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# The Limits of Economic Benefits: Adding Social Affordances to the Analysis of Trophy Hunting of the Khwe and Ju/'hoansi in Namibian Community-Based Natural Resource Management

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## ABSTRACT

In the global neoliberal ecological discourse, trophy hunting proponents often articulate the economic benefits it creates for local communities, especially through jobs and meat. Trophy hunting revenues are also crucial to support the overall operational costs of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). The aim of this paper is to show that this rather simplified dominant discourse, based only on “benefits”, sells short the local realities of the Khwe and Ju/'hoansi Bushmen (San) in the Bwabwata National Park and the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, Namibia, respectively. Building on Gibson, I use the concept of “social affordances” as an addition to economic benefits. This leads me to argue for an expansion of the debate beyond the limits of economic benefits to the human domain, to better understand the multiple experiences, perceptions, power relations and meanings (for good and ill) of local actors on trophy hunting and its main players.

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## Introduction

The public and academic debate about trophy hunting has accelerated in recent years, especially after a ban on trophy hunting in Botswana in 2013, and two controversial hunts in 2015; of the famous Zimbabwean lion Cecil and of a rhino in Namibia for US\$350,000,- (Hannis 2016; Batavia et al. 2018; Sullivan 2018). When well-managed, trophy hunting can create revenue for communities that can be used for nature conservation (such as monitoring or anti-poaching activities) and jobs (such as cleaning, skinning or tracking) and it provides meat for marginalized people. Proponents often articulate such economic benefits as crucial to the future of conservation and rural development (Weaver and Skyer 2003; IUCN 2016; Naidoo et al. 2016; NAPHA 2016; Brown 2017; Angula et al. 2018).

This paper examines trophy hunting in two case studies in Namibia, a country that has often been presented as a success story (Naidoo et al. 2016; NAPHA 2016; Brown 2017; Angula et al. 2018; Weaver and Skyer 2003), because it creates such benefits for local communities in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), which

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has been rolled out over the country since the early 1990s. Trophy hunting is crucial for CBNRM because it generates large revenues that can function as its financial engine, since “[t]here has been pressure on the programme from donors to reach a stage where external support is no longer necessary” (Jones and Weaver 2009, 236–237). However, according to Economists at Large (EAL 2013; cf. Cruise 2015; cf. Paksi and Pyhälä 2018), rural communities in African countries derive only very little benefit from trophy hunting revenue through jobs, and they find the argument that trophy hunting plays an important role in the economic development of African communities flawed. Only 3% of the hunting operators’ revenues reaches these communities, while the majority goes to spin-off beneficiaries such as airlines, tourism facilities, hunting operators, governments, and other individuals at the right positions to connect international capital with the hunting industry. At the national level, revenues only constitute 0.27% of the GDP of Namibia (EAL 2013; Cruise 2015). Nonetheless, the former Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism stated that it is

common knowledge that [...] trophy hunting [...] has grown to be one of the most important industries in Namibia in terms of its strong contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, creation of employment, training opportunities and the wellbeing and social upliftment of our rural people. (Nandi-Ndaitwah 2012, 4)

Such a CBNRM vision is mainly presented by practitioners from conservation NGOs, government officials and stakeholders representing private hunting operators. This vision is problematic since they implement market-based solutions for nature conservation, thereby assuming that local populations who do not follow such principles do not (yet) understand how to do ‘proper’ nature conservation. It is therefore important that the various trajectories of power through which the benefits are generated are transparent, but more generally this is something that rarely happens in the documents of international conservation NGOs (MacDonald 2005). Despite the recent debate, this still seems to be the case today; trophy hunting narratives in the media are often “pro-conservation, and rarely analyze trophy-hunting, critically, in the context of power” (Brandt 2015). In Namibia-where CBNRM has dominated nature conservation since the early 1990s-the debate seems to have intensified the discourse that centralizes economic benefits (for recent examples see Angula et al. 2018; Brown 2017; Naidoo et al. 2016; NAPHA 2016), instead of questioned it. Therefore, it is now ever more important to scrutinize the limits of this model, so that a fuller picture of trophy hunting dynamics for local communities can be presented. I do that by providing empirical material from 2010, before the debate became globally bigger, showing that this strong focus on economic benefits is not a recent phenomenon, but that it has structurally been applied in Namibian CBNRM for much longer, which in itself shows a disregard for local realities perpetuating in today’s program.

By analyzing two long-term Namibian CBNRM initiatives with an emphasis on the perceptions of the local (mostly former) hunting and gathering Bushmen (or San) populations—in this case the Khwe of Bwabwata National Park and the Ju/’hoansi of Nyae Nyae Conservancy—this paper contributes by revealing social dynamics of trophy hunting in Namibia that have so far received little attention. The aim of the paper is thus to show this important omission in the current debate about trophy hunting in Namibia, which leads me to argue for an expansion of the debate beyond the limits of economic

benefits to the human domain, so that we can better understand the multiple experiences, perceptions, and meanings (for good *and* ill) of local actors on trophy hunting and its main players. The strong emphasis on economic benefits often masks important on the ground social experiences and perspectives of the local people and other actors who are involved in trophy hunting, for example about their labor conditions or about their interactions with hunting operators, NGOs, and donors and what such interactions mean to them.

