy are primarily livestock farmers with a few employed as civil servants in the town of Khorixas (Mosimane 2012). The conservancy was registered in December 1999.

The main factor driving the conservancy boundaries is local ethnic affiliation. The local farmers' union, known as the Versteendewoud Farmers Union (VFU), named after the petrified forest fossils in the conservancy, initiated the formation of the conservancy. As mentioned in a personal communication by J. Gawiseb to the authors in December 2010, during a visit to the Regional Council offices in 1996, a member of the VFU acquired a copy of the CBNRM Tool Box, which provides guidelines for the formation of the conservancy. The tool box was discussed at a VFU meeting and consensus was reached to form a conservancy. The VFU members then consulted the headman of the area for Damara Traditional Authority. The general consensus amongst VFU members was that once they had the support of the headman, it would legitimise the presentation of the conservancy proposal to the community, of which the majority are members of the VFU.

In a personal communication in December 2010, U. Naibab informed the authors that, after consultation with the headman of the area, VFU members consulted with the local MET office, to get further information on the conservancies' policy and processes they have to follow to establish a conservancy. The VFU then established a subcommittee to facilitate

the formation of the conservancy. The mandate of the subcommittee was to consult the community on the formation of the conservancy and prepare documents necessary for meeting the requirements to register as a conservancy. One of the conservancy policy requirements was to define the territory of the conservancy.

The subcommittee informed the community about the formation of the conservancy, through meetings and visits to households. Once consensus was reached to form a conservancy, the boundaries of the conservancy were discussed. The general proposal was to use the boundaries of Ward 7, which separates the area from other neighbouring Damara communities. As noted in a personal communication by J. Gawiseb to the authors in December 2010, the subcommittee and the traditional authority agreed to use the traditional authority demarcation of Ward 7 as the boundary of the emerging conservancy. However, during consultations with the community members in Ward 7, the community of Bethanie and surrounding farms decided not to become members of the proposed conservancy. As mentioned in a personal communication by B. Utiseb to the authors in November 2010, this community had earlier also decided not to become part of Torra Conservancy during boundary negotiations. After several meetings and interventions by the headman without any success the subcommittee decided to exclude the Bethanie community from the boundaries of Doro !Nawas Conservancy.

In the case of Bethanie, financial factors played a role in the boundary-formation process. The reason the Bethanie community decided not become part of Doro !Nawas Conservancy was largely due to community dynamics. Some influential community members thought they could derive more economic benefits if they were not part of Doro !Nawas Conservancy. This community is closer to the petrified forests, and have several pockets of petrified forest fossils within their areas. They are also centrally located on the tourist routes to the petrified forests, the burned mountain, dolomite pipes, and the Etosha National Park. Although several individual entrepreneurs had established small stalls along the main roads, no significant tourism facility was established in the community. An individual entrepreneur established a safari camp site in the area, which caused conflict in the community due to lack of sharing of the income derived from tourism – community members only benefitted through employment. Another community camp site was developed closer to the petrified forest, but due to community conflicts and lack of government support, there were not sufficient resources to develop the camp site to its full potential. It never operated because the area was not incorporated into the conservancy and was also considered a dispute area. Unlike with other conservancies, NGOs did not assist the community

to develop joint ventures. The community began to self-identify as part of the Doro !Nawas Conservancy in 2008, almost 10 years after refusing to be part of the conservancy (Mosimane 2012). This change of heart appears to have resulted from lack of leadership in the community, which resulted in disunity and competition for tourism-related revenue among factions within the community. The lack of economic development in the area more generally also led to frustrations among community members who believed that membership in a conservancy could improve their position.

After the exclusion of the Bethanie community and one other neighbouring community, Twyfelfontein, from the boundaries of the conservancy, the Doro !Nawas Conservancy was registered. The conservancy relied on advice from the local MET officers to meet the requirements. The MET officials mediated during conflicts when boundaries were defined, and provided advice on the process. The traditional authority supported the conservancy formation to legitimise the process to community members. During the conservancy formation the traditional authority was only represented by the headman, on behalf of the Damara Traditional Authority. Non-governmental organisations were not involved, and only started supporting the conservancy after it had been registered. Twyfelfontein later registered their own conservancy, called Uibasen conservancy.

