What of the future?

Three key commodities - land, water and cattle - stand out as having much more value than any others in the region. The use (and abuse) of these commodities also has important consequences for people and the natural environment, and any future planning for the region should recognise the value of these three resources. For example, the distribution of people seen today was largely determined by the provision of pumped water, and almost all human activity in the region ultimately depends on the supply of underground water. Cattle farming dominates all other economic activity and much more land is used for ranching than any other purpose. Land has great value, especially so for cattle farmers, and large areas are no longer used communally or for the common good. There are also considerable conflicts over land between those who control large farms and those that have little access to land. Many San have effectively been dispossessed of access to land and the natural resources that were so important to these people.

The value of land, water and cattle has developed as a result of various events, and the communal areas of eastern Namibia have indeed had an interesting history. First, as a waterless expanse of savanna woodlands, they were occupied by San communities: hardy people whose nomadic, hunter-gathering lifestyle was the only viable way of living in this kind of environment. The harshness of the place also meant that the number of inhabitants was always small. And this is the way it was, perhaps so for thousands of years.

Then came a series of decisions by colonial governments to create homelands for Herero people in the region, and also to drill boreholes to provide permanent waters around which people could be settled. As age-old pastoralists, many Herero settlers turned the land to cattle farming, and most of the area was not suited to crop farming, anyway. As the years passed, some people became extremely successful cattle farmers, developing large herds which they grazed on extensive areas. That led to the formal allocation of large, fenced farms for some of the ranchers, while many other cattle farmers informally enclosed their own large farms.

Unlike many other parts of Namibia, the region has largely been left to its own devices. It has not benefited from economic growth driven by mining, tourism, or fishing, for example. Those people who could make good of the land as cattle farmers have done comparatively well, and wealth from cattle sales has helped to attract jobs and businesses to the region. Large parts of the region are now controlled or virtually owned by large-scale farmers, while remaining large

areas of truly communal and open land are generally remote. In any event, people cannot occupy these open areas because they lack water. Poorer folk – the San and many Herero people who did not became wealthy farmers or who could not find other sources of income – remain closeted in their villages, from where they eke out a living as hunter-gatherers and subsistence farmers.

A good deal of farming activity in the region is clearly of a commercial nature. In itself, this is not a problem, but what does raise difficulties is that these commercial activities foreclose access to resources that should be available for communal use. Government policy states that access to communal land should be open, especially for the poor in providing them with places to live since they cannot afford to buy their own land. A place to live is a commodity in its own right, but the commodities that are really important are the natural resources that the land provides. It is to these resources that free access is intended, and it is these resources that should be available to support the lives of poor people.

It is important that these contradictions in the use of land be resolved. Simply doing away with large-scale farming activities to open up access to resources for subsistence farmers would not do much good. Small-scale farming faces a variety of constraints, especially low soil fertility, rainfall and water supplies, and this is certainly not a place to be if the lives of subsistence farmers are to improve.

Given such conclusions, **what then of the future?** Before attempting to answer that question, three assumptions should be admitted. The first is that the nature and distribution of natural resources in the region predisposes it for extensive land uses. It is an environment in which you need big spaces to be successful, with significant investments that provide water, transport, access to markets and other services. Secondly, the possibility that much of this land may not be suited to communal use should be admitted. Even if resources for small-scale subsistence farming were abundant and freely available, there remains the difficulty of managing the resources for the common advantage of all. Thirdly, the entrenched presence of hundreds of large-scale, commercial farmers in the region should be recognised as a fact.

A first priority in our view is to encourage poorer people to move away from rural areas. It is simply very hard to imagine how rural people can ever make a decent living as subsistence farmers in an environment not suited to small-scale farming. Achieving such a shift away from rural land implies that people be encouraged to live in towns, and to acquire skills which allow them to develop economically in urban societies. This will not be easy, but there are many ways of supporting urban development. At least funds now spent on rural development would be used more wisely to increase skills, create jobs, and provide housing and other services in urban areas. Access to public services in the region would also be improved if more people lived in towns. After all, development in most countries is accompanied by urbanisation, and most people in developed parts of the world are concentrated in urban centres.

Second, land uses that make good and wise use of natural resources should be promoted. Since cattle ranching is firmly established as a viable land use, it seems sensible to develop mechanisms for large-scale farmers to take real ownership and responsibility for their land, managing it more responsibly and for the future. Stocking rates should be controlled and programmes to encourage rotational grazing should be promoted to ensure pastures are well managed.

Cattle farmers should also diversify their uses of the land, especially by building up numbers of wildlife that they can harvest. In this, they should follow the activities of many farmers on freehold farms who now earn good incomes by selling venison or hunting opportunities to trophy and other hunters. Initiatives now being pursued to develop conservancies elsewhere in the region should help to increase wildlife in the area, and give conservancy members new opportunities of making money from wildlife.