Also in Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae, trophy hunting has delivered some of the expected economic benefits, but my interviews and observations show that social dynamics at the local level also need to be taken into account, not in the last place because some of the problems that I found seem to perpetuate today. For example, in 2017, it seems as if tensions have arisen between a new hunting operator and local employees in Nyae Nyae, similar as those I describe in my results section.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the discourse that focuses solely on “benefits” reveals how trophy hunting has become another example of “neoliberal environmentality”, in which the environment has been changed in such a way that economic incentives are initiated for economic growth only (Fletcher 2010). This disregards structural critiques concerning “neoliberal conservation” more generally in favor of a sustainability discourse (see, for example, Büscher et al 2012; Sullivan 2018), which has also been well documented in Namibian CBNRM (see, for example, Sullivan 2002; Silva and Motzer 2015; Bollig 2016; Hannis 2016; Schnegg and Kiaka 2018). In this paper, I use the concept of “affordances” to analyze local social dynamics, which is based on work by the environmental psychologist Gibson (1979), and in particular I focus on “social affordances” (Kaufmann and Clément 2007; Reed 1988; Stoffregen 2003; Valenti and Good 1991; cf. Gibson 1979), which I will explain next.

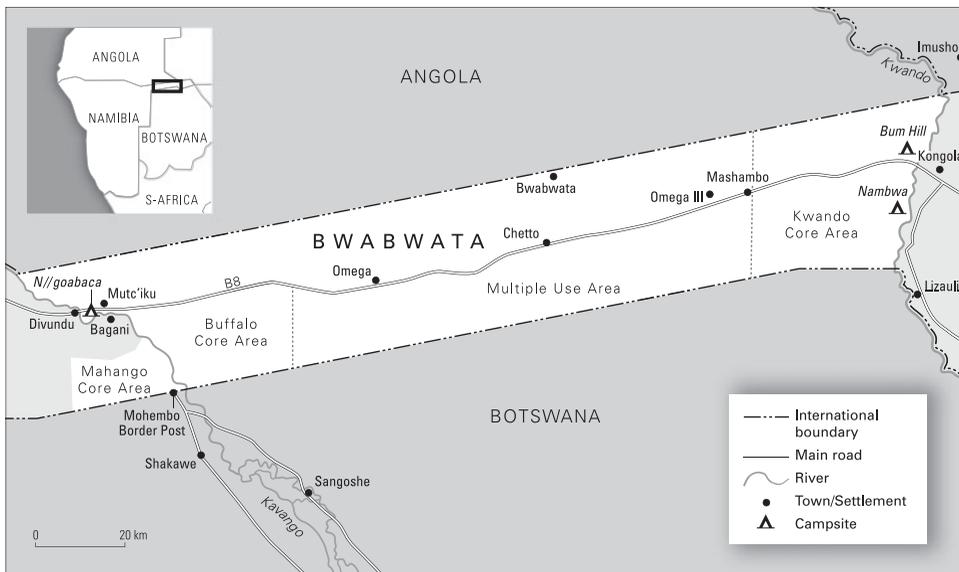
### **Social Affordances and Trophy Hunting**

Gibson (1979, 127) explains that “[t]he affordances of the environment are what it offers the [human and non-human] animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill.” They are “the possibilities for action that an environment allows to an animal” (Dotov, Nie, and de Wit 2012, 29). For example, the meaning of a stone, for an indifferent observer, is just part of his environment as a shaped, hard composition of a certain size and as such a “neutral object”. However, various animals may have incorporated the stone in different ways. A crab, for example, might have used it to hide under, a bird might have used it to open snail shells or an angry man may have thrown it at an adversary. In the subjective universe of the crab, the stone is shelter, for the bird, an anvil and for the man, a missile. These different qualities of one object are *acquired* by the object, in this case, the stone, and *emerge out of its various relationships* with subject organisms. From this perspective, various organisms ascribe functions or qualities to the objects that are then integrated into their own system (Ingold 2011). Of course, objects can also have multiple uses and meanings for perceivers and these are subject to change over time. Therefore, Gibson (1979, 29) considers affordances “equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior [that] points both ways, to the environment and to the observer.”