### **Economic/entrepreneurial drivers: the case of Uibasen Conservancy**

Uibasen Conservancy, also located in southern Kunene, covers 286 km<sup>2</sup> (NACSO 2008) and is the smallest in this region of the country. It is adjacent to Doro !Nawas Conservancy. The area has a population of approximately 286 people. Khoekhoegowab is the language spoken by the majority of the residents. The conservancy is in the arid to semi-arid portion of northwest Namibia, and livestock and tourism are the main sources of livelihoods (Uiseb and Mosimane 2004).

Uibasen Conservancy deviated from the general norm in Namibia of defining boundaries along ethnic distinctions. As our account will show, the economic and entrepreneurial desire to maximise economic returns in the community was the driving force for defining the conservancy boundaries. An individual entrepreneur in the community realised the economic potential that he and a smaller number of neighbouring community members could derive from a conservancy, if they did not become part of the larger, more populated Doro !Nawas Conservancy.

After the Twyfelfontein community declared a dispute against the boundaries of Doro !Nawas Conservancy (which originally included the area), they registered themselves as Uibasen Conservancy. As was the case with Doro !Nawas Conservancy, non-governmental organisations and the government were not very involved in the formation of the conservancy. The traditional authority was not actively involved as the headman representing the Damara Traditional Authority had failed to convince the Twyfelfontein community to be part of the Doro !Nawas Conservancy. The role of this traditional authority during the formation of these conservancies was not well-defined. This ambiguity can be traced back to the position of traditional leaders in post-independence Namibia. After independence traditional authorities did not have the support of government till the passage of the Traditional Authorities' Act of 2005 by which their roles and responsibilities were defined. It could thus be concluded that the traditional authority did not have sufficient powers to influence residents to remain within the Doro !Nawas Conservancy boundaries, despite close ethnic affiliations between communities within the area.

The process of forming a conservancy was managed by the individual entrepreneur who had resettled on the Twyfelfontein farm in 1976 with the permission of Damara Traditional Authority, and thus was a community member. He later received land rights for parts of the area from the government in 1995 (Renzi 1999). The entrepreneur realised the economic potential of the Twyfelfontein area, which is the third largest tourism attraction in Namibia, due to the presence of rock paintings, dolomite pipes, and the burned mountain. Prior to the registration of the conservancy, the entrepreneur had already initiated a small tourism enterprise of tour guiding to the rock paintings and had plans to develop a campsite and other tourism enterprises. He also operated a tourism concession in the Twyfelfontein area, the Abu Huab Campsite, which enabled him to exert considerable influence in the area. During the border-negotiating process for Doro !Nawas Conservancy, the entrepreneur strenuously opposed boundaries that included Twyfelfontein. Instead, he proposed establishing a smaller conservancy, with mainly relatives and people he had farmed with for years on farms neighbouring Twyfelfontein. This allowed him to maintain power in the conservancy as the most knowledgeable and influential member on tourism issues.

The individual entrepreneur who already had the trust of the Twyfelfontein community and neighbouring farm residents used his influence to convince residents to define themselves as a community separate from that of Doro !Nawas. The smaller conservancy contained the majority of

the region's major tourism attractions, which meant that the Twyfelfontein community members as a small group could retain control of the income derived from tourism activities, and not have to share revenue with the larger Doro !Nawas Conservancy population. The trust which the individual entrepreneur had with the community and potential economic benefits that community members could derive from tourism activities were sufficient to persuade the Twyfelfontein community to agree to establish their own conservancy.

## Discussion

Within the larger discourse of conservation spaces, boundaries are often discussed in relation to the rights they give to particular actors to manage natural resources. Borders are often seen as limiting the rights of indigenous residents *vis-à-vis* colonial, national, and international actors. While this explains, to a large extent, their role in demarcating national parks and private game reserves, we have shown that it fails to account for the messy complexities surrounding the boundary-making processes in the case of communal conservancies. However, we have shown that, in the Namibian case, even national park boundaries can be fluid, changing in response to pressure as local residents act to re-establish or regain access to traditional territories. Borders can shift in response to changing contexts and altered power dynamics, although the power of rural residents is often highly constrained. But rather than viewing all conservation borders as oppositional to the desires and needs of rural residents, we find boundary-making processes can facilitate certain types of empowerment as well.