One successful conservancy has been established around Tsumkwe. Known as the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, the area now generates annual incomes of about N$1 million for approximately 2,000 San people who live in the area. Most of the income comes from the sale of hunting rights, but additional funds are earned by making and selling craft, and from fees levied for camping tourists. The conservancy covers an area of 907,000 hectares, and part of its success stems from

the very fact that it is such a large area. Another reason for its success is the relative abundance of several species of large wildlife in the conservancy. In fact, the area could hold much more wildlife, and income to the area could then be many times higher. In addition to increasing wildlife numbers, efforts should also made to manage this conservancy more strategically as a commercial venture in its own right.

Several other conservancies are being planned in the region (***Figure 38***), but the management of each will have to take into account the particular interests that residents have in farming and access to land. This will not be easy. For example, one reason that development of a conservancy in the western Tsumkwe constituency has been slow is that the area suffers from a host of competing land use and occupation interests. Many of the problems have been due to the recent arrival of immigrant farmers with large cattle herds into the area, with the result that San people are increasingly "squeezed" by these new farmers. In areas of former Hereroland, management systems now used by conservancies on freehold farms may be more appropriate because of the presence of so many large cattle ranches.

Finally, there is scope for tourism to be developed. Access to the region for tourists is difficult, but that will improve once a new, direct road between Gobabis and Grootfontein is opened. A map of accommodation for tourists in Namibia (***Figure 38***) shows that there is a remarkable lack of tourism facilities in the whole area. The map also demonstrates just how many guest lodges and other kinds of accommodation can be operated in relatively small areas of central Namibia. Creative and profitable ideas are now needed to attract visitors to enjoy the region's people and natural resources, and the wise use of those resources will be one of the challenges facing those who want greater benefits to come from the communal lands of eastern Namibia.

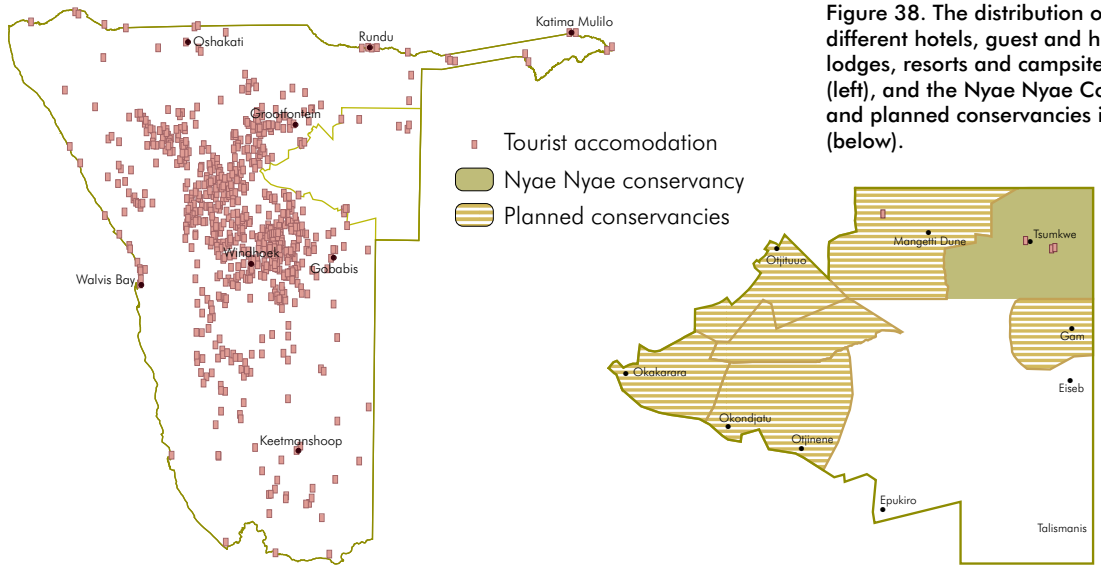

Figure 38. The distribution of about 900 different hotels, guest and hunting farms, lodges, resorts and campsites in Namibia (left), and the Nyae Nyae Conservancy and planned conservancies in the region (below).