Importantly, affordances are also focused on the *social* relations of the (human or non-human) animal with its environment, since “[w]hat other persons afford, comprises the whole realm of social significance for human beings. We pay the closest attention to the optical and acoustic information that specifies what the other person is, invites, threatens, and does” (Gibson 1979, 128). In this relational idea of affordances, other organisms in the perceiver’s environment can ‘act back’ and so interact with the perceiver; they do not exist in the perceiver or in the environment but only come into existence in the ecological relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. This means that behavior *affords* behavior as well (Reed 1988; Ingold 2000; Kaufmann and Clément 2007) and therefore we should not only look for affordances in the physical but also in the social environment. Especially when relating it to trophy hunting, it is the human domain where most affordances are likely to appear since “[t]he richest and most elaborate affordances of the environment are provided by other animals and, for us, other people” (Gibson 1979, 135), who

[w]hen touched they touch back, when struck they strike back; in short, they *interact* with the observer and with one another. Behavior affords behavior, and the whole subject matter of psychology and of the social sciences can be thought of as an elaboration of this basic fact. Sexual behavior, nurturing behavior, fighting behavior, cooperative behavior, economic behavior, political behavior—all depend on the perceiving of what another person or other persons afford, or sometimes on the misperceiving of it. (*ibid.*)

Various scholars would later stress this important part of Gibson’s theory for the domain of human interaction (see, for example, Reed 1988; Valenti and Good 1991; Ingold 2000; Chemero 2003; Stoffregen 2003; Kaufmann and Clément 2007; Dotov, Nie, and de Wit 2012). So affordances are opportunities for obtaining particular resources, or for doing certain things, or they are traps or dangers for perceivers. Other people and animals afford action and *interaction*, which requires socialization that includes an important awareness that the environment affords not only to “us”, but also to “them”; it is above all a *shared environment*. Affordances can be the same or different for other actors and can be appropriated for a whole range of social purposes (Reed 1988; Valenti and Good 1991). It is in the relational character of affordances where objects—including other human or non-human animals for that matter—get meaning (Ingold 2000). Because in such relations the number of opportunities for action is unaccountably large, and many are mutually exclusive to be performed at the same time (e.g., eating and drinking), humans and other animals only perform a very tiny percentage of what they can potentially do, which makes affordances first of all *emergent properties* in the relation (Stoffregen 2003). This emergence allows for a crucial role for culture (Valenti and Good 1991; Kaufmann and Clément 2007) and thus for normativity (Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014). Moreover, it means that affordances can have a constraining effect on behavior; the height of steps on a stair does not constrain climbing, neither does a small child, but in their relation, this affordance can be a constraint. Thus, “behaviour is constrained by relations between properties of the environment and properties of the animal” (Stoffregen 2003, 127). To see how affordances work out in Namibian trophy hunting, for good and ill, I will now first describe the case studies and my methodology, to move on to the particular case situations of the Khwe and Ju/’hoansi.

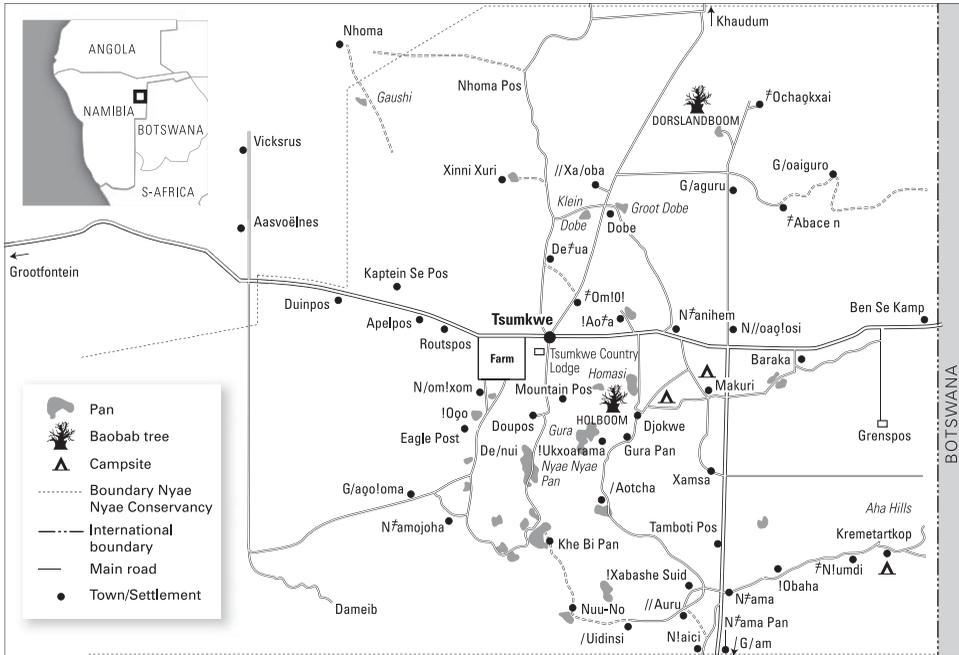


**Figure 1.** Bwabwata National Park.

### *Case Studies in Northeast Namibia*

In this paper, I analyze qualitative data on trophy hunting as a central activity in two CBNRM initiatives in Northeast Namibia, namely Bwabwata National Park (see [Figure 1](#)) and Nyae Nyae Conservancy (see [Figure 2](#)). Fieldwork took place in 2010 when I explored the Khwe and Ju/'hoansi inhabitants' perceptions respectively on nature conservation and tourism developments, including trophy hunting. Both cases stand out as Namibian CBNRM examples and share important features; similar types of activities have been implemented and there is a significant role for national and international actors such as the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Moreover, in both cases, the largest group of inhabitants are Bushmen who are (mostly former) hunter-gatherers.