With communal conservancies, the stories we have presented indicate that control over natural resources is only one factor among many that rural residents consider when establishing conservation territories. The case of Nyae Nyae Conservancy shows that demarcating communal conservancies can re-establish or strengthen indigenous control over conservation territories and provide a way for residents to secure land use rights and prevent in-migration of other groups. Thus, pre-existing communities do account for some of the spatial configurations of Namibian conservancies. However, the boundary-making process also helps residents to create new social spaces, establish new ethnic groups, reaffirm loyalties with traditional authorities, and better position themselves to pursue and control specific economic development strategies. The dynamic interplay between these multiple objectives play out in different local contexts to fragment

old communities and create new ones, depending on the motivations of residents. In Mayuni, the boundaries of the conservancy ultimately allowed one group to separate from a larger ethnic traditional authority and form their own. In Doro !Nawas, ethnic affiliations had considerable influence on its borders, but the economic motivations of other residents also shaped the territory as they opted out of the larger conservancy. As the motivations of residents changed over time, so did the boundaries of the conservancy (e.g., the eventual inclusion of Bethanie). In Uibasen, we see how individual entrepreneurs can carve out new conservation spaces based on the known economic potential of certain areas.

## Conclusion

In many of the cases presented, control over natural resources in and of themselves often appears to be a minor motivation in creating borders when compared to the different forms of recognition, both legal and social, that people desire. These stories provide insights into how local residents use boundary-making, a key component of neoliberalised conservation, to empower themselves in various ways. Conservation territories become the vehicle by which people can create spaces that serve other objectives. By creating communal conservancies, residents gain access to enforcement mechanisms over spaces they value. While national parks have governments and private land owners of game parks have the market to validate their ownership, local residents too have found ways to reinforce their claim to territories in the name of conservation.

Taken together, the border stories of communal conservancies provide some illustrations of how demarcating conservation spaces may advance concerns and values of rural residents, largely independent of ecological or environmental goals. All conservation borders should be viewed as social constructs, and the ability to use borders to fortify the rights of some and exclude others has traditionally been viewed as a particular articulation of governmental or neoliberal market logics. As we have demonstrated here, they have local logics as well. Still, we find some evidence that neoliberalism in the communal conservancy setting can produce a distinctive type of a border. Conservancy boundaries in our analysis tend to be shaped by factors such as social cohesion, place attachment, and resident affiliations rather than by market forces. However, in areas where the potential financial returns from tourism are high, residents may attempt to define boundaries closer to the profitable tourism attractions to ensure that a smaller number

of eligible conservancy members can derive more economic benefits. This is best illustrated in the Uibasen case where financial considerations had the strongest impact on defining the conservancy boundaries. Whereas most conservancy boundaries serve to define who belongs to a community (i.e. those living within the borders) and who is entitled to conservation-based benefits, Uibasen's boundaries play a lesser role in this regard. The high level of formal employment opportunities in Uibasen has led to an influx of people migrating to the area for jobs and they face significant barriers to joining the conservancy although they live within its borders.

Due to the small number of case studies explored in this chapter, we cannot conclusively argue that neoliberalism results in borders that differ from those determined by more socially motivated processes. However the case of Uibasen is suggestive that more financially motivated boundaries result in higher levels of social exclusion and conflict within conservancies (Silva and Mosimane, forthcoming). This is consistent with claims in the literature that neoliberalism leads to greater inequality (McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Dressler et al. 2010; Büscher et al. 2012). Moreover, we hypothesise that as the Namibian conservancy programme matures and people have more awareness of the relationship between boundaries and economic benefits, neoliberal logic may well result in more conservancies that share characteristics with Uibasen Conservancy.

## Notes

1. Khuta refers to a traditional court in the Zambezi region.

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