Notes and sources

1. Numbers of people and households are based on the preliminary results of the 2001 Population and Housing Census. For the Tsumkwe constituency, the number of people is an adjusted estimate which excludes that part falling in the commercial farming area to the west of the communal area. We estimated that 910 people or 10.4% of the total number of people and households are in that communal area, and the 2001 Census figures were thus reduced pro rata by that percentage. The total area of the Tsumkwe constituency including the area of commercial farms is 28,440 square kilometres.
2. Adapted from material and sources in Mendelsohn, J.M., Jarvis, A.M., Roberts, C.S. & Robertson, T. 2002. *An Atlas of Namibia*. David Philip, Cape Town.
3. The land surveyor surveyed the farms that had already been fenced in 1988, and he was then instructed to continue marking out new farms to the south and east. He had two bulldozers, and the drivers were told to continue clearing lines due east, placing beacons every 7 kilometres. Farmers would follow these activities, immediately placing tyres on the beacons with their names to claim ownership of the new farms. The surveyor had been instructed to cover the whole of Hereroland in this way. However, a decision was made to stop this at about the time of independence (F.E. Mercker personal communication).
4. For a thorough discussion on the history or land enclosure and fencing in Hereroland, see Werner, W. 1997. *From communal pastures to enclosures: the development of land tenure in Herero reserves*. Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit, Windhoek.
5. From information kindly supplied by the Namibia Meteorological Services and from Namibia Resource Consultants. 1999. *Rainfall distribution in Namibia: Data analysis and mapping of spatial, temporal, and Southern Oscillation Index aspects*. Windhoek: Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development.
6. For more information see Christelis, G. & Struckmeier, W. (editors). 2001. *Groundwater in Namibia*. Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development and Ministry of Mines and Energy, Windhoek, and BIWAC. 1999. *Database for further decisions regarding the necessity and feasibility of future geophysical and hydrogeological investigations in the study areas Oshivelo, eastern Caprivi and eastern Tsumkwe-Otjinene (north-eastern Namibia)*. Department of Water Affairs, Windhoek.
7. Based on analyses of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development database on boreholes, and on data kindly supplied by Arnold Bittner and Katharina Dierkes.
8. Information supplied by the Chris Weaver and Greg Stuart-Hill of the LIFE Project, Windhoek.
9. From work done by Wynand du Plessis at the Etosha Ecological Research Unit, who extracted the maximum values reflecting green vegetation biomass for each square kilometre over a rainy season from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) satellite images. The images have a resolution of 1 x 1 km, and pixel values for biomass range from 0 to 255, which allow the values to be grouped into legend classes from low to high levels of production. The values over the seven seasons were averaged to produce a map of average biomass production, and the standard deviation of the values was used to calculate a co-efficient to show variation in plant growth. See also Du Plessis, W. 1999. *Linear regression relationships between NDVI, vegetation and rainfall in*

Etosha National Park, Namibia. Journal of arid environments, 42: 235-260.

10. The maps are based on the interpretation of NOAA satellite images by Simon Trigg and Johan le Roux, which then allowed burnt areas to be mapped.
11. Based on an analysis of the 1991 Population and Housing Census, conducted by the Central Statistics Office.
12. Based on population censuses in 1970, 1981, 1991 and 2001. Comparative figures from earlier censuses are not available because the census results were reported using different geographical zones. See Note 1 concerning estimates of people in Tsumkwe constituency in 2001.
13. Based on an analysis of the 1994 Income and Expenditure Survey, conducted by the Central Statistics Office.
14. Directorate of Extension and Engineering Services. 1994. *Socio-economic Survey: eastern communal areas*. Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, Windhoek.
15. Werner, W. 1998. *No one will become rich: economy and society in the Herero Reserves in Namibia, 1915-1946*. Basel Namibia Studies Series No. 2, P. Schlettwein Publishing, Switzerland.
16. The maps of densities were compiled by this project. The number of animals recorded at each crushpen or stock inspection point was obtained from staff of the Directorate of Veterinary Services. The numbers were then linked to the location of these points and an estimate of density was made by "spreading" the numbers of animals over a radius of 10 kilometres around the points.
17. From the annual reports of the Directorate of Veterinary Services.
18. Derived from the stock census records kept by Animal Health Inspectors in western Hereroland and at Gam.
19. Werner, W. 1998. *No one will become rich: economy and society in the Herero Reserves in Namibia, 1915-1946*. Basel Namibia Studies Series No. 2, P. Schlettwein Publishing, Switzerland; and Werner, W. 1997. *From communal pastures to enclosures: the development of land tenure in Herero reserves*. Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit, Windhoek.
20. These figures are estimates extrapolated from the stock census records kept by Animal Health Inspectors in western Hereroland and Gam. These records covered 1,849 farmers who jointly owned about 101,000 cattle. This is one third of the estimated total number of cattle in the region, and so the total number of 1,849 and number of farmers with more than 100 cattle was simply multiplied by three.
21. Baird, J.H. 1995. *Verification of socio-economic data for SARDEP test areas in the southern and eastern communal areas*. Report for Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, Windhoek.
22. Based on information supplied by Namwater and the Directorate of Rural Water Supply in the Department of Water Affairs.
23. Derived from Education Management Information System data of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture.
24. These percentages were estimated by overlaying catchment areas with radii of 5 and 10 kilometres on the map of population density (see Figure 24).
25. Adapted from el Obeid, S., Mendelsohn, J.M., Lejars, M., Forster, N. & G. Brulé. *Health in Namibia: progress and challenges*. RAISON, Windhoek. 120 pp. The incidence of malaria and diarrhoea is the average number of outpatients with these diseases in relation to 1,000 people in the catchment area of each health facility, 1995-1999. The incidence of tuberculosis is amongst adults, and was recorded as the number of new outpatient cases per 100,000 people in each year, 1995-1999.

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