Bwabwata (see [Figure 1](#)) is unique in Namibia, as the government has allowed people to live inside its borders. The number of people living in the park has changed throughout the years and in 2005 there were about 4,675 people living there, 3,775 of whom were Khwe (Taylor 2012; cf. Paksi and Pyhälä 2018). The local Community-based Organization (CBO) of Bwabwata, the Kyaramacan Association, formally represents all the people living in the park (meaning the Khwe and the Mbukushu) but informally mostly represents the Khwe's interests (Koot, van Beek, and Diemer 2016). Bwabwata covers 6,100 km<sup>2</sup> and CBNRM activities have been started since 1992 by the NGO Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) with the support of WWF-US, USAID, and the MET; various types of tourism, souvenir making, game guarding by community members and sustainable harvesting were further implemented in time, and the first trophy hunting concession was publicly tendered in July 2006 (cf. Taylor 2012). A controversial issue in the area, and very important for the people, is



**Figure 2.** Nyae Nyae Conservancy.

that the government has never recognized a Khwe traditional authority, while the neighboring Mbukushu traditional authority claims the park (Koot 2013).

Nyae Nyae Conservancy (see Figure 2) lies to the south-west from Bwabwata. It was the first conservancy in Namibia when it was established in 1998, and it would be followed by another 86 communal conservancies to date, that are “self-governing, democratic entities, run by their members, with fixed boundaries that are agreed with adjacent conservancies, communities or landowners” (NACSO 2018). Trophy hunting has taken place in Nyae Nyae already since 1986, when it led to complicated social relations since the revenues went to the South African government and not to the Ju/’hoansi (who expected to receive a share), leaving the Ju/’hoansi behind in a disturbed relation with the Department of Nature Conservation (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011). From 1998 until today, the Conservancy would sign various contracts with operators to receive ‘development’, mostly as economic benefits from trophy hunting (Koot 2013).

Unlike many other hunter-gatherers in Africa, the Ju/’hoansi of Nyae Nyae are still allowed to hunt as long as they use traditional weaponry: bows, arrows, spears, and clubs (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011). Nyae Nyae covers 9,030 km<sup>2</sup> and contains 36 small settlements spread throughout the Conservancy, in which CBNRM currently dominates the Ju/’hoansi’s livelihoods (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011; Koot and Van Beek 2017). In contrast to the Khwe of Bwabwata, the Ju/’hoansi have their own traditional authority. CBNRM has been introduced since the early 1990s, like Bwabwata with the support of WWF, USAID and the MET, implemented locally by the NGO Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNF) and the Nyae Nyae Conservancy. Just as in Bwabwata, the focus under

CBNRM has mainly been on various tourism initiatives, souvenir making, trophy hunting, game scouting and sustainable harvesting (Biesele and Hitchcock 2011; Koot 2013).

### ***Economic Benefits from Trophy Hunting in Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae***

In March 2006, the Kyaramacan Association was allowed two hunting concessions for Bwabwata that received a very high interest from Namibian hunting operators. Until then economic benefits from CBNRM since Independence (1990) had been very low and only 5.5 percent of the people in the area received a formal income because of a job or pension. Therefore, the income from trophy hunting, the few jobs it created and the meat distribution from the hunts became significant CBNRM markers (Taylor 2012). Another hunting concession was awarded in 2007 and with the concessions in 2006 and 2007, the Kyaramacan Association made a total of N\$1.2 million in both years and they had 36 tons of game meat distributed to the people in Bwabwata (Kamba n.d.).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 17 local residents were employed for tracking and skinning. With the N\$1.2 million per year, Kyaramacan was able to pay for salaries, community projects, a vehicle and conservation-related costs (Kyaramacan Association 2009). There have been different ideas between IRDNC and local residents on how trophy hunting revenues should be distributed, but in the end most was distributed to individual families (instead of investing the revenues into public goods, which was IRDNC's preferred strategy).

In Nyae Nyae, joint venture hunting agreements brought in N\$260,000 in 2000 (Sullivan 2002), which has risen throughout the years and in 2010 trophy hunting brought in around N\$1,2 million (Koot 2013). In fact, Nyae Nyae would become “unprofitable” in case of a trophy hunting ban (Naidoo et al. 2016, 634), since non-consumptive tourism has only developed marginally (Koot and Van Beek 2017).

With the introduction of trophy hunting and money, the environments of the Khwe and the Ju/'hoansi changed in such a way that finances became an ever-bigger player in that environment. Wildlife had now become a moveable financial asset. An elephant, for example, has become an affordance with a *financial* value and hunting one in Bwabwata today costs US\$78.000,- (BNP hunting concession 2018) and in Nyae Nyae US\$80.000,- (Paterniti 2018). In this way, different animal species are reduced to their respective commodified value. However, animals such as elephants can also still afford a spiritual relationship, a loss of crops, damage to water points or physical danger. All inhabitants thus relate to hunting and to large game in different ways because of the many restrictions that CBNRM has also created in the first place; where to settle, the possibility to do agriculture, human-wildlife conflicts, restrictions to hunt and gather, dissatisfaction about not getting any compensation for wildlife damage from the MET, and so on. As an unemployed young man explained to me in Bwabwata, CBNRM mainly constrained him, since “the law is there in the bush [but] I want the fruits [ ... ] But the law says you cannot cut down that tree [ ... ] I know the law but the hunger it will do me that I can cut [the tree]” (interview 21 March 2010).

### ***Methodology***

The case material of the paper is based on four months of ethnographic research in Namibia in 2010 and a longer engagement with Bushmen communities and nature

conservation in the country since 1999. More or less two months were spent in both Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae. My research focused on the perceptions of various Bushmen groups in southern Africa on tourism and nature conservation, including trophy hunting. In Bwabwata I conducted a total of 46 semi-structured interviews, mostly with Khwe, and in Nyae Nyae I held 45 interviews, mostly with Ju/'hoansi. In these recorded interviews, I have used a topic list with a large variety of topics relating to CBNRM and tourism developments more broadly. I have asked people's perceptions on these developments and activities, including trophy hunting, what their role was, and what their opinion about and experiences with these developments and activities were. In this way, reliability and validity have been achieved, as well as by listening back and substantially analyzing all these interviews for relevant parts.

Although trophy hunting has been discussed broadly in all of my interviews as a particular type of tourism/conservation, some interviews have been more important for this paper than others. In particular, my interviews with representatives of the IRDNC and the Kyaramacan Association in Bwabwata about the disputed tender process there, and with the laborers at the two hunting camps (G/aguru and Baraka) and with Conservancy representatives in Nyae Nyae have proven crucial in the developments of my ideas. Especially in the more remote places, interviews would often turn into a group discussion. Most interviews were held in English or in Afrikaans, but I have also worked with an assistant in both locations and if necessary they would translate from the local languages Khwedam or Ju/'hoan into English or Afrikaans. Furthermore, I have made observations and held many informal conversations of which I have kept a diary.

## Results

### *Bribery in Bwabwata?*

The hunting operator who was perceived as the best choice by one actor would not necessarily also automatically be perceived as such by other actors; different interactions would lead to different social affordances between the various actors. In Bwabwata, for example, MET allowed Kyaramacan to open another trophy hunting tender in April 2009 (Kyaramacan Association 2009). As a respondent explained, Bwabwata is very popular among hunting operators "because we have many animals here, buffalo, kudu, elephant and leopard" (interview 30 March 2010). These tender processes "contributed to a series of divisions, alliances and collusions among the MET, Kyaramacan, NGOs, hunting operators, and other local residents. It also produced NGO allegations of bribery and corruption among hunters and Kyaramacan" (Taylor 2012, 130). Such interactions are crucial for a more thorough analysis of trophy hunting and its dynamics by using social affordances because these important consequences of trophy hunting would remain masked if studies would only continue to focus on economic benefits.

The operators' interest in the tenders led to accusations of bribery; the story goes that some people within Kyaramacan had direct contact with impatient hunting operators, in particular, Huntafrica Namibia, who were also interested in the tender. However, during the process of selection, no contact with the hunting operators is allowed to prevent anyone from influencing the situation. Hunting quotas should be advertised

publicly, but on the ground negotiations often take place between a hunting operator and the different stakeholders (Bollig 2016). For some local Khwe associated with Kyaramacan, such social interaction was a normal happening, while for others, such as IRDNC and the MET, it was bribery. A representative of Kyaramacan explained:

If [...] someone comes to me and says [...] “You are suffering from hunger so I can give you this thing” [...] then the others view it as a bribery [...] because there were some hunters that came to us, trying to talk to us, be friendly with us, give us something while they are passing, greeting us and all these things. And then the Ministry of Environment and Tourism including IRDNC say these hunters are bribing us. (interview 10 May 2010)

It seems as if the Kyaramacan Association saw these interactions with such operators whom they were in contact with as reciprocal relationships, since in these relations various affordances are derived (e.g., money, a car, friendship, a handshake, some food, et cetera) but the operator Huntafrica Namibia simultaneously afforded a threat to the MET and IRDNC who considered the above interaction bribery and who believed that Kyaramacan was being fooled by Huntafrica Namibia. In fact, an IRDNC spokesman explained that “they [Huntafrica Namibia] promise [...] They [Khwe] are hungry and they’re desperate, they listen to anybody” (interview 18 May 2010). However, a Kyaramacan board member explained that Huntafrica Namibia wanted to start a community development trust in collaboration with Kyaramacan, “which would be formed between KA [Kyaramacan Association] and Huntafrica [...] if Huntafrica starts hunting in Bwabwata” (interview 10 May 2010). Within Kyaramacan it is said that Huntafrica Namibia never did anything wrong and some Kyaramacan members explained that they still want to work with Huntafrica Namibia, while IRDNC blamed Huntafrica Namibia for influencing Kyaramacan members without following the legal tender procedures. Apparently, Huntafrica Namibia has even threatened IRDNC a few times with legal action because they blamed IRDNC for obstructing the tender procedure.

It seems as if trophy hunting not only provided economic benefits but also generated social networks with “wealthy white hunters”, leading to an unintentional consequence of this CBNRM initiative by exposing “the multi-layered contestations of the tender process” (Taylor 2012, 132). In this process, Huntafrica Namibia became a very different social affordance for IRDNC and the MET than for some of the Kyaramacan board members. Moreover, for Kyaramacan, IRDNC used to afford important support, whereas in this process they had now also become a hindrance, or at least so in the perception of some influential Kyaramacan members. Interactions and different relationships between people then turn out to derive very different social affordances for those involved in trophy hunting, and a ‘simple’ tender procedure shows the important emergence of power dynamics between the different players.

### ***Meat Distribution and Labor Relations in Nyae Nyae***

As explained, (social) affordances are for good *and* ill. So whether people who enter the environment of the Bushmen provide for good or ill depends on the interaction with these people and the (emerging) relationship built up over time. Moreover, other people who also enter this environment in a similar position might build up a very different relationship and therefore afford very differently to other groups. In Nyae Nyae, I found

how the interactions with two different hunting operators do not afford the same for every settlement and/or actor involved. Although there is only one hunting concession in Nyae Nyae, at the time of my fieldwork in 2010 there were two operators active because the main contractor, an elephant hunter, had subleased part of his contract. Both operators are connected to a small group of people in their hunting camps, who will get the jobs and meat, based on the area where hunting takes place. However, people in the settlements complained that they did not receive much meat from these hunts and therefore to them this was not considered a true benefit; in a group discussion in Baraka (see [Figure 2](#)), with about 15 people, an elderly man said that “you must give something to every village” (interview 26 May). Looking at the size of the conservancy it seems unrealistic to distribute meat to all settlements, but this confirms that an affordance is emerging in interaction and as such is derived from this interaction, and that many potential affordances are constrained due to properties of the environment or of the perceiver.

Moreover, the labor relations with the two trophy hunting operators (the main contractor and the subcontractor) differ substantially. The hunting camp of the main contractor was in G/aguru in the north of Nyae Nyae (see [Figure 2](#)), where about 16 Ju/’hoansi worked for him; men as trackers and to do physical labor and women to do cleaning and laundry. In a group interview with 10-15 people, the laborers told me that they did the work mainly due to a lack of other options; they complained heavily about the operator’s behavior and their own working conditions. The work was regarded as unnecessarily heavy and the salaries far too low. They feared and distrusted him with their salaries and other financial matters, as a former employee explained: “[He] always says ‘You must not talk about money, if you talk, I will shoot and kill you’” (interview 26 May 2018). Moreover, according to the people working for him in G/aguru, “the problem is that he takes tips for himself, for example when these are in US\$ he tells the clients that he will change it for us, but we never get it” (interview 28 May 2010). Furthermore, they describe the man as

very strict, and when we are in the field he fights a lot with us [...] For example, he can make us walk very quick in the field, and then when we get sore feet he will only argue and tell you to walk quicker [...] When someone falls ill, he just gives that person some medicine but that person cannot stop working. (interview 28 May 2010).

Looking at it from this perspective gives the “benefits” a very different meaning. Moreover, they explained that this operator was chosen by the Conservancy simply because he would pay the most and that they have had no influence on this decision, in contrast to the WWF Namibia who have apparently lobbied for the operator to stay when he was planning to leave Nyae Nyae: “WWF came from Windhoek and they have said “No, [he] will stay here” [...] They said this man pays very well for the Conservancy” (interview 28 May 2010). Seen as an affordance for the WWF, the highest bidder is the best choice because it increases CBNRM revenues and so provides for most economic benefits, whereas to the Ju/’hoansi laborers he affords fear, distrust, and few economic benefits through jobs they do due to a lack of other options.

In contrast, those Ju/’hoansi working at the subcontractor’s camp not far from Baraka to the south (see [Figure 2](#)) were very fond of “their” operator. Some of them had also worked for the main contractor in the past but they quit their jobs there. They

now enjoy their jobs, receive food and a satisfying salary throughout the whole year (meaning also outside the hunting season). Needless to say, they considered the interaction of this social affordance a lot more positive. In contrast to the main contractor, the subcontractor “asks us to tell him when he makes a mistake so that he can improve, but [the main contractor] does not want to talk” (interview 26 May 2010).

## Discussion

### *Adding Meaning with Affordances*

In both Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae, the Khwe and Ju/'hoansi respectively interact with a variety of actors in trophy hunting, such as hunting operators, NGOs, and donors in two CBNRM initiatives. My emphasis has been on the Khwe's and Ju/'hoansi's perceptions on such emerging interactions, which revealed that benefits, often simplified and presented as trophy hunting's “success”, do not stand on their own; they are neither “positive” nor “negative”, but get meaning in the different interactions and relationships that emerge over time. Nevertheless, economic incentives leading to these benefits have become dominant in CBNRM, but this ignores another reality altogether, namely that “behavior affords behavior” (Gibson 1979, 135). Therefore, it is important to include the interactions and social relations in the trophy hunting debate and CBNRM analyses.

For example, the case study of Nyae Nyae has created some important insights about labor relations on the ground; what this employment affords the laborers and what this means to them. It would, therefore, be too simple to assume that the creation of jobs—which are very limited in numbers anyway in trophy hunting—should always be considered a positive addition (and thus a benefit) to the people's lives; they might in some cases simply not have any better options because of the regulations that have been put in place in the CBNRM structure first of all. In fact, an IRDNC representative who had been at the heart of Namibian CBNRM had learned throughout the years that “jobs are not really a benefit [...] if people pay me my salary they're not giving me a benefit. I *work* for them!” (interview 15 April 2010). Therefore, jobs should not only be seen as a direct “positive” addition (presented as an “economic benefit”), but as a result from a variety of social affordances, creating new meanings. Moreover, it is also in the interest of nature conservationists and hunting operators that these jobs are being done in the first place, and it is therefore also important to further investigate what the relationship with local groups in CBNRM affords the operators and conservationists. Arguably, the mostly low-paid laborers are as much an important affordance to them as *vice versa*.

In addition, as we have seen predominantly in Bwabwata, NGO staff members attempt to influence negotiations between the communities and private hunting operators. They seem to do this with all good intentions, but while such ‘outside’ actors are actually meant to support the local communities in these negotiations based on their knowledge of the law, regulations and market prices, they also tend to impose their ideas onto the public-private cooperation (which might be inevitable up to a degree).

The two case studies from Namibia do not stand on their own; for example, Van der Duim, Ampumuza and Ahebwa (2014) have shown that gorillas that are being commodified through tourism in Uganda are subject to a variety of meanings attached to them by different actors (such as locals, hunters, neighbors, academics, conservationists or

tourists). These meanings and perceptions about gorillas are shaped in the emerging interactions with the gorilla, depending on what the gorilla affords the particular actor. Moreover, Yasuda (2011) found how, in Cameroon, social dynamics such as displacement, the limited access to natural resources, the inequity of profit sharing and employment opportunities, have hardly been considered when trophy hunting was introduced. And at South African farms, Brandt (2015) found how “before we accept all sorts of assumed benefits of the industry”, we also need to analyze processes of displacement and changing labor demands as only a few people find employment through hunting while “the circumstances and conditions of farm work often remain shaped by paternalist, and racist, ideologies”. In this vein, but outside Africa, MacDonald (2005, 283), found how trophy hunting labor relations in Pakistan are like “a reworked colonialism, the variety of environmentalism that supports this capitalization of nature relegates villagers not to the role of ‘managers’ but to that of servants”. Importantly, even though in these cases analyses have not been done using (social) affordances, the different *interactions* play a crucial role; here new meanings are emerging, so it is important to investigate them. Using the theoretical lens of social affordances is one important approach that can be used to investigate the human domain of trophy hunting. Moreover, my findings from Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae also show that trophy hunting creates important ethical questions in the human domain; questions about power, bribery or labor relations, since “economics can never replace ethics” (Hannis 2016, 14) but such questions are also rendered invisible if the focus ignores social issues (Silva and Mosimane 2014; Hannis 2016; Batavia et al. 2018).

### ***Adding Affordances to Economic Benefits Under Neoliberal Environmentalism***

The strong emphasis on economic benefits shows how, in the current global ecological discourse, market mechanisms are presented as *the* solution for nature conservation and development; emerging relationships between “nature”, social institutions and people are tied into this discourse (MacDonald 2005). In many cases, CBNRM has been heavily critiqued for its implementation of neoliberal ideology, in Namibia and more generally (Sullivan 2002; Brockington et al. 2008; Fletcher 2010; Büscher et al. 2012; Silva and Motzer 2015; Bollig 2016; Schnegg and Kiaka 2018). CBNRM carries high costs which creates donor dependency and it is often considered an attempt to reconcile global agendas with community needs, for whom the financial rewards are often very limited (Suzman 2001; Paksi and Pyhälä 2018). It seems as if Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae are no exception to this. Deals are often made between agencies that advise the community and hunting operators. The latter want to capitalize on wildlife, and CBNRM and policy are thus influenced by the interests of conservationists, hunting operators, and tourists (Sullivan 2002).

Such extended market structures and commodification of resources basically describe individuals as rational actors responding solely to economic incentives for their self-interest; this disenfranchizes marginalized communities further from their local resources and can seriously change the meanings they attach to them, thereby impacting social and cultural dynamics of communities (Brockington et al. 2008; Fletcher 2010; Sullivan 2018). As the conflict over a new hunting operator in Bwabwata and the different relations with the trophy hunters in Nyae Nyae show, people interact with people, and

since behavior affords behavior, this is crucial in an analysis of trophy hunting to get a better understanding of its local experiences and consequences. Neoliberal conservation, however, tends to cover up such dynamics by continually presenting economic benefits, almost as if these are equivalent to “development”, but as such economic benefits obviously have their limits.

The discourse of global ecology in which local ecologies are incorporated within the material organizational sphere of capital is driven by international conservation organizations who generate new forms of governmentality (MacDonald 2005). Fletcher calls this the “neoliberal environmentality” in natural resource policies, which is “an effort to combat environmental degradation [...] through the creation of incentive structures intended to influence individuals’ use of natural resources by altering the cost-benefit ratio of resource extraction so as to encourage *in situ* preservation” (Fletcher 2010, 176). As a form of neoliberal environmentality, trophy hunting systematically intervenes, acts and modifies percipients’ (seen as rational actors focused on self-interest) environment by creating a variety of external, mostly economic, incentives that are only focused on economic growth (Fletcher 2010). Such behavior, in which the environment is shaped to only further increase economic benefits, means that perceivers’ relations with objects in this environment are also changed substantially, and affordances change accordingly; in the end, affordances are *emerging* properties that are derived from the relation between the perceived and the perceiver (Stoffregen 2003).

So to use trophy hunting for generating revenues for conservation and development is not unique to Namibia, but has become an important element of global conservation planning. What is often overlooked is that it creates new meanings, changes social relations and material realities within and between communities (MacDonald 2005) that emerge out of these changing and new relations. Thus, such interventions create a lot more than economic benefits and therefore need to be regarded as what they are; changes that create a large variety of different affordances, in particular in the human domain. In the global setting, where neoliberal environmentality dominates such projects, economic approaches tend to be preferred to communicate the success of CBNRM (and trophy hunting as a crucial element in this). This way, the ongoing promotion of Namibian CBNRM and trophy hunting as crucial for the development of the local communities becomes another example of what Büscher (2014) calls “selling success”, which entails a rhetoric that has for long dominated the southern African and Namibian CBNRM discourse (Sullivan 2002; 2018). In CBNRM, such “success” is often reproduced within networks of NGOs, agencies, government officials and so on, who can define it as “ways that will allow it to be found. Success stories prevail against criticism that comes from other quarters (particularly local people who have experienced CBNRM, and independent commentary from scholars)” (Blaikie 2006, 1954). Within neoliberal environmentalities, and thus within trophy hunting in Bwabwata and Nyae Nyae in Namibia, economic benefits dominate what is considered “success”, despite their limitations.

## Conclusion

A large body of literature about Namibian trophy hunting in CBNRM, mainly published by practitioners in nature conservation, carries the risk to present a simplified and

biased presentation of local perceptions on trophy hunting, based on the definition of “success” in neoliberal environmentalism. Therefore, I argue that we need to analyze (Namibian) trophy hunting as a social phenomenon too, instead of solely articulating the economic benefits it creates (cf. Silva and Mosimane 2014), by including analyses of social *interactions* and what they mean for those people who are often automatically assumed to be “benefitting”. Doing so, provides for a much better, more complete, understanding of the good *and* ill, instead of only focusing on the “good” that trophy hunting affords. Of course, economic benefits are an important part of the story that deserves acknowledgement, but an analysis based only on those is far from complete. The concept of affordances offers an innovative and important addition that can be used as a potential theoretical approach for such analyses. Social affordances, in particular, look at the changing and novel interactions with other people in the human domain of the environment and this is exactly what has recently often been disregarded in academic and public debates.

Most Khwe and Ju/'hoansi are very well aware of what trophy hunting affords, for good *and* ill, or, as Reed (1988, 112) explains, “animate objects afford *interaction*, and socialized objects afford *proper* (as against improper) action and interaction”. This creates specific dynamics within the groups and with outsiders. Trophy hunting is a social phenomenon first of all, and using the lens of social affordances respects its structural properties that are constraining but enabling at the same time (cf. Giddens 1984). Various forms of constraint can also be noticed when using (social) affordances. Of course, what is a constraint for one person can be another person's enablement. Therefore, the usage of emerging social affordances has the potential to create new, more complete, perspectives on trophy hunting in (Namibian) CBNRM. This is especially important for researchers and policymakers, since most of the research that has recently come out about Namibian CBNRM and trophy hunting, in particular, has not questioned, but intensified the focus on economic benefits.

## Notes

1. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) received reports about ill-treatment by a new operator that explain how “community members of NNC [Nyae Nyae Conservancy] were up in arms with SMJ Safaris over alleged ill-treatment that includes unfair labour practices, unprocedural game hunting and degrading insults” (Nyangove 2017).
2. At 1 June 2010, in the middle of my fieldwork, N\$1 was converted into US\$0,13 and into €0,11 (Currency 2017). Moreover, the total amount was N\$2.4 million, but the Cabinet decided that, because it is in a national park, they should get 50% of these revenues for the Game Products Trust Fund, a state initiative to reinvest revenues obtained from wildlife on state land into nature conservation (Kamba n.d.)

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